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Larisa K. Miller

Hoover Institution Archives, lkmler1861@gmail.com

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Primary Sources on C. E. Kelsey and the Northern California Indian Association

Larisa K. Miller

ABSTRACT

This article provides a brief history of and identifies primary sources on C. E. Kelsey and the Northern California Indian Association, which brought federal support to the non-reservation Indians of northern California in the early 1900s. Kelsey is a frequently mentioned but largely unknown figure in the unique history of Indian-white relations in California. As an officer of the Northern California Indian Association (NCIA) and special agent for the Indian Office he altered the landscape for California Indians. Because there is no corpus of Kelsey's personal papers, NCIA records, or government records, he remains largely unknown, to the point that authors and archivists have sometimes misnamed him.

Introduction

C. E. Kelsey is a frequently mentioned but largely unknown figure in the unique history of Indian-white relations in California. As an officer of the Northern California Indian Association (NCIA) and a special agent for the Office of Indian Affairs, he altered the landscape for California Indians in the early 1900s. He was recently credited as “the official in the [Indian] Bureau who had the deepest knowledge of the condition of California Indians at the time—a man who had unparalleled personal experience of the contemporary life of virtually every tribal group of Native Californians and had written extensively and eloquently on the practical and moral obligation of the government to redress the atrocious wrongs suffered by California Indians.”¹ Even as he asserted Kelsey's preeminence, this author got Kelsey's full name wrong.

1. Clifton Kroeber, "Introduction to Part One," in *Ishi in Three Centuries*, ed. Karl Kroeber and Clifton Kroeber, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), 3-4.

The documentation Kelsey created is important to historians, genealogists, tribal enrollment officers, and many federally unrecognized tribes—of which California has by far the greatest number—that petition the U.S. government for recognition. But the misnaming of Kelsey exemplifies the dearth of information about him. There is no corpus of Kelsey’s personal papers, NCIA records, or government records. He left federal service two decades before the National Archives was created. The federal records from his San Jose office and the NCIA records he maintained as secretary were probably with his personal papers, which were at his home in San Diego County in the 1920s. After this the records trail goes cold. Kelsey’s grandchildren confirm that his papers were not placed with any repository, and only a handful of C. E. Kelsey items remain in the family.

The loss of these archival collections leaves a hole in history when the direction of Indian affairs in California turned to buying federal rancheria lands, introducing legal and administrative problems unique to California. Some accounts are beginning to address this gap. A recent work by Valerie Sherer Mathes on the activities of the Women’s National Indian Association in California contains a chapter on the NCIA, including several photographs. Yet Mathes ends her book with a call to explore the “histories of the various state associations,” such as the NCIA. Khal Schneider frames Kelsey’s land purchases for government rancherias against privately-purchased, communally-owned Indian rancherias in Mendocino, Lake, and Sonoma Counties.² A great deal more work remains to be done. This article attempts to encourage further research by providing a short history and identifying relevant primary sources regarding Kelsey and the association that brought federal support to the non-reservation Indians of northern California.

A Brief History of C. E. Kelsey and the NCIA

In 1900, the history of the California Indians was already unique. California had been densely populated by several hundred thousand natives prior to outside contact. Under Spanish and Mexican rule, many thousands were lost to the disease, disruption, and forced labor brought by the Catholic missions, which were established along the coast as far north as Sonoma. The gold rush of 1849 brought massive streams of outsiders who overran much more of the state. Over the following decades the natives were murdered, killed by disease, or driven from their lands and livelihoods by miners and settlers.

Unlike much of the western United States, the federal government had not quieted native title to most of the land of California. Between 1851 and 1852, eighteen treaties with California Indians were signed, but the Senate refused to ratify them. Instead of reserving lands via treaty, the government established military reservations

2. Valerie Sherer Mathes, *Divinely Guided: The California Work of the Women’s National Indian Association* (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2012), 266; Khal Schneider, “Citizen Lives: California Indian Country, 1855-1940” (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2006).

for the Indians. But some reservations were blocked, and others were moved or liquidated when the land became attractive to whites. A series of executive orders and a congressional act in 1891 led to the creation of small, scattered reservations of varying quality for Indians in southern California. In northern California, there were only three reservations in 1900—at Hoopa, Round Valley, and Tule River. The number of Indians living outside their borders was unknown. They had virtually no legal rights, protections, or federal involvement.

In this period, the NCIA was established and began missionary outreach work to some Indians in northern California. It was a non-denominational Christian organization founded by Anna F. Taber as a branch of the Women's National Indian Association (WNIA, later the National Indian Association) in San Jose in 1894. Taber and most other members were middle and upper class women of the area, though much of their funding came from benefactors on the east coast.

The NCIA's first missionary effort involved helping the school for Indians at Greenville, which was in the care of the WNIA; it then founded a mission at Hoopa. The Indians at these locations lived on government lands, where the NCIA could easily set up operations. It was much more difficult to work with other Indian groups because they lacked secure land tenure; the NCIA could not afford to set up shop and then start over whenever the Indians might be evicted. To address this, NCIA bought land in Manchester for some of the homeless Indians, but it could not afford to buy land for all of them. The NCIA instead turned to pressing the federal government to take responsibility by purchasing land.

C. E. Kelsey joined the NCIA as it was laying the groundwork for its legislative campaign. Born in Wisconsin in 1861, Kelsey traveled to California twice before serving as a clerk at the Green Bay Indian Agency from 1891 to 1893. Three years later, he earned a law degree from the University of Wisconsin. In 1901, he and his wife Abigail moved to San Jose, where he opened a law practice and later served as secretary and director of the NCIA for more than a decade.

The NCIA petitioned Congress for passage of several bills to provide support to the non-reservation Indians of northern California. The first called for a survey of conditions, and it was followed by others seeking funds to buy land for residential sites. The association succeeded in large part due to Kelsey's efforts. He orchestrated the rediscovery and removal of the Senate's injunction of secrecy from the California Indian treaties of 1851-52, which was strategically timed for the Senate vote on the initial legislation. He was then appointed as special agent for the Indian Office to report on the condition of the Indians of California. The population schedule he submitted with his report in 1906 was the first census of the non-reservation Indians of the northern part of the state, establishing a baseline that is vitally important today. Kelsey's report spurred Congress to appropriate \$150,000 to buy land for some of the neglected Indians, and he was reappointed from 1906 to 1913 to make the purchases. From his office in San Jose, Kelsey racked up thousands of miles traveling around California and made two trips to the Indian Office headquarters in Washington, D.C.

Kelsey bought forty-five tracts of land in California totaling more than 7500 acres; a dozen sites were in southern California and the rest were in the north. More sites were purchased after Kelsey left the service. They are now known as Indian rancherias. Owned by the U.S. government, rancherias are small tracts of land established for particular Indian groups. They are distinct from Indian reservations, which the government holds in trust for the Indians. Kelsey wanted the rancherias to be legally allotted to individual Indians, which would have led to their eventual ownership by those individuals, but this did not occur. In the end, the rancherias created new problems. The land varied in quality, and sometimes lacked water and wood for fuel and fences. Numerous and greatly scattered, they were difficult for the Indian Office to manage. Adding to administrative difficulties, the tracts differed from reservations in legal status, and those legal differences extended to their residents. Furthermore, Indian groups that did not receive a rancheria found themselves disadvantaged in various ways.

Beyond purchasing rancheria lands, Kelsey helped individual Indians file applications for allotment on the public domain, advocated for formalizing Indian allotments in national forests, worked to get Indian children into public schools, and responded to numerous requests for a variety of investigations and reports. One of these led to Kelsey's formal release of Ishi, popularly known as the last of the wild Indians, from federal oversight to the University of California in 1911.

Kelsey held his federal appointments while serving as an officer of the NCIA, which proudly trumpeted his achievements. Indeed, Kelsey's work for the Indian Office may have represented the association's greatest success. With his appointment to buy land for the Indians, the NCIA turned its attention to other work. It established schools, recruited and supported field matrons to visit Indian women in their homes to teach the domestic arts, sold baskets on behalf of their native makers, and encouraged public involvement with California's Indians by printing pamphlets and sending members to speak at clubs and events. In 1908, the NCIA had auxiliaries in the San Joaquin Valley, southern Lake County, and San Francisco; it also flirted with a new name, printing some flyers as the California Indian Association.

The NCIA inaugurated the Zayante Indian Conference at Mount Hermon, a non-denominational Christian retreat in the Santa Cruz Mountains, in 1906. The annual conference brought together friends of Indians, field workers, and a handful of Indians with the goal of raising awareness about the conditions and needs of the California Indians. At the 1910 conference, Rev. Frederick G. Collett and his wife Beryl Bishop-Collett got their start in Indian work. Their relationship with the NCIA is an early indicator of the controversy Frederick Collett generated during his career of Indian advocacy.

The Colletts volunteered as teachers and missionaries at Colusa and stayed on there after NCIA funding was exhausted. After they signed a one-year contract with the association in 1912, acrimony developed. The NCIA accused the Colletts of being expensive, inefficient, and unreliable, while the Colletts claimed the NCIA approved their work but failed to pay their expenses. When the NCIA did not renew the

contract in 1913, the Colletts organized the Indian Board of Co-Operation and established themselves as its field secretaries.

The Indian Board of Co-Operation performed activities similar to those of the NCIA. Unlike the NCIA, it collected dues from Indians to further its work. The board lost many Indian supporters when it was discovered that the money had paid the couple's salary and expenses. In a separate matter, Frederick Collett was accused of interfering with the welfare of Indians in another part of California. The resulting internal investigation by a special agent of the Indian Office, completed in 1917, documented the bad blood between the Colletts and the NCIA, and implicated Kelsey as a player in the dispute. The investigator concluded that the complaints against Collett were unwarranted. However, this did not end the criticism of him. As late as 1928, Collett was indicted for mail fraud resulting from his fundraising activities, but two trials proved inconclusive.

While relations soured with the Colletts, the concept of an Indian industrial school modeled on the Tuskegee Institute became the NCIA's flagship project in the 1910s. The school was developed and implemented via the Zayante Conference. The NCIA bought land for the school at Guinda in Yolo County, and the school opened with a small number of boys and girls in 1913. The association's fundraising efforts fell short, however, which limited the number of students. A fire destroyed the school's main building in 1917, and then the superintendent resigned. When the NCIA was unable to find a replacement, it was forced to rent the place as a farm.

The NCIA sponsored several conferences to generate ideas and mobilize workers in the 1910s, most notably the Congress of Indian Progress, which was held in conjunction with the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco. But the association's volunteers were falling in number and its finances were dwindling. By the end of the 1920s, NCIA had faded away even as the Indian Board of Co-Operation remained active.

Kelsey, meanwhile, was terminated by the Indian Office in 1913. He returned to practicing law in San Jose. The Commonwealth Club of California considered forming a committee to study the perceived Indian problem in 1916 and sought his help. Kelsey agreed to serve and offered his opinion on the major issue—the status of Indians who were hung up between state and federal jurisdictions—but the committee never materialized. Kelsey's unsuccessful effort in 1919 to secure a pardon for Charles Padilla, an Indian incarcerated at Folsom Prison for killing a white man, was his last advocacy effort on behalf of the Indians of California.

Primary Sources on the NCIA

The NCIA's first petition to Congress, referred to the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs on January 21, 1904, assembles several key documents. One is a schedule of the population of 418 Indian settlements the NCIA had identified in forty-seven counties of northern California, which was the most comprehensive count to

date. Another is the memorial it presented to President Theodore Roosevelt in May 1903, which is accompanied by subsequent correspondence to the president from the commissioner of Indian affairs and Kelsey. This set of documents served as the opening salvo in the association's legislative campaign to obtain government support for the non-reservation Indians of northern California. The petition of Richard H. Pratt and other veterans of the Indian Service presents an opposing viewpoint. As founder of the Carlisle Indian School in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, Pratt became an active voice against the NCIA's approach.³

A large part of the NCIA's work consisted of publicizing the conditions of the northern California Indians and recruiting support. One way it did this was by printing and distributing pamphlets and flyers that emphasized the association's current projects and interests. The most extensive of these is *California and Her Indian Children* by Cornelia Taber. Written by the NCIA's corresponding secretary, who was also the daughter of the association's founder, this 74-page book has a heavy religious and instructional message. Blended with a history of the NCIA and its work, it paid particular focus on current missionary endeavors. Printed photographs of a few Indians and their homes are included. The publication can be freely downloaded from Google Books, though this version is missing the end foldout "Indian Map of California" that depicts reservations, boarding schools, day schools, field matrons, missionaries, lands recently purchased, Indian rancherias, and the number of Indians in each settlement. Hard copies with the map are available at various libraries in California.⁴

Among the most commonly available pamphlets printed by the NCIA are the proceedings of the annual Zayante Indian Conference. Other flyers reprint its petitions to Congress, recruit women to serve as field matrons, educate the public, and suggest ways to get involved. Casual mentions of the Colletts in some items suggest the association's initial cordial relations with the couple. As ephemeral works, the pamphlets often lack a publication date, though it can sometimes be determined from references in the text. Some contain printed photographs, particularly the Indian attendees at the Zayante Conferences. A number of libraries and archives in California and beyond have one or two flyers individually cataloged by the name of the association.⁵ Publications concerning the Congress on Indian Progress can sometimes be located by searching library catalogs. Multiple repositories often hold

3. Senate Committee on Memorial of the Northern California Indian Association, "Memorial of the Northern California Indian Association," 58th Cong., 2d sess., 1904, S. Doc. 131; U.S. Senate, "Granting of Lands to the Landless Indians of Northern California," 58th Cong., 2d sess., 1904, S. Doc. 137.
4. Cornelia Taber, *California and Her Indian Children* (San Jose, CA: Northern California Indian Association, 1911).
5. Among the repositories with individually cataloged items are the California State Library, California State Sutro Library, San Jose State University Library Special Collections, The Huntington Library, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, and the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University.

copies of the same item but because each can catalog them differently, the duplication may not be evident until the original items are examined.

Perhaps the largest single collection of NCIA pamphlets is not listed by individual item in the library's catalog but is instead part of the Indian Rights Association papers at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Much of this collection has been published and distributed in microform, where relevant publications are listed under the names Northern California Indian Association, California Indian Association, and Zayante Indian Conference. Some unique flyers can also be found in a smaller but significant collection of NCIA ephemera at the Autry National Center in Los Angeles. It contains about ten flyers created by the NCIA along with items issued by other organizations.⁶

Another printed source about the NCIA consists of its submissions of news items and annual reports to its parent organization, the Women's National Indian Association, which changed its name to the National Indian Association (NIA) in 1901. This umbrella organization issued *The Indian's Friend*, a newsletter that was published monthly while the NCIA was an active member, as well as annual reports. These publications were aimed chiefly at the organization's own membership. By patiently skimming their pages one can find fairly regular updates on the activities and progress of the NCIA. Newsletters typically include reports about NCIA meetings, Zayante Conferences, and Kelsey's activities. They also contain "The True Story of Fernando," a piece by Cornelia Taber about defective Indian land titles; updates on the California Indian Industrial School at Guinda; and an obituary for Anna Taber, founder of the NCIA. The annual reports of the NIA typically include anywhere from one paragraph to one page reporting on the accomplishments of "our Northern California auxiliary." Both the NIA's annual reports and *The Indian's Friend* have been published and distributed in microform.⁷

Some holes left by the sources already noted can be filled by searching contemporary California newspapers. Some of these have been digitized with fully searchable text. Because the association was headquartered in San Jose and most of its officers lived in the Santa Clara Valley, San Jose newspapers usually contain the most information. The *San Jose Mercury News* is included in the America's Historical Newspapers digital database, which is subscription based, while the *San Francisco Call* is freely available in Chronicling America on the Library of Congress website.

6. "California Indian Association" (#314, reel 129, 5 items), "Northern California Indian Association" (#344, reel 132, 15 items, of which one is attributable to a different organization, the Indian Board of Co-Operation), "Zayante Indian Conference" (#302, reel 128, 1 item), Indian Rights Association Papers, 1868-1968 [microfilm] (Glen Rock, NJ: Microfilming Corp. of America, 1974); Northern California Indian Association Newsletters and Bulletins (MS.1311), Autry National Center, Los Angeles; "Northern California Indian Association", California Ephemera Collection (CA EPH), California Historical Society, San Francisco. (The NCIA seems to have briefly toyed with a new name as the California Indian Association, which can be directly connected to the NCIA through the list of officers of the two organizations.)
7. *American Indian Periodicals in the Princeton University Library* [microfiche] (New York: Clearwater, 1982).

References and dates mentioned in *The Indian's Friend* can also be used to zero in on specific issues of other local newspapers that are not digitized or indexed.⁸

Relatively few unpublished records of the NCIA are available. The NCIA incorporated in 1902 so that it could buy and hold land, and its articles of incorporation are available at the California State Archives. Beyond this, searching for papers of individual NCIA officers may be the best strategy. Their names are often listed on the association's pamphlets and letterhead. A small cache of letters from field matrons and teachers working with Indians in the field are available in the Cornelia Taber papers at the California Historical Society. Field matrons were employed by the Indian Office but received support from private organizations; the NCIA sponsored a relatively large number of these women. As the association's corresponding secretary, Taber wrote letters to and received letters from them. For those interested in field matrons, the account by Mary Ellicott Arnold and Mabel Reed, *In the Land of the Grasshopper Song: Two Women in the Klamath River Indian Country in 1908-09*, is a lively read by two of their matrons. The book, however, contains few direct references to the NCIA. Arnold's papers are split between two eastern repositories, though the finding aids make no references to the NCIA.⁹

Several NCIA members corresponded frequently with the officials of the Indian Rights Association, with which the NCIA collaborated in its legislative campaigns. Letters received from them—particularly Anna Taber, Cornelia Taber, and Kelsey—are among the IRA papers already mentioned. These letters provide an inside look at the NCIA's congressional lobbying efforts. In their advocacy work, the Tabers and Kelsey also wrote to Albert K. Smiley, who was an organizer of the well-known conference at Lake Mohonk, New York, that highlighted concerns for Indians and other groups.¹⁰

8. Readex, "America's Historical Newspapers," <http://www.readex.com/content/americas-historical-newspapers> (available through many public and university libraries); Library of Congress, "Chronicling America," <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>.
9. Articles of Incorporation of the Northern California Indian Association (34724), January 24 1902, California State Archives, Sacramento; Cornelia Taber Papers, 1906-1926, California Historical Society, San Francisco; Mary Ellicott Arnold and Mabel Reed, *In the Land of the Grasshopper Song: Two Women in the Klamath River Indian Country in 1908-09* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, reprinted 1980); Mary Ellicott Arnold Papers, 1888-1970, Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College, Swarthmore; Mary Ellicott Arnold Papers, 1908-1958, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, Harvard University, Cambridge.
10. "Incoming Correspondence" (reels 16-38), Indian Rights Association Papers, 1868-1968 [microfilm] (Glen Rock, NJ: Microfilming Corp. of America, 1974); Smiley Family Papers (1113), Haverford College Library Special Collections, Haverford.

Primary Sources on C. E. Kelsey

Publications

Catalog searches typically yield three published items authored by Kelsey. Completed in 1906, two are closely related and continue to be highly relevant today: “Report on the condition of the California Indians”¹¹ and “Schedule showing non-reservation Indians in Northern California.”¹² A third, “The Rights and Wrongs of the California Indians,” is his address at the Commonwealth Club of California meeting in 1909, which is accompanied by Cornelia Taber’s presentation at the same event.¹³ These materials are frequently cited by scholars and for lack of anything more, they have come to define Kelsey’s written body of work.

There are at least a few more published pieces by Kelsey. One of these is “Indian Reservations in southern California, and What Has Been Accomplished in the Last Three Years,” submitted by Kelsey to Wayland H. Smith, the secretary of the Sequoia League, in November 1908. It is part of Smith’s *In Re California Indians to Date: An Authorized Account of the Present Status of the California Indians and What has been Done up to 1909*. At the urging of the Indian Office, Kelsey spoke at the Lake Mohonk Conference in 1909. His address, “Providing for the California Indians,” is part of the published proceedings. “Mr. Kelsey’s Brief History of the California Indians” is a chapter Warren K. Moorehead sought from Kelsey for *The American Indian in the United States Period 1850-1914*. Finally, Kelsey’s talk “State and Federal Responsibility for the Indian,” which was presented at a sub-conference of the Congress on Indian Progress in 1915, was published in *The Indian School Journal*.¹⁴

11. Small runs of the report were published several times, including: *Report of the Special Agent for California Indians to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, March 21, 1906* (Carlisle, PA: Indian School Print, 1906); C. E. Kelsey, “Report of Special Agent for California Indians” in *Federal Concern About the Conditions of California Indians, 1853 to 1913: Eight Documents*, Robert F. Heizer, ed., (Socorro, NM: Ballena, 1979). The original manuscript is in file 3017-1906, Indian Division Letters Received (entry 653), Records of the Office of the Secretary of the Interior (Record Group 48), National Archives, College Park, Maryland.
12. C. E. Kelsey, “Schedule showing non-reservation Indians in Northern California,” *Census of Non-Reservation California Indians, 1905-1906*, ed. Robert F. Heizer (Berkeley: Archaeological Research Facility, Department of Anthropology, University of California, 1971). The original manuscript is in file 5340-1909-034, California Special, Central Classified Files (entry 121), Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (Record Group 75), National Archives, Washington, D.C.
13. C. E. Kelsey, “The Rights and Wrongs of the California Indians,” *Transactions of the Commonwealth Club of California*, 4(7) (December 1909).
14. Wayland H. Smith, *In Re California Indians to Date: An Authorized Account of the Present Status of the California Indians and What has been Done up to 1909* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles Council of the Sequoia League, 1909); *Report of the Twenty-Seventh Annual Meeting of the Lake Mohonk Conference of Friends of the Indian and Other Dependent Peoples, October 20th, 21st and 22nd, 1909* (Lake Mohonk, NY: Lake Mohonk Conference of Friends of the Indian and Other Dependent Peoples, 1909); Warren K. Moorehead, *The American Indian in the United States Period 1850-1914* (Andover, MA: Andover Press, 1914); Chilocco Indian School, “State and Federal Responsibility for the Indian,” *The Indian School Journal*, 16(2) (October 1915): 80–82, from the series *The Indian School Journal, 1904–1926*, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (Record Group 75), National Archives, Fort Worth, Texas, <http://research.archives.gov/description/2745553>.

Federal Records

Even with these additional items, the published sources are meager. While the bulk of documentation about the NCIA is in published materials, including mentions of Kelsey's work for the association and some of Kelsey's addresses at the Zayante Conferences, most of Kelsey's writings are unpublished and scattered through larger bodies of archival materials. These Kelsey items can be found by those willing to painstakingly search for them.

As one would expect, Kelsey's federal service is best documented in federal records. However, there is no body of government records specifically identified as his by title. Rather, one must sort through many records of the Indian Office housed at National Archives facilities across the country to locate records written by Kelsey. Most of the extant materials are letters. In fiscal year 1912 alone, Kelsey reported receiving about 1650 letters and writing about 1550.¹⁵ The letters he wrote and sent to other Indian Office employees represent the bulk of what is available today. They are typically interfiled—seemingly scattered—among many other letters in the voluminous records of the Indian Office.

Because he reported directly to the commissioner of Indian affairs in Washington, D.C., Kelsey wrote many letters to him. They are now among the records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs at the National Archives in downtown Washington, D.C.. Two records series probably contain the bulk of Kelsey materials: "Letters Received, 1881-1907" and "Central Classified Files, 1907-1939."¹⁶

When Kelsey began his work, the Indian Office in Washington, D.C. assigned a sequential number to most of each year's incoming letters, which were filed by year and then by their pre-assigned sequential number. The office maintained two indexes to the incoming letters that are now the main finding aids for the letters. The first, "Indexes to Letters Received, 1881-1907," lists correspondents such as Kelsey (as well as Anna Taber, the founder of the NCIA) in alphabetical order, and then provides the year and file number for each letter received from them. For example, two of the many letters listed under Kelsey's name are numbers 1906-74803 and 1906-76237.¹⁷

Because so many letters from Kelsey are listed in the index, it is worthwhile to filter out routine and mundane ones, such as those requesting more blank stationery

15. C. E. Kelsey to Commissioner, July 25, 1913, p. 4, file 773-1913-101, box 1, "California Special," Central Classified Files, 1907-1939 (entry 121), Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (Record Group 75), National Archives, Washington D.C.
16. "Letters Received, 1881-1907" (entry 91), Central Classified Files, 1907-1939 (entry 121), Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (Record Group 75), National Archives, Washington, D.C. The entry numbers refer to a series description in Preliminary Inventory 163, *Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs*, compiled by Edward E. Hill (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Service, 1965), where each is described in greater detail.
17. *Indexes to Letters Received, 1881-1907* (entry 87), Microfilm Pub. No. P2187, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (Record Group 75), National Archives, Washington, D.C.

or voucher books. This is done by looking up each letter by year and number in the second finding aid, “Registers of Letters Received, 1881–1907.” Much as a checkbook register lists each check written by its sequential number, these registers list each letter received by year and then by file number. For each the register lists the writer’s name, date received, date written, subject matter, and the division to which it was referred. For example, the register indicates that letter 1906-74803 was written by Kelsey on August 23, 1906, and seeks information regarding precedent in buying land. Letter 1906-76237, also from Kelsey, is dated August 26, 1906, and asks for the names and addresses of field matrons in northern California. By going through this two-step process one can select which letters to examine in the “Letters Received, 1881–1907.” Both of these finding aids are available on microfilm, which makes them somewhat more available than original records due to longer public hours for the microfilm reading room at the National Archives.¹⁸

Beginning in August 1907, about two years into Kelsey’s federal service, the Indian Office in Washington, D.C. changed its filing system. It started filing letters received and copies of letters sent together in a decimal-subject classification system that is more topical, as opposed to the previous chronological system. These are the “Central Classified Files, 1907–1939,” and they contain most of Kelsey’s letters to the Indian Office. This series is arranged by jurisdiction, then by a decimal number representing a particular subject, and then by a year and sequential number representing the first letter sent or received on a particular topic. The relevant jurisdiction for Kelsey’s letters is “California Special,” and one key decimal classification is the 300s, where letters relating to lands—the bulk of Kelsey’s work—were filed. One might request all of the California Special files from file code 300 to 399, which span many boxes, and then page through all of the files that were opened before Kelsey left the Indian Office in 1913. For example, California Special file 19187-1912-307.4 was opened in 1912 and contains correspondence with Kelsey regarding land purchased at Smith River. California Special file 80665-1916-310 represents a lands file that was opened in 1916, several years after Kelsey’s period of service.¹⁹

“Central Classified Files, 1907–1939” is even more important for research on Kelsey because Indian Office clerks often removed letters from the earlier series of “Letters Received, 1881–1907” and filed them for more immediate access in the then-currently active Central Classified Files. For example, Kelsey’s census of non-reservation Indians in northern California was received in 1906 and filed in the Letters Received records series as letter number 1906-29290. In 1909 the Indian Office moved it to California Special file 5340-1909-034 (034 is the file code for census matters). A note placed in the spot where old letter number 1906-29290 would be found refers to the new file location.

18. *Registers of Letters Received, 1881–1907* (entry 88), Microfilm Pub. No. P2186, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (Record Group 75), National Archives, Washington, D.C.
19. California Special Files, 1907–1919, Central Classified Files, 1907–1939 (entry 121), Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (Record Group 75), National Archives, Washington, D.C.

Another series of Bureau of Indian Affairs records, “Special Agent Files, 1907–1948,” relates to the activities of special agents like Kelsey. These records are filed in three date segments and then by name of agent; the relevant file is 1907–21 Kelsey. One might expect this to be a very extensive file, but it is actually a rather slender file focused on such administrative matters as purchases and accounts. Slim as it is, the file has value because Kelsey complained bitterly about the Indian Office’s allocation of expenses, part of which is documented here.²⁰

A final item available among the records at headquarters is a “Map of California Showing location of Indians...,” which is credited to Kelsey. This large scale manuscript map shows Indian reservations and rancherias, Indian population figures, and Indian boarding and day schools.²¹

In addition to requesting instructions from and reporting on issues to officials at the Indian Office headquarters in Washington, D.C., Kelsey sought information from and shared expertise with Indian agents in California as he implemented instructions and policies. Because Kelsey’s jurisdiction stretched across California, he would have corresponded with virtually every agent having responsibility for a particular region within the state, such as the agents at the Round Valley, Greenville, and Reno agencies. Each Indian agency’s records are maintained separately as subunits of the Bureau of Indian Affairs’ collections. Records of the Indian agencies in northern California, where Kelsey performed the bulk of his work, are housed at the National Archives regional facility in San Bruno, California.

These letters between Kelsey and agents often discuss affairs at particular rancherias or matters concerning individual Indians. For example, in 1910, Kelsey wrote a letter to the superintendent at the Round Valley Indian School about the number of Indians in nearby counties and the possibility of enlarging the school. This letter was filed among the records of the Round Valley Agency. Kelsey wrote a letter to the special agent at Reno, Nevada, in 1913 regarding Charlie Cully’s land allotment near Nevada City, California, and this letter was filed with the other records of the special agent in Reno. Today most of these letters are still filed among the records of those individual Indian agencies, of which there are a fair number. Adding to the number of agencies that might have Kelsey materials is the fact that some letters were moved to the records of successor agencies, particularly the Sacramento Agency and Sacramento Area Office, to keep them at hand for quick reference by employees.

There is no simple way to locate these letters by Kelsey. A few are easily found in files bearing Kelsey’s name. However, most of them are interfiled among the many

20. Special Agent Files, 1907–1948 (entry 949), Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (Record Group 75), National Archives, Washington, D.C.

21. Map No. 6541, dated 1910 (62 inches by 50 inches), Central Map File, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (Record Group 75), Cartographic Section, National Archives, College Park, Maryland. The map is described as entry 120 in Special List 29, *List of Selected Maps of States and Territories*, compiled by Janet L. Hargett (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Service, 1971).

other records of each agency, where they are arranged in various records series according to either date or subject. For example, the 1910 Kelsey letter mentioned above is filed by date in the records series “Incoming correspondence from others than the commissioner,” which is part of the Round Valley Agency records. The 1913 Kelsey letter about the Cully allotment near Nevada City was moved to a file titled “Nevada City” in the series “Tribal group files” of the Sacramento Area Office. Depending on the arrangement of each records series, the best one can do is zero in on the dates or topics of Kelsey’s activities and then page through hundreds of documents looking for Kelsey’s name.

Locating records relating to the Rev. Frederick G. Collett follows much the same method. However, because the special agent at large in Reno, Nevada, investigated Collett from 1915 to 1917, there is a file on the case among that agent’s records. It describes the fractured relationship between Kelsey and Collett. In seeking other records about Collett, it helps to know his major areas of work. In this early period, Collett and his wife focused their efforts on Indian children in public schools. Therefore, a number of files relating to school matters contain correspondence between various Indian agents, particularly the agent at Reno, regarding the work of the Colletts.²²

Kelsey estimated that he spent one-third of his federal career fighting for things on behalf of the Indians of southern California. Any extant letters that he wrote to Indian agents in southern California as part of his efforts would remain among the records of the southern Indian agencies. They are arranged much like those of the northern California Indian agencies, and are housed at the National Archives regional facility in Perris, California.

A final source in federal records is Kelsey’s personnel file, which is at the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis, Missouri. Much of this slender file relates to relatively banal matters, such as extensions of Kelsey’s appointment and execution of his bonds and signature cards. However, there are also detailed assessments of Kelsey’s work prior to his termination and a personal record sheet in Kelsey’s hand. The latter is the basis for confirming his full name as Charles Edwin Kelsey. The file can be retrieved by providing his name, department, and service dates: C. E. (Charles Edwin) Kelsey, Interior Department, 1905–1913.²³

22. F. G. Collett and [School] General 166 files, Investigative Records, 1913–1923, Special Agent at Large–Reno; Indian Associations files, Agency General Subject Records, 1906–1925, Reno Agency; and Old Public Schools files, Indian and Public School Subject Records, 1908–1933, Reno Agency; Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (Record Group 75), National Archives, San Bruno, California.

23. Chas. E. Kelsey file, Department of the Interior Personnel Files, National Personnel Records Center, St. Louis, Missouri.

Manuscript Collections

Beyond federal records, there are Kelsey's letters to contemporaries interested in California Indians. Kelsey figured he knew or knew of just about everyone who had anything to do with Indian matters in California. In the search for these letters, the preference of Charles Edwin Kelsey, 1861–1936, for signing as C. E. Kelsey introduces an added difficulty of distinguishing his works from those of others also known as C. E. Kelsey. On the east coast, Charles Edward Kelsey, 1862–1931, graduated from Amherst College in 1884 and was a publisher connected with *The Youth's Companion*. In California, Clarence Earle Kelsey, 1882–1989, graduated from the University of California with a degree in engineering in 1905, dabbled with airplane engines in the San Francisco Bay Area, took up farming in Ventura County, and served as president of the Conservation Association of Southern California in the 1920s. There are a few collections in which Kelsey's letters are mistakenly cataloged as belonging to one of these other men. This is particularly true of Clarence Earle Kelsey, who was in northern and southern California during roughly the same periods as C. E. Kelsey. Because none of the other C. E. Kelseys were involved in California Indian affairs, subject matter becomes a key distinguishing factor.²⁴

The Indian Rights Association records have already been mentioned as a source of Kelsey letters. Because Kelsey made lasting connections with two of the IRA's leaders, Matthew Sniffen and Samuel Brosius, Kelsey's letters to them date from 1903 to 1922. While they relate to a range of California Indian matters, many concern the NCIA's political work in the early 1900s. These are all the more important because few papers survive from the members of California's congressional delegation during this period.

One significant exception is the papers of Thomas Bard, who was a senator from California from 1900 to 1905. The bulk of Bard's voluminous papers at the Huntington Library relate to his business affairs, but the collection also contains some clippings, letters, and printed matter concerning the Indians of California. Included are parts of the three-way correspondence between Kelsey, Bard, and Bard's secretary discussing their search for the un-ratified California Indian treaties of 1851–52. They are the closest thing to a smoking gun documenting how the treaties were resurrected to grease the passage of legislation on behalf of the Indians of California.²⁵

Kelsey's correspondence with other advocates for Indians included Charles Fletcher Lummis and Albert K. Smiley. Lummis founded the Sequoia League, which focused public attention on Indian affairs in southern California, in 1901. Though

24. Charles Edward Kelsey in *Who Was Who in America*, volume 1, 1897–1942 (Chicago: A. N. Marquis Co., 1943), 664; Clarence Earle Kelsey, *Down Memory Lane* (Santa Paula, CA: Kelsey, 1960), 12–13, 22–23, 27. Letters written by C. E. Kelsey are erroneously filed under the name Clarence Earle Kelsey in the C. Hart Merriam Papers and Philip Stedman Sparkman Papers at the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley; both of these collections are focused on California Indian affairs.

25. Boxes 7E, 9A, and 9F, Thomas R. Bard Papers, 1866–1958, The Huntington Library, San Marino.

active in different regions of the state, the two organizations sometimes worked together. Smiley has already been mentioned as an organizer of the Lake Mohonk Conference, where Kelsey spoke in 1909. Kelsey's letters to Smiley relate to attending the conference and general advocacy work.²⁶

Kelsey also corresponded with a number of anthropologists including Alfred L. Kroeber, C. Hart Merriam, Samuel Barrett, and T. T. Waterman. These letters express Kelsey's intense interest in Indian languages and artifacts, which he actively collected, as well as more substantive matters. The letters also serve as points of evidence in assessing the theory that anthropologists steered Kelsey to purchase lands for "real" Indians rather than more acculturated groups. They can be found in the records of the Department of Anthropology, A. L. Kroeber papers, and C. Hart Merriam papers at the Bancroft Library at the University of California at Berkeley. Two other collections at the Bancroft Library also contain Kelsey material including a couple of Kelsey letters in the Philip Stedman Sparkman papers. The records of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition contain copies of letters written to Kelsey by exposition officials during the planning of the Congress on Indian Progress.²⁷

Manuscript copies of Kelsey's census of non-reservation Indians in northern California and his numerals from the California Indian languages, which Kelsey completed during his survey of conditions for his report of 1906, are also available in collections at the Bancroft Library.²⁸ Photocopies of the census and numerals are often available at CILC (California Indian Library Collections) libraries in California. As previously noted, the original census is in the Central Classified Files of the records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs at the National Archives in Washington, D.C. The manuscript copies of the census continue to be important because the version published by Robert Heizer contains some errors.

There are also a few letters from Kelsey relating to land purchases for the Indians at Campo in southern California in the Constance Goddard DuBois papers at the

26. C. E. Kelsey Collection (MS 1.2427), Lummis Collection, Autry National Center, Los Angeles; Smiley Family Papers (1113), Haverford College Library Special Collections, Haverford. Several C. E. Kelsey letters in the Smiley papers are misidentified in the finding aid as being written by Carl E. Kelsey, Charles N. Kelsey, or Charles K. Kelsey, but context makes evident the true author.
27. Kent G. Lightfoot, *Indians, Missionaries, and Merchants: The Legacy of Colonial Encounters on the California Frontiers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 229–233; Les W. Field (with the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe), "Unacknowledged Tribes, Dangerous Knowledge: The Muwekma Ohlone and How Indian Identities are 'Known'," *Wicazo Sa Review*, 18(2) (Autumn 2003): 79–94; Boxes 14 and 81, Records of the Department of Anthropology; CU-23, Reel 32, A. L. Kroeber Papers; Banc Film 2049, Reel 63, C. Hart Merriam Papers; Banc Film 1958, Reel 1, Philip Stedman Sparkman Papers; Banc Film 2633 and Box 99, Panama-Pacific International Exposition Records; Banc MSS C-A 190: The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.
28. Reels 55-59 and 60-61, Ethnological Documents of the Department and Museum of Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley; Banc Film 2216, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley; Document numbers 424 and 445, Collection of Manuscripts from the Archaeological Archives of the Phoebe Hearst Museum of Anthropology, Phoebe Hearst Museum of Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley.

Cornell University Library. The records of the Commonwealth Club of California at the Hoover Institution Archives contain Kelsey's letters about the club's proposed committee to study the Indian situation. Two files relating to efforts to pardon Charles Padilla are available at the California State Archives, though Kelsey's written contribution to them is disappointingly minimal.²⁹

Finally, there is only one known photograph of Kelsey that is publicly available. It was printed in newspapers on several occasions in 1905–06, when Kelsey's appointments to investigate conditions and purchase land were newsworthy. A small number of unpublished photographs of Kelsey remain with his descendants. Because he was an avid photographer, even in many family photos, Kelsey was behind the camera rather than in the picture.³⁰

Conclusion

While the main bodies of documentation created by C. E. Kelsey and the Northern California Indian Association have not survived, many writings of both are available to those who are willing to search for them. For the NCIA, the ephemera, newsletters, and other printed matter it issued are perhaps the core sources. The key source for Kelsey is probably his extensive correspondence with other employees of the Indian Office. The letters he wrote to the commissioner of Indians Affairs are now at the National Archives in Washington, D.C. The letters he wrote to other Indian agents in California are housed at the National Archives regional facilities in San Bruno and Perris, California. Because of the way these letters are interfiled with other Indian Office records, one must visit each National Archives facility and page through many other materials to locate relevant items.

As the processing and description of hidden archival collections continue, and as more archival finding aids and collection materials are digitized and posted on the Internet, more materials will come to light. Meanwhile, there are sufficient records described here to begin fully fleshing out the role of Kelsey and the NCIA in the history of Indian-white relations in early 20th century California.

29. Reels 1 and 2, Film 8648, Constance Goddard DuBois Papers, 1897–1909, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library, Ithaca; Box 364, Commonwealth Club of California Records, 1903–2012, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University, Stanford; Charles E. Padilla, #5306 and #5840, Executive Clemency Files, California State Archives, Sacramento.
30. "San Josean Given Appointment," July 29, 1905, and "California Indians Get Appropriation," circa June 24, 1906, clippings from unknown newspapers in private collection; "Lectures on Work for and among the Indians," July 9, 1906, *San Jose Mercury News*.

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