6-2022

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The Apache Wars and the
Swiss Sergeant, John Spring

by Albert Winkler

The Apache Wars were a series of conflicts that comprised the longest sequence of confrontations between a Native American Nation and the white Americans of the United States. These largely took place starting with the first US military incursions into the American Southwest in 1846 during the War with Mexico and lasted until Geronimo’s final surrender in 1886. While most of the fighting occurred in the modern US states of Arizona and New Mexico, yet much of the warfare was between the Mexicans and the Apaches dating back to the seventeenth century. Those wars were very costly in lives and resources on both sides of the conflicts. They also took place over such a lengthy period of time that they involved generations of participants on both sides. The ultimate defeat of the Apache peoples meant the destruction of their culture and represents yet another crime the United States government inflicted on the American Indians.

The Swiss, John Spring

Among the participants in the Apache wars was the Swiss Sergeant, John Spring, whose story does much to illuminate and introduce the nature of the conflicts. Spring’s family originated in Canton Bern in Switzerland, and each of his parents were born in Steffisburg. His father, Christian Spring, was born on May 28, 1810, and passed on August 20, 1872, while his mother, Anna Marie Büchler, was born.
sometime near 1815 and died on June 25, 1875. Johann Arnold Spring was born in the nearby community of Thun on May 8, 1845. He was the third of four sons. The oldest was Gottlieb, and the second was Rudolf Samuel. The fourth and youngest was Emil Arnold.¹

The family did well financially, and its members held positions of respect and authority. The father, Christian, served as a police inspector in Thun and was authorized to certify certain legal documents. Gottlieb worked as a merchant and Rudolf Samuel was a lawyer and judge. Both remained in Thun, while Emil Arnold plied his trade as a goldsmith in Vienna. Each of the children in the family held positions that required a good education, including John (Johann) who had that opportunity as well. As a youth, he also followed the Swiss tradition of marksmanship, a valuable skill that would serve him well in the

American West. Spring’s education was well indicated by the fact that he would later teach school in Arizona.

As a young man, Spring traveled widely, but he retained the spirit of adventure and a love for the Union cause during the Civil War. He stated succinctly, “when the fearful losses incident to the bloody Wilderness campaign became known, many young Swiss declared their intention to abandon everything to cross the ocean and serve in the Union Army.”

Spring was right about the huge losses during the Wilderness campaign of May and June 1864, but he seems to be confusing the Wilderness campaign with the Battle of the Wilderness. He could not have known about the cost of the Wilderness campaign before he set sail for the United States. Yet he could have known about the large casualties suffered by both combatants in the Battle of the Wilderness on May 5 to 7, 1864.

Spring arrived in New York City and soon joined the army. Apparently, he was able to negotiate with William E. Dodge Jr. to join as his substitute, so Dodge would not be drafted into the army. The usual price of a substitute was $300, a large amount of money at that time. The system of paying men bounties for enlisting in the Union Army was also an inducement for men to join. At times, money would be paid by local, state, and national agencies and could exceed $1,000. It is unknown if Spring received such bounties. His official enlistment date was June 28, 1864, when he was nineteen years and one month old. He was described as a man with brown eyes and dark hair, and his height was five feet and six inches. One year later when he reenlisted in the army, his height was given as five feet and eight and a half inches, indicating that he had not yet reached his adult height when he first joined the army.

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2 Gustafson, 4-6.
4 Gustafson, 5-6. See also “John Spring” in familysearch.org accessed on March 15, 2022.
Since Spring spoke no English at that time, he was assigned to the Seventh New York infantry regiment, an all-German unit, so he would have little difficulty in speaking with his fellow soldiers. Frequently, men in the army whose native language was not English, were entered in military records under various names. In Spring’s case, he was listed as Hans Spring, Carl Hans Spring, and John Spring at various times. To avoid confusion, Spring started referring to the Anglicized form of his first name, and he then went by John Spring.5

The new recruit spent most of his first months as a soldier in various army hospitals suffering from some kind of unlisted ailment, but he was back with the Seventh New York by the end of December 1864. His unit was actively engaged in fighting around Richmond and Petersburg, Virginia, including the assault on the Southside Railroad on April 2, 1865, in an attempt to cut supplies to the Confederate forces by rail. In that action, a bullet struck Spring in the shoulder, which severely wounded him, and he was taken to a hospital at City Point, Virginia, where he arrived on April 4.6

The agony of war was brought forcefully to Spring’s attention as he viewed the suffering of the wounded soldiers. He especially took note of a man who had been horrifically wounded by a bullet that went through his upper lip. The unfortunate man could not speak, and another wound to his right hand kept him from writing. He was never able to communicate or tell his name, and had to be fed through a tube through the bullet hole in his face. The man faced a horrible death, but he took some comfort when Abraham Lincoln came to visit the hospital on April 8, 1865. The President graciously “shook hands with us all and addressed us with a few friendly words, reminding us to bear patiently our sufferings, that now the beginning of the end [of the war] had come. When he touched our unknown’s hand and said a few kindly words to him especially (he must have noticed his intense pain and pitiable condition) two great crystal drops started from the sufferer’s eyes.

5 Gustafson, 6-8.
6 Gustafson, 8-9.
and fell slowly over the poor mutilated face.” The miserable man died soon afterwards.\textsuperscript{7}

Spring continued to convalesce when he was transferred to a hospital in Washington, D.C. He was officially discharged from the army on June 29, 1865, exactly one year to the day after he had enlisted.\textsuperscript{8} Employment was hard to find at the end of the Civil War, especially for a young man who had not yet mastered English, because many former soldiers returned to take what jobs were available. Spring worked a few odd jobs until he reenlisted in the US Army. For the next three years, the Swiss immigrant served in the military, mostly deployed in Arizona. His leadership and organizational skills were noticed, and he achieved the rank of Quartermaster Sergeant effective March 1, 1866. He left the service on September 16, 1868, after having contributed to the Apache campaigns of the American Southwest.\textsuperscript{9}

\begin{flushleft}
\textit{Union Soldiers in the Civil War.}

Courtesy: Project Gutenberg.
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\textsuperscript{7} Gustafson, 9-11.
\textsuperscript{8} John Spring, familysearch.org accessed on March 15, 2022.
\textsuperscript{9} Gustafson, 11-13.
A Proud Warrior’s Tradition

A convenient focus of the Apache wars is the famous warrior, Geronimo. No other Indian warrior has reached the fame and renown as Geronimo, and his fighting abilities have given him great honors for more than a century after his death. During the Second World War, the most elite combat troops of the US Army were the airborne units who jumped into battle using parachutes. Whenever they jumped from their transport aircraft, the C-47, in practice or into combat, they faced the most dangerous moments of their deployment. At that instance, they often yelled “Geronimo” to show their bravery and resourcefulness under the most trying conditions. The US Army 501st Parachute Infantry Battalion unit patch still has a stylized picture of an Indian warrior on it with the name “Geronimo.”

When the US operation to kill Osama Bin Laden for his planning of the attack on the US Trade Center on September 11, 2001, the special operations forces used the code word “Geronimo” either to designate Ben Laden or as the code for the entire operation. All this was to honor perhaps the most resourceful and skillful adversary the US Army ever faced.

Raised as an Apache Warrior

The man, who would later be accused of killing dozens, if not scores of people, and terrorizing thousands more in a series of bloody rampages over many years across the future American states of Arizona and New Mexico and the Mexican states of Sonora and Chihuahua, was confused about the year of his birth. The Apaches had no access to the calendars used by the white men, and many of them did not know the year of their birth. In his old age, Geronimo related that he was born in 1829, but the evidence from modern scholarship suggests he came into the world in June 1823. The location of his birth remains unclear, but strong evidence suggests he was born in his ancestral lands some-
where near where the headwaters of Gila River are near the boundaries of New Mexico and Arizona.  

The child was born into the Bedonkohe band of the Chiricahua Apache Tribe. His father was Taslishim, or the Grey One. His mother was only remembered by her Spanish name, Juana. This suggests that she was a captive of the Mexicans as a child. If so, she later escaped to rejoin the Apaches. The boy was named Goyahkla (Go khlä yeh) or Goyathlay “The One Who Yawns.” Indian children were seldom given names at birth, and they were often given their monikers only after they had shown some character traits or had some noteworthy experience. Clearly, tired babies yawn, but Goyahkla appears to be a mild designation for such a feared, resourceful, and successful warrior, and the origin of the name remains obscure. Some Apaches have suggested that with a slightly different pronunciation, the name would mean “intelligent, shrewd, clever.” Later, he became the most famous Indian in North American history, Geronimo.

The origin of the name Geronimo continues to be unclear. It was a common Spanish name, and it could have been used in a generic

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12 Utley, Geronimo, 5-6.
sense much like when many Americans used to call each other “Joe” when someone’s name was unknown. As an adult, Geronimo “had a fair knowledge of the Spanish language.”\textsuperscript{13} He never learned English even though he spent decades in American reservations and prisons especially late in life. His mother might have taught him Spanish as a child. Juana may also have called him Geronimo as a nickname or a pet name. Another theory states that when he fought against the Mexicans, he was charging them like a fiend, and his enemies, recognizing their adversary, cried out in fear, “Cuidado! Watch out! Geronimo.” This might have been as close to Goyahkla as they could pronounce in the heat of battle. Yet they could also have been calling on St. Jerome to help them, or that he fought like St. Jerome. This seems doubtful because St. Jerome was the patron saint of librarians and is not known for protecting men in battle. In any case, the name stuck, and the great warrior was known as Geronimo by the Mexicans, Americans, and other Apaches.\textsuperscript{14}

Geronimo was the fourth child of a family of eight children, four boys and four girls. In the Apache culture, the number four was considered to be lucky. In his old age, the former warrior talked about his early life, and that he had “rolled on the dirt floor of my father’s tepee.” He was carried in a cradle on his mother’s back and at times “suspended from the bough of a tree.” “I was warmed by the sun, rocked by the winds, and sheltered by the trees as other Indian babes.”\textsuperscript{15}

His mother taught him the legends of his people, above all to revere the god Usen to whom he should pray for “strength, health, wisdom, and protection.” In turn “my father often told me of the brave deeds of our warriors, of the pleasures of the chase, and the glories of the warpath.”\textsuperscript{16} He played games with his brothers and sisters, which

\textsuperscript{13} Geronimo’s Story of His Life, S. M. Barett ed. (New York, NY: Duffield, 1906), 108 in footnote.
\textsuperscript{14} Debo, Geronimo, 14 and Bob Boze Bell, The Illustrated Times of Geronimo (Cave Creek, Ariz.: Two Roads West, 2020), 12.
\textsuperscript{15} Geronimo’s Story, 11-12.
\textsuperscript{16} Geronimo’s Story, 12.
helped him develop valuable skills he would use later in life. They played hide-and-seek; and they also played war games in which they acted like adult warriors. They practiced creeping up on some object they designated as the enemy and thus “performed the feats of war.” The children became very skillful in hiding from their mother to see if she could find them. Often, they were gone for hours and fell asleep in their hiding places.17

Childhood play was interrupted when the children were old enough to work in the fields, and they helped their parents plant, care for, and harvest crops of corn, beans, melons, and pumpkins. The beans, pumpkins, and corn were harvested in the fall. They were placed in bags, and stored in caves and other hidden places, so they could be eaten during the winter. The only domesticated animals they had were dogs and horses.18

The Apaches of New Mexico and Arizona did not grow tobacco, but they found a wild variety called desert tobacco, and it was very widely used. As Geronimo stated, “All Indians smoked it, [both] men and women.” Even though the Native Peoples knew nothing about nicotine, the drug in tobacco helped elevate their mood, and it also helped to curb hunger pains. Tobacco was so prized that smoking it was a right of passage, and young men were not allowed to smoke it until they had “hunted alone and killed large game—wolves and bears.”19

The Indians ground corn by hand to make a kind of bread, but they also crushed the corn, soaked it in water, and allowed it to ferment. This made a kind of beer known as *tiswin* (gray water) or *tizwin*. This drink “had the power of intoxication, and was very prized by the Indians.”20 The alcohol level of *tiswin* was low, and the Apaches would often fast for days before drinking it, so they could absorb the alcohol more readily into their bodies, and the effect of the drink would be stronger.

17 Geronimo’s Story, 12.
18 Geronimo’s Story, 13-14.
19 Geronimo’s Story, 14.
20 Geronimo’s Story, 14.
The consumption of alcohol was a big problem for the Apaches. They drank so often and so heavily that many of them were alcoholics by the time they had matured to adulthood. When the Apaches came into contact with Americans and Mexicans, much stronger drink became available through distilled beverages, mostly whiskey. The Indians frequently got so dead drunk that their “drinking parties . . . often featured violence, mayhem, and even murder.” But the consequences of their drunken parties were often even more severe. “Time and again it [drunken revelry] overcame experience and common sense to entice groups to expose themselves to massacre by Mexicans.”

Early in the boy’s life, Taslishim saw to his son’s training as a hunter and as a warrior. The father gave his son a sacred bow and arrows, which had been blessed by a holy man, and Geronimo learned to use the weapon with great skill. The boy was subject to rigorous physical and mental training including an ability to go without food and water for lengthy periods of time. He had to run long distances over ragged terrain up and down hills, which was an exercise to be repeated almost daily. To show that he was breathing properly through his nose, the child had to keep a small stone in his mouth the entire time. As he aged, the runs became longer and harder. But Taslishim died when his son was only ten years old, so the training had to be continued by other family members. Geronimo had impressive character when he was still young, and “after my father’s death I assumed the care of my mother.” “We lived near our old home and I supported her.” The child was clearly mature beyond his age, and was already taking on the role of an adult.

The Apache youths learned to survive. When they left on the hunt or military campaigns, they had the women pound enough fat and meat to eat for a week, and they brought water as well. The men were to cross open flats of ground only by night and to hide in the brush by

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21 Utley, 11.
22 Utley, 12.
23 Geronimo’s Story, 24.
day. They were to locate water by climbing high places and look for green places in the landscape where water could frequently be found. No one should sleep under a tree because that is the first place any adversary might look. If they became lost, they should start a fire and set up a smoke signal, but they should watch the flames from a distance to see if it was a friend or a foe who came to find them.  

When his father died, Geronimo began to hunt. This activity was so pleasurable, and “was never work.” The Apaches hunted herds of buffalo, antelope, elk, and deer that would be killed. The men hunted buffalos from horseback and killed them with either spears or bows and arrows. They found these animals useful for food, bedding, and materials to build their tepees. Yet the deer was the most valuable animal because their hide or buckskin was soft and pliable for clothing and moccasins, but deer hunting required more skill. The men would approach the deer from downwind and would move so slowly and methodically that the animal would not be spooked. Often, the men held a weed or a brush before them to keep the deer from becoming suspicious. The hunters were so skillful that, at times, they could kill several deer from a herd before the others realized what was happening and run away. 

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25 *Geronimo’s Story*, 19.
The young men had much fun hunting turkeys and rabbits from horseback, by either grabbing the animals by hand or killing them with a club or stick. The Indians hunted eagles for their feathers, and it took great skill to sneak up to an eagle on a high perch. The more ferocious animals requited much courage as well as skill to kill them. As Geronimo admitted, “I have killed many bears with a spear, but was never injured in a fight with one.” He added, “I have killed several mountain lions with arrows, and one with a spear.” Both of these animals were valuable for food and their skin. The hide of the cougar was often used to make quivers for arrows.26 The skills honed in hunting allowed the warriors to fight the Americans and Mexicans most effectively when they were on raids or at war.

The main purpose of raids was to take food, clothing, weapons, ammunition, horses, and livestock. As such, the raids were relatively limited in scope, and every effort, including spiritual, was used to avoid casualties. War was a more serious matter when the Apaches often took more risks. These attacks were often a matter of revenge for some injury or murder committed by an enemy, and the Apaches often tortured, mutilated, and killed their victims. Most often the Mexicans were the victims of both raids and war.27

When Geronimo approached maturity, he was trained as a full-fledged fighter, and was required to go on four expeditions with mature warriors who would instruct him on how to deploy, move, and fight. As a novice, he had to demonstrate great resourcefulness and courage. After the fourth successful expedition, the young man became a warrior, and he was then allowed to function as a mature adult in society.28 Geronimo was very pleased to achieve this status when he “was admitted to the council of warriors.” He was seventeen years old. At this point, “I was very happy for I could go wherever I wanted and do whatever I liked.” After recognition as a warrior, he could accompany

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26 Geronimo’s Story, 19-21.
27 Utley, 12.
28 Utley, 13-14.
any expedition. He was so excited that “I hoped soon to serve my people in battle. I had long desired to fight with our warriors.”

Geronimo also took on other adult roles, and soon married. He and “the fair Alope,” “a slender, delicate girl,” had long been involved in courtship, and he wished to marry her. The young warrior went to Alope’s father, No-po-so, and asked for permission to take her as his wife. No-po-so was reluctant to part with his dutiful daughter, and “he asked many ponies for her.” Geronimo made no verbal response, but he soon left on a raiding expedition against the Mexicans and upon returning “appeared before his wigwam with a herd of ponies,” and he took his wife. This was the only ceremony necessary in the Apache culture, and Geronimo was then a married man. He never mentioned where he got the ponies or how many Mexicans he had to kill to get them.

Geronimo built a new home made of buffalo hides near his mother’s tepee for himself and his new wife. He decorated the new tepee with spears, bows, and arrows as well as trophies of his successful hunts including bear robes and cougar hides. Alope brought the feminine touch to their home, and decorated it with “beads and drawn work on buckskin.” “She also drew many pictures on the walls of our home.” Geronimo was pleased with Alope and his new life. “She was a good

29 Geronimo’s Story, 24.
30 Geronimo’s Story, 24.
wife,” he said with obvious affection. “We followed the traditions of our fathers and were happy. Three children came to us—children who played, loitered, and worked as I had done.”

Apaches and Mexicans at War

Geronimo’s happy life was soon to be destroyed because the Apache Indians had long been at war with the Mexicans largely in the states of Sonora and Chihuahua. While there had already been much fighting, many more raids and massacres had taken place, starting in 1831. One Mexican newspaper gave an incomplete list of the raids, but it recorded that the state of Chihuahua experienced 1,707 recorded encounters between Comanche and Apache Indians and the Mexicans between 1832 and 1849. This resulted in the deaths of at least 716 Comanches and Apaches. At the same time, the Indians killed 1,521 Mexicans. Another report from 1835 estimated that since 1820 the Apaches had killed at least 5,000 Mexican settlers and another 4,000 had fled and abandoned over one hundred settlements. The only troops in the area were the “demoralized garrisons of worthless soldiers.”

The Mexican officials of Chihuahua estimated that the two of the Apache groups, the Gileños (one of three groups of the Chiricahua) and the Mescaleros, numbered between 2,500 and 3,000 men, women, and children in the 1820s before the largest fighting broke out. Clearly, the other Apache tribes numbered thousands more people at that time, but the Mexicans still badly outnumbered them. In 1823, the population of Chihuahua was 134,000, and the dwellers in Sonora numbered about 50,000.

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31 Geronimo’s Story, 24-26.
34 Griffen, Utmost Good Faith, 183.
35 Griffen, Utmost Good Faith, 5.
Even though the Apaches were inflicting more losses on the Mexicans than they were receiving, the Indians’ loss rates in the 1830s and 1840s would be hard to sustain, and the number of casualties would only increase in the following decades. The matter even became more severe after 1848 when the United States forced Mexico to cede 55% of their lands in one of the most shameful acts in American history. These areas included Arizona and New Mexico, and many Americans, whom the Apaches called *pindah-lickoyee* (White-eyed Enemies), soon flooded into the region and would also fight against the Apaches. In the first federal census taken in New Mexico and Arizona by the United States in 1850, there were 61,547 people in those areas. By the 1860 census, the population had ballooned to 99,998. In 1870, there were 98,356. In 1880, there were 129,223, and in 1890 shortly after the end of the Apache wars, there were 248,525.

The Americans soon established cattle ranches and towns as trading centers and supported ore mines. The Americans also created stage and rail lines that crossed the lands of the Apaches, and the United States government established military posts in the region for protection. The Apaches clearly faced hopeless odds, but their culture and way of life were at stake, and many chose to fight rather than throw themselves at the mercy of cruel nations who were most interested in their destruction.

In a clear act of genocide, the government of Sonora started offering bounties for Apache scalps in 1835. Chihuahua also announced in 1837 that it would pay one hundred pesos for the scalp of any Apache warrior, fifty pesos for the scalp of a woman, and twenty-five pesos for the scalp of a child. The Americans joined the ranks of “paid killers” when Chihuahua reinstated the practice of paying for Apache scalps in 1849. Starting in May of that year, the state would pay two hundred and fifty pesos for every captive warrior and one hundred and fifty pesos for every woman or for every child under fourteen years old. In addition, two hundred pesos would be paid for every dead warrior. The

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scalp was necessary to prove the death of a warrior. Since it was much easier to bring in a scalp than to care for and protect a live captive, the paid murderers preferred to bring in proof of a warrior’s death. The business of paying for murder proved to be costly, and the state paid 17,896 pesos for scalps in the last seven months of 1849. The payments also went up the following year. Most of the money was paid to Americans riflemen who took the opportunity to obtain easy money.\textsuperscript{37}

Scalps could come from anywhere including peaceful Indians and Mexicans, including back-street prostitutes, unfortunate drunks, or anyone at the wrong place at the wrong time. The policy was a practical and a moral disaster, as well as counterproductive. It severely hurt relations with the Apaches, never depleted the number of those Indians in any significant way, and wasted funds that were badly needed in other sectors.\textsuperscript{38}

Geronimo received much praise when he sought revenge for Kirker’s massacre. James Kirker was an American scalp hunter who came to Galeana in Chihuahua to obtain bounties for Apache scalps. He invited the Indians to come to a feast and assured them they would be protected. Not fearing a trap, the Apaches came, gorged themselves on food, and got drunk on whiskey. The next morning, July 7, 1846, Kirker and his Mexican troops went on a killing spree, murdering one hundred and thirty men, women, and children. As Mangas Coloradas, the leader of the Apaches, stated later, “My people were invited to a feast . . . whiskey was there. My people drank and became intoxicated, and were lying asleep when a party of Mexicans came in and beat out their brains with clubs.”\textsuperscript{39} A baby was “torn alive from the yet palpitating body of its mother, first plunged into the holy water to be baptized, and immediately its brains were dashed against a wall.” Kirker marched his men back to Chihuahua in triumph carrying “the scalps on poles . . . in procession,

\textsuperscript{38} Haley, \textit{Apaches}, 51; and Griffen, \textit{Apaches at War and Peace}, 224.
headed by the Governor and priests, with bands and music, escorting them in triumph to the town.” There was no doubt that these ghastly actions would lead the Apaches to seek revenge in the coming months.40

In November 1846, over one hundred and seventy five Apach-es, including Geronimo, left New Mexico to strike at Galeana. These warriors traveled very rapidly and could cover seventy-five miles in a day on foot and over rough country, a feat which often amazed their adversaries. Some even stated that in this respect the “Apache was the greatest fighter the world had ever seen.” The Apaches attacked at dawn, and they were met by a hasty defense of Mexican troops and civilians at Galeana. “Thoughts of their dead kinfolk crowded into the mind of every man,” inspiring them to fight well. The Indians took casualties, but they pressed their attack through the streets of the vil-
lage, often fighting hand-to-hand. Finally, the Mexicans broke and fled, and a few of the warriors who were on horses ran them down and stabbed them in the back with lances. Then the “Indians [began] hunting through the dark houses for hidden refugees.” This was a great vic-
tory, and some Apache men had their fighting reputation enhanced by their conduct in the battle. Among these was Geronimo.41

The Massacre of Geronimo’s Family

The warfare between the Apaches and Mexicans was frequent but not constant. Many times the two sides called truces to negotiate some kind of agreement or to trade for various items. In 1851, a group of Bedonkohe Apaches came to the town of Janos which they called Kas-kie-yeh. Geronimo, his mother, and his wife and children came with them much like a family outing. The men went into the town every day to trade, where they often got drunk. Not expecting any treachery, they only left a small guard for protection.

40 Sweeney, Mangas Coloradas, 135-6.
Many Mexican officials saw this as an opportunity to kill Apaches. Colonel José María Carrasco (Carasco) was a “fierce, arrogant advocate of a war of extermination.” Colonel Carrasco led a group of four hundred troops who struck the Apache camp on the morning of March 5, 1851. The Mexicans soon killed the Apache guards, and they overwhelmed the camp. Carrasco later said, “I concluded that it was my duty to destroy the enemy wherever I could find him.” The Colonel also stated with obvious pride. “We killed one hundred and thirty, and took about ninety prisoners principally women and children,” who were taken to be sold into slavery. Their ultimate fate remains unknown, but such slaves were often abused, starved, and overworked.

When the Apache men returned from Janos in the afternoon, they met with horrific news. As Geronimo related, “We were met by a few women and children who told us that Mexican troops from some other town had attacked our camp, killed all the warriors of the guard, captured all our ponies, secured our arms, destroyed our supplies, and killed many of our women and children.” The warriors scattered and hid themselves until nightfall when they assembled at “a thicket by the

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42 Utley, 24.
43 Utley, 27.
44 Carrasco in Bell, [13].
river,” and discussed everything they knew about the massacre, and Geronimo “found that my aged mother, my young wife, my three children were among the slain.”

Geronimo snuck back to the site of the massacre to make sure the reports were accurate, and “he found them all dead, lying in a pool of blood.”

The Apache men still discussed the events of the day, while Geronimo “silently turned away and stood by the river.” Overcome by grief, he lost track of time, and he did not know how long he stood there. He only returned to the others when he heard the men talking in a war council. The warriors only numbered eighty men, and they knew they were heavily outnumbered. Few had weapons, so they wisely decided to save revenge for another day and returned to their homes in Arizona “leaving the dead upon the field.”

Geronimo stood in silence while the others left, “hardly knowing what I would do. I had no weapon, nor did I wish to fight, neither did I contemplate recovering the bodies of my loved ones, for that was forbidden.” He did not pray or resolve anything because, “I had no purpose left.” For three nights and two days, the men trudged back to their homes. Geronimo ate nothing and spoke to no one at that time because “there was nothing to say.” He only ate when the men arrived at their own settlement, and Geronimo saw the trappings of his former life. “There were the decorations Alope made, and there were the play things of our little ones.” These were mementos of his former life, and the memories brought him great pain. He just could not stand to see them again. “I burned them all, even our tepee. I also burned my mother’s tepee and destroyed all her property.” In his grief and anger he “vowed vengeance upon the Mexican troopers who had wronged me.” Every time he remembered that happy days with his family “my heart would ache for revenge upon Mexico,” a creed he would follow for the rest of his life.

45 Geronimo’s Story, 27.
46 Debo, 36.
47 Geronimo’s Story, 27.
48 Geronimo’s Story, 28.
49 Geronimo’s Story, 28.
The Apaches believed they received strength from a spiritual source, and Geronimo was considered a medicine man because his power was strong. At this time, he received his first gift when a voice called him, “Goyahkla.” It was repeated four times, the magical number. The voice stated, “No gun will ever kill you. I will take the bullets from the guns of the Mexicans, so they will have nothing but powder.” “And I will guide your arrows [to your enemies].”

The spirit visited Geronimo again much later and gave him a similar promise. Geronimo had a close relationship with his favorite sister, Ishton. Perhaps in the winter of 1869-70 when Ishton was suffering from a long, hard delivery of a baby, Geronimo feared for her life. During the ordeal, he climbed to the top of a mountain and prayed. At sunrise, he lifted his eyes and hands to the east to greet the sunrise, when a voice spoke. “The child will be born and your sister will live; and you will never be killed with weapons but live to an old age.” The power that spoke was correct. That day the child, Daklugia “Forced-his-way-through,” was born, and Geronimo lived into his old age to die a natural death.

The great warrior would fight the Mexicans many times over a period of more than three decades, and he would receive many wounds, but no enemy bullet would ever kill him. Geronimo explained late in his life, “During my many wars with the Mexicans, I received eight wounds.” He mentioned seven. He was shot in the right leg above the knee, and the bullet was never removed. He was also shot in the left forearm, “wounded in the right leg below the knee with a saber; wounded on top of the head with the butt of a musket; shot just below the outer corner of the left eye; shot in the left side; [and] shot in the back.” He admitted, “I have killed many Mexicans; I do not know how many, for frequently I did not count them.” Nearly fifty years after the murder of his family, hatred still burned within him. “It has been a

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50 Debo, 38.
51 Debo, 77.
52 Geronimo’s Story, 68-110.
long time since then, but still I have no love for the Mexicans.” “I am old now and shall never go on the war path again, but if I were young, and followed the warpath, it would lead to Old Mexico.”  

**War with the Mexicans Begins**

It took months for the Apaches to organize a raid of revenge for the massacres in March 1851 because they wanted to strike back in large numbers. Geronimo went to various groups of Apaches to get their support for an attack into Mexico. “I will lead you to their city. We will attack them in their homes. I will fight in the front of the battle. I only ask you to follow me to avenge this wrong done by these Mexicans.”  

The Apaches also realized that they needed to teach the Mexicans the lesson that there would be severe retribution for attacking their people.

The warriors hid their families in the mountains near the border with Mexico and left a strong guard to protect them. All of them were on foot, and the warriors carried few necessities. They only wore moccasins and a cloth wrapped around their waists, sufficient in size to be used as a blanket when the men slept. “Each warrior carried [only] three days’ rations, but as we often killed game while on the march, we seldom were without food.” They also covered very impressive distances. “We usually marched about fourteen hours per day, making three stops for meals and traveling forty to forty-five miles per day.” They marched over rough terrain including river courses and mountain ranges to hide their movements.

Geronimo led the Apache war party to the town of Arispe, and the Mexican officials sent eight men to consult with them, but the warriors killed them all. The Mexicans troops came to attack the Apaches the next day. The warriors got a significant advantage when they cap-

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53 *Geronimo’s Story*, 68-110.
54 *Geronimo’s Story*, 30-48
55 *Geronimo’s Story*, 31-50.
tured the Mexican supply train, and the Apaches then had more guns and plenty of supplies. The next morning, the Mexicans renewed the fight again by attacking with two mounted companies and two on foot. Geronimo “recognized the cavalry as the soldiers who killed my people at Kaskiyeh,” and he was given the honor to direct the Indians in battle.⁵⁶

Geronimo explained, “I was no chief and never had been, but because I had been more deeply wronged than the others, this honor [of leading the others] was conferred upon me, and I resolved to prove worthy of the trust.” The new war leader arranged the warriors in a “hollow circle near the river.” Geronimo led an attack against their adversaries and he ordered the other warriors to surround the Mexicans. The memory of his dead family inspired him to fight well.

“In the battle I thought of my murdered mother, wife, and babies . . . and I fought with fury.” He admitted “Many fell by my hand, and constantly I led the advance.” The battle lasted for two hours. At the end, Geronimo and three other warriors were left on the field of battle. All their arrows were gone and their spears had been broken in the bodies of the Mexicans. “We had only our hands and our knives with which to fight, but all who had stood against us were dead.” Two armed soldiers advanced and killed two of the four Apaches, while Geronimo and the other fled. A trooper killed the other man, but Geronimo grabbed a spear. The soldier fired and missed, but Geronimo killed him with the lance. Then he grappled hand-to-hand with the remaining trooper and killed him with a knife. In the victory celebration, Geronimo was then made a “war chief.” He regarded the battle with great satisfaction. “I could not call back my loved ones. I could not bring back the dead Apaches, but I could rejoice in this revenge. The Apaches had avenged the massacre of ‘Kas-ik-yeh.’”⁵⁷

Upon the return of the war party, the Apaches celebrated their great victory. Geronimo soon married again, and he took two wives.

⁵⁶ Geronimo’s Story, 51-2.
⁵⁷ Geronimo’s Story, 53-4.
The first of these was Chee-hash-kish, whom he took in 1851 or 1852. She was described as “a very handsome woman,” and later had two children by him, Chappo, a son, and a daughter, Dohn-say (Tozey) later know as Lulu. The second wife was Nana-tha-thtith by whom he had one child. Modern researchers have stated that he had nine wives in total during his lifetime. The fact Geronimo took additional wives clearly showed that he had gained prestige in the Apache community because
only a very talented hunter and raider could hope to support two families. But the taking of additional wives also indicated that the Indians were losing men in battle, and there were fewer available men for the women to marry. No matter how many times he married, Geronimo never expressed the same joy and affection for his new families as he had with Alope and their children. His hatred for the Mexicans was as vicious as ever, and he continually sought more revenge against them.

Raids of Revenge on the Mexicans

Geronimo was an honest man in his autobiography, and he told the truth about his successes and failures in further attempts to seek further revenge against the Mexicans. “Finally, I succeeded in persuading two other warriors, Ah-koche-ne and Ko-deh-ne, to go with me to invade the Mexican country.” The men left their families and took enough food for three days. They were on foot, and walked into Sonora and found a small village to attack. They bravely approached in broad daylight hoping to take five horses hitched outside of a house.

Then the Mexicans opened fire on them. “My two companions were killed.” Soon the “Mexicans swarmed on every side; some were mounted; some were on foot, and all seemed to be armed.” Even though he was on foot, he somehow was able to outmaneuver and outwit his pursuers on horseback. “Three times that day I was surrounded, but I kept fighting, dodging, and hiding.” Twice Geronimo took aim with his bow at the Mexicans, and he was sure he found his mark each time. When night fell, the resourceful warrior crossed into Arizona, but his pursuers followed. “Several times the next day, mounted Mexicans tried to head me off; many times they fired on me, but I had no more arrows; so I depended on running and hiding, although I was very tired.” He had not eaten since the Mexicans came after him, and he did not dare to stop and rest. Finally on the second night, he got away.

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58 Debo, 47-8.
59 Geronimo’s Story, 55-6.
imo was lucky to be alive when he returned back to the other Apaches. Yet he had lost his two companions, had brought no plunder, and he was completely exhausted. Additionally, the families of the fallen warriors blamed him for the misadventure. But he was not discouraged, and he would soon raid again.60

It was only a few months after this failed raid that Geronimo again talked two warriors to join him on a raid into Mexico. The men went to the Sierra Madre Mountains, and they chose a village near the mountains which they decided to attack, once again at daylight. The night before they struck, the Mexicans discovered the group and fired on them, killing one of the warriors. The two survivors did not flee immediately, and that morning they watched a company of Mexican soldiers on horseback marching north. This mounted expedition was well supplied for what appeared to be a long journey. The two warriors followed their adversaries until the Indians were sure the excursion was headed to attack the main Apache settlement in Arizona. In yet another impressive feat of skill and stamina, Geronimo and his companion outran the mounted expedition, and they arrived at the Indian camp three days later at midday to spread the warning. They had arrived just in time because the Mexicans struck that afternoon.61

The disciplined troops opened fire, and killed three small boys in the first volley. Many of the Apache warriors were gone from the camp at this time, but the men who were available drove the soldiers back. In the process, “We killed eight Mexicans.” But the Apaches lost as well, including the three boys and two warriors. Having failed to overrun the Indian camp, the Mexicans went into “full retreat.” Four warriors followed them for three days. Geronimo noted, “We were quite sure they would not return soon.”62

Soon after driving the Mexicans away in the summer of 1853, the Apaches went on the offensive, and Geronimo went with a party of twen-

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60 Geronimo’s Story, 56-7.
61 Geronimo’s Story, 57-8.
62 Geronimo’s Story, 58-9.
ty-five warriors to engage the enemy. The Apaches found one company of belligerent soldiers, and the warriors waited until the entire company had to advance through a narrow pass in the mountains when the warriors opened fire into their backs. Geronimo was impressed with the discipline of their adversaries. “The Mexican troopers, seeming without a word of command, dismounted, and placed their horses on the outside of the company for breastworks, made a good fight against us.”

Geronimo led a charge to dislodge the troops. “The warriors suddenly pressed in from all sides and we fought them hand to hand.” During this fight, Geronimo raised his spear to kill a Mexican soldier who had just raised his gun to fire, “I was advancing rapidly, and my foot slipping in a pool of blood, I fell under the Mexican trooper.” The soldier struck Geronimo in the head with the butt of his musket and knocked the warrior senseless. The Mexican had no time to finish off his adversary because another Apache came to Geronimo’s rescue by killing the trooper with a lance. All of the Mexicans were killed in the attack. After a celebration, the warriors began to look after their dead and wounded comrades.

The other Apaches found Geronimo, still alive, lying on the ground where he had fallen. “They bathed my head in cold water and restored me to consciousness.” They placed a bandage on his head, but the badly wounded man still had to walk back. “Although weak from loss of blood and suffering from a severe headache, I was able to march on the return to Arizona.” Geronimo was so severely wounded that he did not fully recover for months, and he had the scar on his head for the rest of his life. Even though the Apaches had killed all the Mexicans, their losses were heavy, so there was no glory in their victory, and none of them wanted to stage further raids for the remainder of the year.

Yet by the next summer of 1854 or 1855, Geronimo went with twelve warriors again into Mexico. After four days’ march into that

63 Geronimo’s Story, 59-60.
64 Geronimo’s Story, 60.
65 Geronimo’s Story, 61.
country, the Apache scouts reported that there was a pack train only five miles away. They waited until the dawn of the next day and struck when the packers were just starting with their mule train. The mule skinners wisely ran off leaving the spoils to the warriors. The warriors were driving the pack train home when Mexican troops caught up to them.\textsuperscript{66}

The Apaches were eating breakfast at the time, and they did not know the soldiers were nearby until they opened fire, striking Geronimo. “At the first volley a bullet struck me a glancing lick [blow] just at the corner of my left eye and I fell unconscious.” The other Indians immediately ran for cover, and the troops went after them. In doing so, they passed over the fallen warrior. But when Geronimo woke up, he ran for cover to some trees nearby where he was soon trapped between two companies of his enemies. Again, he fled, “Bullets whistled in every direction and at close range to me. One inflicted a slight flesh wound on my side, but I kept running, dodging, and fighting until I got clear of my pursuers.” The brave and resourceful man climbed the steep walls of a canyon where the soldiers’ horses could not go. The warriors separated and met at their rendezvous point three days later. They returned empty handed for all their efforts. Many of the Apaches again blamed Geronimo for their failure. Once again, he met their criticisms with silence. “But I was not yet discouraged.”\textsuperscript{67}

The Mexican soldiers had gone in pursuit of the Apache raiders. The troops found the Indian camp, and hit them with a surprise attack early in the morning. Only twenty warriors were in the camp at that time because the rest were far away trading for blankets with the Navajo Indians. At this time, Geronimo was still resting to recover from his wounds. His injured left eye was swollen shut, so he could only see out of the other one. The attack was so rapid that there was no chance to fight, and all the Apaches could do was grab what they could and run away, but many women, children, and warriors were killed.

\textsuperscript{66} Geronimo’s Story, 62.
\textsuperscript{67} Geronimo’s Story, 62-3.
before they could escape. Many Indians, including Geronimo, had no time even to protect their family members. Before he could take them to safety, the Mexicans killed his wife, Nana-tha-thtith, and their child. At that point in his life, the Mexicans had now killed his mother, two of his wives, and four of his children.68

Geronimo was fortunate to get away. He was able to snatch a bow and some arrows. He took just an instant to fire an arrow into a Mexican officer before he made good his escape into the rocks. The surviving Apaches could do nothing when “the troopers burned our tepees and took our arms, provisions, ponies and blankets.” To make matters worse, the cold of winter was rapidly approaching. Their conditions were so challenging that the Apaches would not be able to make war on the Mexicans again for a very long time.69

Yet Geronimo still had revenge on his mind, and in the next summer, he took eight men with him into Mexico. This time, they were quite successful. Early one morning, they intercepted a mule train driven by four mule drivers who beat a hasty retreat. Much to the delight of the warriors, they found the mules loaded with “blankets, calico, saddles, tinware, and loaf sugar.” When the Apaches were returning with their booty, they encountered a mule pack train driven by a white man. Luckily for the mule driver, he saw the Indians before they saw him, and he rode his horse away as fast as he could. This time the warriors found the mules were carrying loads of cheese. When Geronimo and his band came back to Mangus-Colorado and the rest of the tribe, they held a big celebration. They divided the spoils of their raid and danced all night, and they even killed and ate some of the captured mules.70

The revelry was interrupted after three days when Apache scouts returned to the camp and reported that Mexican cavalry was approaching dismounted. All the warriors were in their encampment, and Mangus-Colorado took command of one group of them while Geroni-
mo led the other, planning to seize their enemy’s horses and then overwhelm and annihilate them. The plan was thwarted because the Mexicans had their own scouts who gave them ample warning to evade the trap, but fighting did ensue. “Within four hours after we started, we had killed ten troopers with the loss of only one man, and the Mexican cavalry was in full retreat.” Thirty warriors chased their adversaries back into Mexico, and the Apaches had plenty of provisions to last a long time, including blankets, clothing, sugar, and cheese.71

The next summer Geronimo got three warriors to accompany him into another foray into Mexico. The men approached a small village. They noticed that there was little activity at midday, no doubt because of the daily midday nap or siesta, so they attacked in broad daylight. The warriors were only armed with bows and arrows. When the Apaches let out their “war whoop” or battle cry, the Mexicans offered no resistance and wisely fled in every direction. The warriors looked through the abandoned village and found “many curious things” because “these Mexicans kept many more kinds of property than the Apaches did.” They took many supplies and loaded them onto the horses and mules they found nearby. The warriors brought their pack train back to the Apaches, and there was much celebration and feasting upon their return which lasted an entire day. Geronimo admitted with some pride, “This was perhaps the most successful raid ever made by us into Mexican territory.” There was then enough supplies to support the Apaches for a year.72

The raids continued almost on a yearly basis. The next fall season Geronimo took twenty men with him again into Mexico. These raiders struck several settlements and captured significant amounts of provisions and supplies. About three days later, the same party intercepted a mule train. They killed one of the mule drivers, but the other two escaped. Much to the delight of the warriors, they found the mules loaded with mescal, a strong liquor made from the agave plant found

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71 Geronimo’s Story, 70-1.
72 Geronimo’s Story, 72-4; and Debo, 52-3.
in the area. As soon as the men made camp, they got very drunk on the alcohol.

The situation soon turned ugly, and the warriors began to fight each other. Geronimo also drank the mescal, and even though he felt its effects, he had not become drunk. He kept his wits about him, and tried to control the situation. He ordered the others to stop fighting, but he was ignored. Soon a drunken brawl broke out, which their leader could not control. Fearing that they could be overwhelmed if the Mexicans attacked, Geronimo did his best to make a defense, but he could not even get the warriors to take sensible precautions, “I tried to place a guard out around our camp, but all were drunk and refused to serve.” He added, “Finally the camp became comparatively still, for the Indians were too drunk to walk or even fight.” His men had passed out, and “while they were in this stupor I poured out all the mescal, then I put out all the fires and moved the pack mules a considerable distance from camp.”

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73 *Geronimo’s Story*, 74-5.
The Apache leader then tried to help those who were injured in the drunken fights. “I found that only two were dangerously wounded. From the leg of one of these I cut an arrow head, and from the shoulder of another I withdrew a spear point.” After he had tended all the wounds, Geronimo stood watch alone until daylight. The next morning when the men were much more sober, the warriors loaded their wounded onto the pack mules and headed for their homes. But the next day, the war party captured a herd of cattle and drove them to their camps in Arizona. Even though the Apaches had mules to ride, they drove the cattle on foot, which was a difficult undertaking. When the warriors got home, they feasted on some of the mules, but they especially enjoyed the beef from the cattle. Geronimo admitted, “this was the first cattle we ever had.” They killed the cattle and dried the meat which they ate all winter. The warriors did not like mules, “We had little use for mules, and if we could not trade them for something of value, we killed them.”

On his next expedition, Geronimo took four warriors with him again into Mexico. The Apaches had always gone on foot before. “We were accustomed to fight on foot; besides we could more easily conceal ourselves when dismounted.” But this time they came mounted because they wanted to capture cattle and drive them back to their camp, and they returned successfully with about sixty of the animals. Geronimo led additional raids in the coming months and years. On one of these, he went with thirty men on a successful foray and claimed, “we had killed about fifty Mexicans,” while successfully capturing all the horses, mules, and cattle that they wanted.76

The warriors often showed great skill in outsmarting their adversaries. On one occasion, the Mexicans surprised the Apaches by taking all their horses and mules. The warriors had not made any raids into Mexico yet that season, and the attack caught them unprepared. “It was useless to try to overtake them on foot, and our tribe had not a

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74 Geronimo’s Story, 75-7.
75 Geronimo’s Story, 77-8.
76 Geronimo’s Story, 80-1.
horse left.” Yet Geronimo refused to give up, so he took twenty men and followed the Mexicans as they retreated. Finally, the war party got close to the horses at a cattle ranch and attacked the men tending the herd, and they killed two of the cowboys (vaqueros). The warriors then retrieved their horses.

As a wise precaution, Geronimo and three other men stayed in the rear just in case they were followed. This group saw that they were trailed by nine of the cowboys, and they watched when the vaqueros made camp for the night and tied up their horses. “About midnight we stole into their camp and silently led away all their horses, leaving the cowboys asleep.” The warriors then hurried to catch up with their companions who always traveled at night. The Apaches celebrated when the raiding party returned to their main camp in Arizona days later. “It was considered a good trick to get the Mexicans’ horses and leave them asleep in the mountains.”

First Confrontations with the Americans

While the white population of the territories of New Mexico and Arizona grew dramatically over the decades, the Americans slowly moved into the lands where most of the Apaches lived. This changed significantly in the late 1850s. Starting on September 16, 1858, the Butterfield Overland Mail company ran from St. Louis to San Francisco on a trail through southern Arizona and New Mexico. The company soon had one hundred and seventy stage stations including Apache Pass Station in the heart of Indian country. While the Americans knew of the frequent Apache raids into Mexico, they had suffered little from the hands of the warring Indians. That was about to change dramatically.

Geronimo had keen insight into the nature of disagreements and misunderstandings between the Apaches and the Americans.

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77 Geronimo’s Story, 84-5.
78 Debo, 56.
79 Debo, 56, 67.
“From the very first, the soldiers sent out to our western country, and the officers in charge of them, did not hesitate to wrong the Indians. They never explained to the Government when an Indian was wronged, but always reported the misdeeds of the Indians. Much of that was done by mean white men reported at Washington as the deeds of my people.”

The great warrior’s change in his opinion of the white men was very understandable especially in view of General James Henry Carlton’s attitude and policy relating to the Indians. When he arrived with the California Contingent in 1862, he issued orders to his troops to kill Indian men wherever and whenever they could be found. He stated, “You have been sent to punish them [the Indians] for their treachery and their crimes.” According to him, no other policy was possible, and he also affirmed, “You have no power to make peace.”

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80 Geronimo’s Story, 116.
81 Debo, 68.
was the murder of the great Apache leader, Mangas Coloradas, that led to greater hostilities with the Americans.

Mangas Coloradas was the highly esteemed leader of the Mimbreno Apaches. One witness, Clark Stocking, observed. “Mangas was the most magnificent specimen of savage manhood that I have ever seen. He was six foot five inches of stature, erect, and haughty of pose, with a grimly severe expression of countenance, rigid as a face cut out of stone.”82 In the winter of 1862-3, the experienced mountain man, Joseph Reddford Walker, was traveling through New Mexico with a group of men on their way west. They were afraid of the Indians, and they thought they could secure a safe passage by capturing Mangas

Coloradas and holding him as hostage. Presumably, they would then release the chief after they left the area. These men soon met troops from the California Column of soldiers under the command of General Joseph Rodman West who cooperated with them in the scheme.

Early in the morning of January 16, 1863, this band of civilians and soldiers came to Pinos Altos, New Mexico, and raised a white flag meaning that they wanted to negotiate with the nearby Indians to make peace. Mangas Coloradas was then in a conference with the other prominent leaders, Victorio and Nana, who urged him not to speak with the whites. But Mangas Coloradas was about seventy years old. He had seen much bloodshed, and was tired of war that brought such misery to his people. He felt that the Americans had never really deceived him, and he obviously had faith in Jack Swilling who was with the whites.83

Before noon on January 17, 1863, Mangus and a bodyguard of more than twelve warriors came to the Americans, and Swilling came to meet him. Daniel Ellis Conner said that Swilling was a tall man at six feet, but he “looked like a small boy beside Mangas.” The two men spoke in broken Spanish, and Swilling convinced the chief that any resistance would mean that he and the warriors with him would be killed. Mangas told his followers to leave saying to them, “Tell my people to look for me when they see me!”84

General West accosted Mangus and told him that he had “murdered your last white victim, you scoundrel.” The great chief protested his innocence and stated all the fighting the Apaches had done was in self defense. “We were attacked by the white man who came digging up my hills for the yellow iron [gold].” West then told Mangas that the troops would kill him if he attempted to escape. The General told his men what he wanted done with “that old murderer.” In a direct order, he made his wishes clear, “Do you understand? I want him dead.”85

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83 Sweeney, Mangas Coloradas, 448.
84 Conner in Sweeney, Mangas Coloradas, 450.
85 Sweeney, Mangas Coloradas, 454-5.
The night of January 18, 1863, was a “cold and disagreeable night.” Despite the cold, the only fire that remained lit was the one that the soldiers guarding Mangas kept burning. The troopers began to torment the chief after midnight. “They were engaged in heating their fixed bayonets in the fire and putting them to the feet and naked legs of Mangas.” Apparently, the soldiers were trying to goad their prisoner into making an escape, so they would have an excuse to kill him, but the chief did not give them the opportunity. The sadistic torture continued until about 1:00 a.m. when the chief grew furious with his tormentors. He raised himself onto his elbow and “in a vigorous way,” told the “sentinels in Spanish that he was no child to be playing with.” These were the last words he ever spoke because two of his guards fired their muskets at the same time. The bullets went through his body and Mangas fell back. To make sure he was dead, another soldier fired a shot into the chief’s head.\textsuperscript{86} In his official report of the incident, General West reported, in a typical lie, that Mangas was shot while attempting to escape and that no blame should be placed on him or his men, and the soldiers who shot him were not punished in any way for committing murder. They had just fulfilled the wishes of their commander.\textsuperscript{87}

To further humiliate the dead chief and to mock his culture, the white men desecrated his body. The men cut off Mangas’s head and “boiled it in a great black pot” to remove all the flesh. They then sent the skull to be examined by a phrenologist who decided he had a bigger brain size than Daniel Webster, the great American politician. Later, it was used as a lecture exhibit to satisfy the curiosity of sadistic white people.\textsuperscript{88}

Perhaps the worse consequence of the chief’s murder was the lasting distrust and fear that the Apaches held against Americans for decades to come.\textsuperscript{89} The Apache, James Kaywaykla, stated that the

\textsuperscript{86} Conner in Sweeney, *Mangas Coloradas*, 455 and 457.
\textsuperscript{87} Sweeney, *Mangas Coloradas*, 458.
\textsuperscript{88} Debo, 69.
murder of Mangas was “an incomprehensible act, but infinitely worse was the mutilation of his body.” Because “most Apaches believed that the body will go through eternity in the condition in which it leaves the earth, and for that reason they abhor mutilation.” Geronimo was equally furious about the murder of Mangas, and how the chief’s body was desecrated. He described these incidents as “perhaps the greatest wrong ever done to the Indians was the treatment received by our tribe from the United States troops about 1863.”

Before they learned of Mangas Coloradas’ murder, the man’s family and other Apaches waited for word of the conference, hoping that negotiations would lead to peace. Any such hopes were dashed in a few days when American soldiers attacked their camp killing eleven or twelve of them. Reportedly, “their scalps were afterwards worn as ornaments upon the bridles of the soldiers.” Geronimo reported, “We gave almost all of our arms and ammunition to the party going” as a body guard with Mangas, “so that in case there should be treachery, they would be prepared for any surprise.”

When Geronimo learned of the death of the Apaches from the soldiers’ attack, he and others were afraid for their safety, but they also started to take quick revenge. “Fearing that the troops . . . would attack us, we retreated into the mountains near Apache Pass.” “On this retreat, . . . we discovered four men with a herd of cattle.” “We killed all four, . . . drove [their] cattle back into the mountains, made a camp and began to kill the cattle and pack the meat.” Before they had completed this task, soldiers discovered and attacked them, killing at least one warrior, three women, and three children. The survivors fled in different directions, but they met again at an appointed location about fifty miles away. The American troops pursued them relentlessly, and attacked them again ten days later. After another retreat of four miles, the army found them yet again, and they were forced to scatter yet
again. Geronimo had learned what peace efforts with the Americans frequently meant because the soldiers would pursue them and kill them whenever possible.

**US Indian Policy and Reservations**

After the end of the Civil War in 1865, more settlers took advantage of the peaceful situation to migrate into Arizona and New Mexico. The discovery of more silver in the area in 1866 meant that towns began springing up in numerous locations. These increased numbers included miners, ranchers, and businessmen, and there was increased traffic on the trails to and from these towns. All of these new settlers demanded that the government protect them from hostile Indians.

In 1871, the federal government came out with its Peace Policy under which the Indians would be given a place to live and be taught some kind of occupations, so they would no longer need to raid and plunder. “The Apaches of Arizona and New Mexico [were to be] placed upon reservations, furnishing them with subsistence and other necessary articles, and to promote peace and civilization among them.” That way the Indians would remain on “reservations and refrain from hostilities.” When this formula for peace was derived, no one thought to ask the Apaches what they thought of it.

Perhaps even more ominous was the fact that General George Crook also first came to the area in 1871. Often known as among the most effective and resourceful Indian fighters in the history of the American Army, yet Crook was also famous for carrying out the brutal and often unwise policies of the federal government. The General soon formed an opinion that the Apaches were “vermin to be exterminated.” But Crook was resourceful and soon developed strategies and tactics that would prove to be effective. He discarded the slow and

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94 Geronimo’s Story, 121-4.
95 Debo, 79-80.
96 US Statutes as cited in Debo, 80-1.
97 Debo, 81.
unwieldy practice of supplying his troops on the march with the use of wagons, and replaced them with the more mobile pack animals. Additionally, he employed Apache scouts, “the wilder the better,” to help him find the other warriors of their own nation.\textsuperscript{98}

On February 7, 1872, General Crook ordered all Apaches to be on reservations within nine days or be considered hostile. His notice was premature because the reservations of San Carlos and White Mountain were only established by executive order of the President of the United States on December 14, 1872.\textsuperscript{99} To convince the Apaches to move to the non-existent reservations, Crook went on the offensive starting on November 15, 1872, and continuing throughout the entire winter. His Apache scouts were most helpful in the army’s attempt to locate the warriors and to convince them to come to the reservations.

\begin{footnotes}  
\item[99] Thrapp, \textit{The Conquest of Apacheria}, 106-7, 111.  
\end{footnotes}
By the following spring, the defeated Indians had settled on the reservations. There were many challenges on the reservations. Some Indian agents cheated the Indians on the quality and quantity of food and sold some of it illegally to miners nearby. Some businessmen also wanted to stir up the Apaches against the white Americans, so they could get lucrative contracts to supply the army. While these problems remained, the situation improved when John Philip Clum came as the Indian agent to the San Carlos Reservation on August 8, 1874. He was described as “honorable, able, and efficient.”

Furthermore, Clum liked the Apaches and looked after their needs. He even counted the warriors on a regular basis, which gave them an alibi when they were accused of staging any raids. He made sure that the weekly ration of “three hundred pounds of beef, fifty pounds of flour, eight pounds of sugar, four pounds of coffee, one pound of salt, and two bars of soap” were handed out faithfully to each one hundred Indians. Additionally, Clum encouraged the Apaches to be industrious, and he noticed they were very good at raising livestock. At the start of 1875, the relations with the Indians were as good as they had been any time since 1860, but the situation was about to change dramatically.

In that same year of 1875, the federal government began its concentration policy of bringing together different Indian groups onto the same reservation. This policy was “cruel and stupid uprooting of barely tame hostiles, so recently guaranteed a settled homeland ‘forever,’ was to bring about eleven more years of Apache wars with the most arduous military campaigns in American history, the death of hundreds of civilians in the United States and Mexico, and the damage and suffering without reckoning to the Apaches.”

The government agents said that moving the various Indian groups together would make more sense economically, but the reason

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100 Thrapp, The Conquest of Apacheria, 106-7, 111.
101 Debo, 92-3.
102 Debo, 93.
103 Debo, 94.
was clearly to steal the land from the Apaches. The areas from which the Indians were removed were quickly restored to the public domain, so they could be purchased or taken by any interested American. The United States government has continually cheated the Indians. Almost every Indian reservation has two factors in common. They are located in the most dry and desolate areas to be found, and no white man wants it.

Captain James G. Bourke was an aid to General Crook, and the young officer saw much to admire in the work the Apaches had done when they were stationed at Verde Valley of Arizona. The Indians had dug an irrigation ditch five miles long that was four feet wide and three feet deep. They had planted fifty-seven acres of melons and vegetables, and they were prepared to plant large areas of corn and barley. “The prospects of the Apaches looked especially bright, and there was hope that they soon would be self-sustaining.” The orders to have them removed to the San Carlos reservation was “an outrageous proceeding” that Bourke believed was a severe embarrassment.

On February 27, 1875, the first tribes of Apaches left for their new homes at San Carlos. While some of the various groups of Apaches were friends and long had cooperated with each other, others felt animosity and hatred. Some of these groups fought each other on the long trek and several Indians were killed. By the end of the year, some 4,200 Indians were on the reservation, and many were from tribes hostile to each other.

The Indian agent, John P. Clum, told Geronimo to meet him in a conference early in June 1875. The agent told the warrior that he would have to come to the reservation, and Geronimo said he had to retrieve his people who were about twenty miles away. When Geronimo reached the camp, he gave orders that the people kill all their dogs to keep them from barking or making noise. They then fled into the Sierra Madre mountains of Mexico. This was Geronimo’s first break out from

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104 Debo, 95.
106 Debo, 96-7.
American control. Before Geronimo and his band came again to the reservation, the Apaches had killed an estimated twenty people.  

Clum always blamed Geronimo for any problems with the Indian warriors including all of their raids. The agent believed in a simple solution to the Apache problem, kill Geronimo. Clum often wrote “If Geronimo had been hanged.” This opinion was also held by many other Americans in the area, and Geronimo was made an arch villain. This fame or infamy was out of proportion to the warrior’s raids, but Clum had managed to make Geronimo the personification of all the Indian’s misdeeds.

When Geronimo was seen with a large number of horses, Clum assumed that the warrior had obtained them on a raid, and the Indian agent ordered his arrest. On April 21, 1877, Clum sent word to Gerono-

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107 Debo, 98-9.
imo, and five or six of his followers to come to a conference, and the Indian agreed. Fearing no trouble, many of his men brought their families with them. When these men arrived, Clum accused them of killing white men and stealing cattle. He further stated, “We are going to San Carlos [Reservation] with you, and unless you are very careful. . . . Your bodies will stay here . . . to make food for the coyotes.”

Clum gave a prearranged signal, and the agency police ran out to surround the warriors. Geronimo and his men realized that they could be caught in a crossfire, but a brave unnamed Apache woman kept the police from opening fire. She ran to the chief of police and threw her arms around his shoulders and neck thus pulling his gun down, and he was unable to fire it. The courageous woman had prevented a bloody encounter. By the time he pushed her aside and was able to raise his weapon again, his men had maneuvered to cut off any means of escape. Geronimo and his men surrendered without further incident.

The great warrior reported that the “scouts took me to the guardhouse [blacksmith shop] and put me in chains.” The shackles of this era were typically large and heavy. They could only be placed on a prisoner by the use of hot iron, and their use was very painful and inconvenient. Geronimo said “I was kept as a prisoner four months, during which time I was transferred to San Carlos” for trial. He believed there was some kind of litigation against him, but he was not allowed to attend. The warrior stated that it was “unjust imprisonment which might easily have been death to me.” Geronimo had read the situation well because Clum believed that many lives would have been saved if his arrest “had been swiftly followed by prosecution, conviction, and execution.” Much of Geronimo’s motivation in making war included suspicion and fear.

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109 Debo, 105.
110 Debo, 106; Utley, 91; and Edwin R. Sweeney, *From Cochise to Geronimo: the Chiricahua Apaches, 1874-1886* (Norman, Ok: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 2010), 83; hereafter cited as Sweeney, *Geronimo*.
111 Geronimo’s Story, 131-3.
112 Debo, 111.
No one wanted to take responsibility for the prisoner, and even the local sheriff denied he had jurisdiction. When Clum left the agency, he was replaced by Henry Lyman Hart who mercifully removed the chains from Geronimo and let him go. This was much to Clum’s chagrin, and he stated the warrior had already killed at least one hundred people. He further stated that if Geronimo had been hanged at that time, an additional five hundred lives would have been spared and twelve million dollars would have been saved. His chains “never should have been removed, except to permit him to walk untrammeled to the scaffold [for execution].”

The Mestas Massacre

Geronimo believed that life on the reservation was too challenging, so he took his followers and tried to survive on the borders of the United States and Mexico, where he resumed his life of raiding in both countries. On April 16, 1882, a war party of Apaches approached a sheep camp where Victoriano Mestas was in charge. He had employed about ten Mexicans and a number of friendly Apaches to help control the herd. As a child, Mestas has been captured by the Apaches. He knew Geronimo well and thought he was still on friendly terms with the warrior. When Geronimo called out to the camp in the darkness before dawn on April 17, 1882, Mestas recognized his voice. Geronimo assured him, “It is me, Mestas; it is Geronimo. I have many men and they are hungry. We will not harm you for I am Geronimo, your friend.” Richard Bylas was one of the friendly Apaches with Mestas. He did not trust the warrior, and Bylas called back. “You lie, Geronimo, you want to kill us. Always, you are a liar.”

When Mestas was young, Geronimo and his group captured him, and the warrior reportedly treated the boy well by giving him a pony and a saddle as was often the case when Apaches took children.

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113 Debo, 114.
The boy later left the Indians and resumed to his former life as a Mexican, but Bylas reminded him that “was a long time ago,” and much had changed since then. Bylas continued his warning, “Don’t let them come for they will kill you.”

Mestas no doubt thought that he had a better chance if he treated Geronimo and his men well because that was better than risking a bloody encounter. At daybreak, he invited the Apaches to come in when Mestas’s wife fixed them a meal of tortillas and mutton. After the meal, Geronimo ordered his men to “disarm the herders and tied their hands behind their backs.” Then the war leader ordered Mestas to take off his shirt, which was “a Mexican shirt with fine embroidery,” because Geronimo did not want to get any blood on it. He would later wear the shirt proudly back on the reservation. Then, he had his men tie up Mestas, his wife, and children. Bylas confronted Geronimo again, “Why do you want to kill these people after they have fed you and you promised to harm no one?”

The warriors argued with Geronimo about the fate of the other captives. One of his men, Chatto, asked why the captives should be killed “when you promised to do them no harm? We would have lost many men if we tried to attack this camp.” These arguments made Geronimo hesitate, but then another warrior, Chihuahua, stated, “These people are Mexicans and they are our enemies. Always the Mexicans have lied to us and killed our people.” Geronimo ordered the tied captives to be shot to death. The bullets flew so fast, and the aim of the warriors was so poor, that Geronimo was nearly hit in the volley.

Since Richard Bylas was an Apache, he had not been executed with the others, but Geronimo wanted him killed as well. Bylas was sitting next to another warrior, Naiche, a hereditary chief of the Chiricahua Apaches, and he refused to allow the murder. In a voice loud enough for Geronimo to hear, Naiche ordered his two nephews to kill Geronimo.

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114 Sweeney, Geronimo, 208; and Debo, 140.
115 Sweeney, Geronimo, 208.
116 Sweeney, Geronimo, 209.
him “if he says anything.” Geronimo then remained silent for a time, but other killings took place nearby.\footnote{Sweeney, \textit{Geronimo}, 209.}

Victoriano Mestas’s nine-year-old son, Stanislaus, was the only survivor of the massacre of his family, and he gave a vivid account of what happened. When Geronimo and his men threatened the sheep herders, “My father and five other men . . . attempted to get their guns, but they were too late.” The warriors had overwhelmed the defenders before a shot could be fired. Soon the killing began. “An Indian put the muzzle against the head of one of the men and fired, blowing his brains out.” No doubt much to the horror of the child, “I saw them kill my mother and two little brothers by beating their brains out with stones.” The attackers took the boy’s father and “tortured him most dreadfully.” When the unfortunate man begged that they spare him, “they only tortured him the more.” They finally tired of this activity and “split his head with an ax” to put the suffering man out of his misery.

The fortunate Stanislaus believed he was only saved because of the courage of an Apache woman, Bylas’s wife, “by holding me behind her and begging them to spare me.” The experience of seeing his family killed and narrowly escaping death was devastating for the young boy and after the ordeal, “the face of little Stanislaus is indicative of great suffering. Horror is depicted upon his every feature.”\footnote{Thrapp, \textit{Conquest of Apacheria}, 237-8.}

Yet there was more to Stanislaus’s rescue from death than the courage of the Apache woman, because other warriors came to his defense. When one of the warriors saw the boy behind the woman, he stated, “Here is one we missed.” Geronimo replied sharply, “Kill him too.” Jelikine was among those who had been sickened by the needless slaughter. He “was a Mexican who had been captured as a little boy and raised by the [Apaches],” and he refused to allow the boy to be murdered. He was a small man but was known for his bravery. He grabbed a spear, pointed it to Geronimo’s chest and said, “I am a warrior, Geronimo, always have I obeyed your orders. The people
you have killed today are my people but something—I think it is their God—has spared the little one’s life. Do not harm him or I will kill you, Geronimo.” The courageous Jelikine then turned to the entire band, “I will kill any man who harms the little boy. You are many. I am alone, but I will take many with me when I go.” No one wanted to put Jelikine’s threat to the test, and the boy was spared.119

The Apaches Flee into Mexico

Soon after the Mestas Massacre, Geronimo knew the US Army was in pursuit, and he took his men into the Sierra Madre mountains of Mexico to find safety and protection with the group led by Juh (Tandinbilnojui) who were already in that area. On important occasions, Geronimo contacted the Great Power and used the information he gathered to convince others to follow his leadership. At that time, Geronimo sang four songs, and his Power assured him that he should go to the San Carlos Reservation to find others to flee with him from the control of the US government and “all was going to be well on their way to San Carlos.”120

Geronimo and his war party were prepared to use force to get followers at San Carlos. Early on the morning of April 19, 1882, Jason Betzinez was asleep in the Apache camp, when he heard some leader yell out, “Take them all! No one is to be left in the camp. Shoot down anyone who refuses to go with us! Some of you men lead them out.” In great fear, “We did everything they told us to do. We were given no time to look for our horses and round them up, but were driven from our village on foot.” These people were about to face a harsh ordeal, which they had to face on foot. All they had with them were a few belongings they could easily grab, and they had no chance even to eat breakfast that morning.121

119 Sweeney, Geronimo, 209-10.
121 Betzinez, 56.
Lieutenant Colonel George Forsyth was in command of the 4th US Cavalry which included six companies of troopers numbering four hundred and fifty men, and he was ordered to apprehend the Apaches who had so recently left the reservation. On the morning of April 23, 1882, a detachment of Forsyth’s Apache scouts led by Lieutenant McDonald found the trail of a dozen warriors. The detachment followed the trail for several hours before the warriors ambushed them. The fire was so accurate that within minutes four of the six scouts were killed. After receiving a handful of reinforcements, McDonald and his tiny band dug in, and they sent a messenger to Forsyth for help. Arriving with the remainder of the command a few hours later, Forsyth prepared to counter attack at Horseshoe Canyon.122

The Apache, Betzinez, stated that when the soldiers were about a mile away from the Indian positions, the warriors “stripped off their shirts and prepared for action.” Apache warriors often went into battle nearly naked. Participation in battle was always voluntary for the Apaches, but few warriors would shrink from such duty for fear of ridicule for failing to protect their families. The warriors moved down “a deep U-shaped ravine,” which formed the canyon. The Indians were firing from the rim of the canyon, but “the soldiers fired ferocious volleys,” and wounded three of their adversaries.123

The battle was hotly contested, but the fire coordination deployed by the soldiers proved to be too much, and the warriors finally withdrew. Forsyth was pleased to report a victory, but only one Apache was known to have been killed, while the calvary commander lost two troopers dead and four wounded. In addition, four scouts had been killed in the initial engagement.124 Rather than pursuing his retreating adversaries, Forsyth turned away. This proved to be very unwise because the group of warriors with Geronimo continued their flight into Mexico, where they were soon to meet another American military force.125

122 Sweeney, Geronimo, 216.
123 Betzinez, 63.
125 Sweeney, Geronimo, 216-17.
In the afternoon of April 24, 1882, the Indians prepared to stage another all-night forced march that went through the night and into the next day. On the morning of April 26, after thirty-six hours of strenuous marching, the warriors crossed into Mexico and breathed a huge sigh of relief. Much to their surprise they had not seen any of the enemy since the engagement at Horseshoe Canyon, and they had believed they had not been pursued by the US Cavalry. They began to relax, realizing that the Americans were forbidden to cross the boundary line between the two countries and enter Mexico. The Apaches were tired from their long marches and decided to rest before they continued to Juh and the other Indians in the Sierra Madre Mountains. They rested, “under a grove of cottonwood trees,” where there was located “a fine spring and stream where we pitched our camp and intended to remain for several days.”

The Fight with Tupper’s Men

Unfortunately for the Apaches, they let down their guard feeling they were safe. The warriors were usually very careful in placing guards to watch for the approach of any possible enemies, but the Indians underestimated the pursuing American soldiers who continued to follow them into Mexico. The Indians “relaxed completely, . . . becoming careless in observance of safety precautions.” In addition, “For two days and nights we gave ourselves up to merriment and dancing.” This included the cooking of mescal, which was a plant with sweet sap in it. The Apaches considered it to be a big treat, and they had not enjoyed it for a long time because the plant would not grow on the reservation. These celebrations, and the cooking of the mescal, gave the US cavalry time to catch up with them and to attack.

The contingent of US troops were led by Captain Tullius C. Tupper, who had two companies of cavalry with thirty-nine soldiers.

126 Betzinez, 67.
127 Betzinez, 68.
and two companies of Apache scouts with another forty-five men under him. Albert Sieber was the chief of scouts. Born in Germany, Sieber is often considered to be one of the greatest and most effective scout in the US Army during the Indian wars. The moon was bright the night when Sieber and his men approached the village. One of them got close enough to estimate that the encampment included one hundred and fifteen warriors. This was an exaggeration unless the scout was including teenage boys in his calculation, but the Army leaders also had a good idea of the camp’s location and layout.128

Tupper divided his forces placing the soldiers on one side of the Indian camp and their scouts on the other side to block off any escape route into the mountains. If the plan worked, the Apache encampment would be caught in a deadly crossfire. The strategy depended on surprise, but the Apache scouts gave away their position before the battle started.129

Just before dawn, on April 28, 1882, three young Apache women and a young man, Frank Gooday, came to check on some mescal that was cooking in a pit. When this group walked within thirty feet of the scouts, the whites knew their discovery was imminent, so they opened fire. One of the women fell dead into the pit. The other woman ran for her life, but she was gunned down and killed as well.130

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129 Sweeney, Geronimo, 219.
One of the scouts, Sherman Curley, had wanted to capture the two girls, but the sergeant next to him wanted revenge. Curley said he should not, “shoot the girl, that we would catch her alive. But the ser-
geant with me shot her anyway and killed her.” Curley later tried to put this murder in perspective. “I think he did this because his brother, who was chief of police, got killed there . . . at [the] San Carlos” Reserva-
tion.\textsuperscript{131} Believing they had been discovered, the scouts wasted no time and opened fire, sending several volleys into the Indian encampment, which killed about six men and several women. Tupper, realizing that the battle had already began, led the cavalry in an attack on the vil-
lage.\textsuperscript{132}

The shock of the volleys and the army’s onslaught sent the Apaches fleeing. Some of them grabbed a few weapons and fled to a rocky hill where they hoped to make a stand. The Apache, Jason Betzi-
nez, was away from the camp searching for his mule when he heard the first sound of battle. “All at once, I heard a gun fired from the foothills east of the camp.” In his great excitement, he saw “a troop of cavalry galloping my way.” The frightened man ran back “as fast as my legs would carry me toward camp.” The scouts clearly fired at any targets that were available. “While we were running toward the hills several women and children were hit.”\textsuperscript{133}

Among the Apaches was the famous leader Loco whose son was killed early in the battle. He called to the Apache scouts with the US Army to defect to the other side. They answered by shooting at him, and he was slightly wounded in the ankle. Geronimo was again an inspiration to his men. As Sam Haozous related, “He holler [yelled] he call the men, his fighting men, so there is soldiers on the west side there; more soldiers on that side [with the Indian’s cattle] . . . then, on the east side Indian scouts.” Some young warriors followed his direc-
tions and tried to move closer to their adversaries.\textsuperscript{134}

\textsuperscript{131} Curley in Sweeney, \textit{Geronimo}, 220.
\textsuperscript{132} Sweeney, \textit{Geronimo}, 220.
\textsuperscript{133} Betzinex, 68-69.
\textsuperscript{134} Sweeney, \textit{Geronimo}, 221.
The battle progressed slowly at that point, and lasted almost the entire day. The troopers did not have enough men to charge the Indian positions, and both sides fired on the other at too great a distance to do much damage. In one pathetic scene, an old Apache woman sought an end to the fighting. She climbed to the top of the hill and called to her son, Toclanny, whom she mistakenly believed was with the army scouts. “In vain she called to him, telling him that we had been run off against our will by the hostiles from Mexico. But her son was not there; and she was shot and killed.”

The army and their scouts fired roughly four thousand rounds, but inflicted little damage on their adversaries. A careful examination of the battle later revealed the Apaches suffered the loss of about twelve men and several women.

The Indians held out all day, and finally withdrew after nightfall. That night they practically had nothing at all except the clothes on their backs, and were still in a pitiful condition because they had lost all their mounts. “We were now on foot again, the soldiers having captured all our horses and mules.” Despite the fact that some of the warriors had been able to retrieve “a few horses,” almost all the people had to continue the march on foot. By the early morning, they were nearly exhausted, when they soon would need to face an ambush by the Mexican troops.

The Fight at Alisos Creek: Geronimo’s Greatest Battle

The Apaches prepared as best they could for an all-night march. They drank water from a spring and ate what little food they had. Fortunately for the wounded, some of the warriors had recaptured a few horses, so the animals could carry the badly injured. One woman had been shot in the ankle and was carried for a distance on “a stretcher made of reeds,” but “the animal bucked her off,” and “they finally had

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135 Betzinez, 70.
137 Betzinez, 70.
to abandon her.” Additionally, “we were traveling very slowly on account of being mostly on foot and nearly exhausted.”

To ward off any possible attack by the cavalry, Geronimo placed most of the warriors at the rear of the people on the march. This was unfortunate because the greatest threat came not from the Americans but from the Mexicans troops under the command of Colonel Lorenzo García who were waiting in ambush for them at Alisos Creek. It was very unusual for the Apaches’ adversaries to know their line of march so that they could stage an ambush for them. Two warriors might have given Garcia information on where the Apaches were planning to go. “Here two of them, Go-ya-hn and Gi-naszi-hn, stole four good horses from some cowboys at a ranch” and were captured. The Mexicans tortured the warriors until they gave the required information and then killed them.

Colonel García led about two hundred soldiers who took up positions near Alisos Creek and awaited the approach of the Apaches. At dawn on April 29,1882, about fifteen warriors in advance of the Indians’ main column rode past the Mexicans’ position. But García wanted to launch his attack on the main force, largely of women and children, so he allowed the first group to pass unmolested. The Mexicans then opened fire on the unsuspecting Indians with deadly effect. “We were suddenly attacked by Mexican soldiers who came at us out of the ravine where they had been concealed.” The troops then closed in to do more damage on their adversaries. “Almost immediately Mexicans were right among us all, shooting down women and children right and left.” A few of the warriors tried to protect the women and children while everyone who could ran for cover. “It was a dreadful, pitiful sight, . . . people were falling and bleeding and dying, on all sides of us.” The attack was so ferocious that “whole families were slaughtered on the spot, wholly unable to defend themselves.”

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140 Betzinez, 72.
When the Mexicans rushed onto the Apaches, some of the fighting was hand to hand, and several warriors were killed because they had little skill in dealing with the troops’ use of the bayonet on their rifles. After the battle, the Mexicans found twenty-one bodies along a creek bottom nearby. Some of the women and children fled to a gully about a mile away where they tried to defend themselves, but they could do little, and the Mexicans found nine Indian bodies there after the battle. One Apache, later known as James Nicholas, had been walking at the rear when he heard the first rifle shots and realized they were under attack. Women were shrieking and crying, and he heard someone yell, “Go back,” so he ran for cover. Luckily, he was near one of the few horses that was with the group, and he held onto the animal’s tail which allowed him to run faster. People were being shot down all around him, but he was saved by a number of warriors who took action. Geronimo and others stood their ground which stopped the Mexican attack, and this action may have saved the entire band from annihilation.141

As Jason Betzinez ran away from the Mexicans with his mother, he “heard Geronimo behind us, calling the men to gather around him and make a stand to protect the women and children.” Betzinez learned later that thirty-three warriors gathered with Geronimo “around whom some women and children assembled for protection.” These men held off the Mexicans while “the few women with them dug a big hole in the dry creek bed. Here they made their stand in this rifle pit in the center of which a little water, mixed with blood from the wounded, seeped in so they could quench their thirst.” To improve their position, “the women also dug holes for other warriors in the bank of the little arroyo [gully], around the center strong point.” This made a good defensive position from which the warriors could fire on the Mexicans any time they showed themselves.142

141 Sweeney, Geronimo, 224.
142 Betzinez, 72-3.
The warriors had to have sufficient ammunition to keep up the fight, but they were soon running low. They had to have a large bag of five hundred cartridges that “some exhausted runner had dropped while fleeing.” So “an old Apache woman” volunteered to go out and get it. The woman was under fire, and bullets struck near her, but she “successfully brought in that bag of ammunition just as the men were running short.” Betzinez added clearly with great pride. “Not all heroes are warriors!”

Kaywaykla gave further information on the retrieval of the ammunition. Loco had been carrying the cartridges, but he dropped them when he fled to the ravine. When the Mexicans charged on foot, the old woman “climbed over the bank and ran, knife in hand, to cut the bag from the packsaddle.” But the ammunition was too heavy for her to carry, so she was forced to drag it slowly toward the gully. No doubt, she made an easy target, but Fun, whose Apache name was Yahe-chul, “smoke comes out” or “shoots rapidly,” distracted much of the soldiers’ fire. He ran out and fired his Springfield rifle as rapidly as possible. This was an impressive feat because the Springfield was a single-shot gun. “With cartridges between his fingers he fired and loaded, fired and loaded, all the time zigzagging back and forth amid a shower of bullets.” The fire on the old woman was heavy and bullets “whistled about her, but she never faltered.” The “desperate woman” was “unable to make the remaining two or three steps” before “she fell, with her feet toward the ditch and was dragged to safety with the precious supply of bullets.”

The courageous old woman was not the only female to aid in the defense of the ravine. During the battle, “the women distributed ammunition and loaded rifles.” They were also involved in firing at the enemy because “women, too, used rifles.” Apparently, the Apaches rarely took women with them on raids, yet women were often directly involved in combat to defend camps.

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143 Betzinez, 73-4.
144 Kaywaykla in Ball, 41.
145 Kaywaykla in Ball, 43.
146 Bell, [43].
Sometimes, the Mexican soldiers were close enough that the Apaches could hear them. “Every now and again they would blow a bugle and a commander would say, ‘Go in there and get Geronimo!’” Some of the Indians could understand Spanish, and they would warn the others of an impending attack. “They are coming again. Get ready for them.” At other times, the Mexicans would yell to their enemies, “Adios! Adios!” meaning roughly goodbye forever.147

As the battle progressed, Fun kept up his courageous if not foolish activities, and the Apaches long remembered him as the hero of the battle. He was so bold that he was “the man who saved Geronimo.” At only age sixteen, his feats appeared even more remarkable. Fun kept running back and forth firing his rifle with deadly accuracy. “On level ground the Apaches would zigzag and shoot fast, for they can move and shoot very quickly.” Additionally, “If he was going forward toward the enemy, he goes sideways so he isn’t so big a target.” Fun took so many chances that his survival appeared to be an act of Providence. “We know there is a God who can protect us even against a thousand and if you have sufficient faith, you can be saved.”148

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147 Kaywaykla in Ball, 38.
148 Kaywaykla in Ball, 39.
Another warrior, Chihuahua, soon joined Fun in exposing himself courageously to the enemy fire. The brave warrior “lay on his side firing at the Mexicans. The bullets came so close they pitted his chest by throwing gravel against him.” He was so marked up that he looked like he had caught smallpox. Chihuahua’s son, Eugene Chihuahua, stated that Fun and Chihuahua were “doing all the fighting.” He added with disgust that “Geronimo was in a cave with the children,” and Fun told him to get out or “he would shoot him.”

Eugene Chihuahua’s criticism of Geronimo’s courage was most unfair. The leader may well have taken cover for a while to protect the children, but he still did much good work in battle. Geronimo ordered his men to identify and to fire on the enemy’s officers, clearly understanding that the best way to disorganize the soldiers was to remove their leadership. The Apache leader saw a ditch that ran near to the Mexicans’ position, and he crawled along it to get a better understanding of what they were going to do. He could hear what the leader was saying because the “wind was blowing in my direction,” and he understood Spanish very well. As best as Geronimo could recall, the Mexican leader said, “Officers, yonder in those ditches is the red devil

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149 Eugene Chihuahua in Ball, 39.
Geronimo and his hated band. This must be his last day. Ride on him from both sides of the ditches; kill men women and children; take no prisoners; dead Indians are what we want.”

The soldiers then staged another large attack. As the Mexicans charged, they screamed, “Geronimo, this is your last day.” The leader of the attack was Captain Antonio Rada, but the advance was met by heavy fire from the warriors. The soldiers came close to the Apache position until Geronimo shot and killed Rada, an action which ended the assault. In the heat of the battle, one warrior, whose name is unknown, aimed carefully and shot and killed five Mexicans, each of them receiving a bullet in the head. Realizing the threat from this marksman, Garcia ordered his men to direct their fire on the warrior’s location. Their shooting appeared to be effective, and the Apache was silenced forever. This group of soldiers was forced to retreat having suffered nine dead from the attacking force of twenty-five men.

Late in the day, the Apaches became exhausted from the battle, and they were running low on ammunition. Fearing the worse, Geronimo made a desperate suggestion. “Let’s us men make a break. We could if we leave the women and children.” The proposal was so shocking that Fun confronted the leader, “Geronimo, if you say that again, I am going to shoot you down right here.” But Geromimo was not the only warrior to make such an extreme proposal as the battle wore on.

Near the end of the conflict, the Mexicans set the brush on fire in an attempt to smoke out the Apaches. The situation became serious when the flames were in a circle, and the fire came closer and closer to the Indians. The men believed that they could escape if the children made no noise. “The warriors asked the consent of the few women who were there to let them choke the small children so that they wouldn’t give away their movements by crying.” This was an idea that was more than an errant thought because it had already occurred to some

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152 Kaywaykla in Ball, 41.
153 Betzinez, 74.
of the Apache women. One eyewitness, Sam Haozous, stated that one woman smothered her child since she did not “want her baby to be a slave for those Mexicans.” Many more could have been killed, but Haozous stated that Geronimo got the warriors to keep the mothers from killing their babies in a “wholesale slaughter.”

Fortunately for the Apaches, the battle ended after sundown, and they were able to escape from the Mexicans in the darkness. “They all crawled through the fire and got away without being seen.”

The situation was awful as the Indians mourned their losses. “All during the night in our camp on the cold mountainside we could hear people mourning and wailing for their relative who had been killed or captured.” Their condition was challenging because “there was no help for the wounded, no food, nor any chance of getting reinforcements.”

Indeed both the Apache and Mexican losses were heavy. According to the most reliable sources available, the Indians had lost seventy-eight people, but only about a dozen of this number are believed to have been warriors, and the rest were women and children. In addition, the Mexicans reportedly had also captured thirty-three women and children. They had also taken fifty-eight horses and mules, no doubt leaving even more Apaches on foot. In contrast, Garcia’s forces had lost four officers including one man who died four months later from wounds received in battle. An additional nineteen soldiers had been killed. According to the official report, perhaps an additional officer and fifteen men were wounded. Of this number, six were considered to be seriously hurt. Yet this may be a low count because an eyewitness stated that there were thirty to forty men wounded in all.

The fate of the captive women and children was pitiful. The children were given as slaves to the mayor and prominent citizens of Bavispe, Mexico. The women were treated worse when they were taken to Guaymas on the west coast of Mexico on the Gulf of California.

154 Sweeney, Geronimo, 227.
155 Betzinez, 73.
156 Betzinez, 74.
157 Forsyth, 118-19; and Sweeney, Geronimo, 228.
where they were sold as slaves. The young women faced a life of prostitution, or if they were more fortunate, served as a mistress of a rich Mexican.\textsuperscript{158}

**The Annihilation of Juan Mata Ortiz’s Men**

In the fall of 1882, Geronimo and his men showed remarkable tactical flexibility in araid on the ranch of the Mexican, Juan Mata Ortiz. The Apache warriors knew of the man’s reputation as an Indian fighter. They also knew where he lived, and Geronimo was instrumental in planning the attack. On the morning of November 12, 1882, the Apaches struck at Mata Ortiz’s ranch. They killed one of his *vaqueros* (livestock herders) and took many cattle. In his desire to take quick revenge, Mata Ortiz decided not to wait for reinforcements and to pursue the Apaches quickly.\textsuperscript{159}

On the following day, November 13, 1882, the famous Indian fighter led a group of twenty-one men from the nearby town of Galena. When the Mexicans approached the mouth of the notorious Chocolate Pass, Mata Ortiz hesitated even though the Indian trail was fresh, and he realized the possibility of a trap. He assembled his men to him and gave them the offer. “If anyone has any misgivings about going on, they should return to the petticoats of their women,” clearly indicating they were cowards. Rather than face this insult, many of the men met his words with a battle cry, saying that they were willing to risk death by advancing, not realizing that a huge war party was waiting for them.\textsuperscript{160}

The Apache mode of making war was heavily influenced by their culture. While the Plains Indians often used decoys to lure their enemies into an ambush, the Apaches seldom used this tactic preferring to wait until their adversaries passed and then attacked. Yet the war-

\textsuperscript{158} Hutton, *Apache Wars*, 302.

\textsuperscript{159} Sweeney, *Geronimo*, 251-2.

\textsuperscript{160} Sweeney, *Geronimo*, 252.
The Apache Wars and the Swiss Sergeant, John Spring

The Apaches had bated the trap by the use of a fresh trail and had great success in luring Mata Ortiz and his men where they could be easily attacked. Geronimo and the other leaders stationed one group of warriors hidden in a ravine to engage the Mexicans first and drive them against another group. The trap was well laid, but then the Mexicans did not respond as planned. After they lost several men and many horses to the initial volleys, they did not run into the second group, but instead retreated to a high hill “where they hastily began piling up loose rocks to form a breastwork.”

The Indians crept close to the hill near a single cedar tree, and the warriors advanced up the slope. “For protection against the Mexican bullets, each Indian rolled ahead of himself a round rock about the size of his head.” One of the warriors, Bonito, came forward and said he would lead a group of eight men, “who always fought together” to circle behind Mata Ortiz’s positions and strike them from the rear. The older men with Geronimo, including the best marksmen, stayed by the cedar tree to distract the enemy during the circling maneuver, while some of them continued to advance by pushing boulders in front

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161 Betzinez, 94.
of them. Finally, the warriors were within a few feet of the crest of the hill.  

As he approached the top of the hill, Bonito turned to see how well his men were advancing, and he saw She-neah “raise up to fire through an opening between two rocks. As he did so, a Mexican bullet struck [him] on top of the head making a furrow from front to rear in his scalp and skull.” The man died later from this wound. At this sight, Bonito became so angry, “that he screamed the order for the final attack. The men jumped up and went right in among the Mexicans.” The two groups of warriors rushed the top of the hill at the same time. “In the brief hand-to-hand fight that followed, all Mexicans but one were killed.” The lone survivor fled toward Galeana. The warriors could have easily caught and killed him, but Geronimo yelled, “Let him go! He will tell the rest of the soldiers in the town what has happened, whereupon more Mexicans will come out to the rescue. In that way we can destroy other soldiers.”

The great warrior was right because the Mexicans soon sent out another force, but the situation did not turn out the way Geronimo had planned. When the soldiers stopped about one mile away and started to dig in for defense, Geronimo became content with the great victory they had already achieved, and he withdrew stating, “Let’s go back to see how the women and children are getting along.” The Apaches had lost two men in the fight, so they staged no great celebration even though they had accomplished much. All the Mexicans could do was mourn their losses. After the battle, they found Mata Ortiz’s body which had been “horribly mutilated and partially burned” leading many of them to believe that the Apaches had “burned him at the stake.” His harsh treatment may be somewhat explained by the fact that the Indians believed he was involved in the fight that killed Victorio, one of their great leaders, in 1880.
Geronimo Meets General Crook

After the destruction of Mata Ortiz and his men, Geronimo and his followers again retreated into the Sierra Madre Mountains of Mexico where they stayed for the next six months. The terrain was so steep and rugged that the Mexicans realized it provided extensive defensive locations for the warriors and refused to attack them in those places. The Indians finally came down to raid again in December of 1882 and January 1883 when they were in need of food and ammunition. Geronimo and his men were doing relatively well, but they were soon joined by other Apache refugees who were suffering from shortages and also sought food, refuge, and shelter from Geronimo, by then a famous and highly respected leader. The pressure on the Apaches was soon to increase when George Crook led the US Army into the Sierra Madre Mountains to get Geronimo to surrender and return to the reservation.166

General George Crook was one of the most experienced and successful Indian fighters in the US Army. Starting in 1852, he had a stellar career fighting Indians which was only interrupted by his impressive service in the Civil War from 1861 to 1865. By 1883, he had led forces in no fewer than five major Indian wars and had participated in seven major battles with the Native Peoples.167 Long experience had taught Crook how to track and apprehend the Indians, and he said that catching Apaches “must be done through their own people.” Clearly, no white tracker had the stamina and skill to pursue renegade Indians, and he requested that the number of Apache scouts employed by the army be increased from 125 to 250.168

Before Crook could lead an American Army into Mexico, he

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166 Sweeney, *Geronimo*, 283-5.
had to meet a number of requirements. He had to attack in retaliation for a raid, and he had to have some idea of the Apaches’ location from a reliable guide. He also had to obtain permission from his superiors and from the Mexican officials. The two governments had made an agreement that allowed a “hot” pursuit of the Indians, which was hard to argue because Crook was planning an extensive campaign before any warriors struck American lands. Despite these difficulties, the Mexicans were more than willing to receive help against the Apaches, and permission was granted. Additionally, there was fear that Crook’s Indian scouts could be confused with the enemy, so he required them to wear red headbands or bandanas to tell the two groups apart.169

Crook believed so strongly in the fighting and tracking abilities of his Apache scouts that he took 193 of them with his expedition into Mexico. In comparison, he only took 42 troopers and 76 citizen packers with him to look after the 266 pack mules. This detachment entered Mexico on May 1, 1883. By May 11, Crook knew they were getting near the enemy as the scouts were seeing many fresh signs of their adversaries. The scouts were looking forward to do battle against Geronimo and his followers, whom they thought “ought to be put to death anyhow, as they would be all the time raising trouble.” Their commander was concerned about a general massacre, and Crook admonished them to spare women, children, and any man who had surrendered. About 151 men, including 143 scouts, separated from the others and went ahead, hoping to move faster than the mules and to close with the renegade Apaches more successfully.170

Geronimo’s skill as a warrior and as a leader of men was clearly demonstrated on numerous occasions, but his power from some kind of spiritual source also showed his leadership qualities. On May 15, 1883, Jason Betzinez witnessed one of the most remarkable episodes of Geronimo seeing what no one could see and foretell the future. “We were sitting

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169 Sweeney, *Geronimo*, 300-1.
there eating. Geronimo was sitting next to me with knife in one hand and a chuck of beef which I had cooked for him in the other. All at once he dropped the knife, saying ‘Men, our people whom we left at our base camp are now in the hands of US troops! What shall we do?’”¹⁷¹

This revelation was stunning and “was a startling example of Geronimo’s mysterious ability to tell what was happening at a distance.” Still perplexed many years later, Betzinez affirmed, “I cannot explain it to this day. But I was there and saw it. No, he didn’t get the word by some messenger. And no smoke signals had been made.”¹⁷² At that time, the warriors were over one hundred and twenty miles from their base camp, but Geronimo’s reputation was so high that his men were willing to follow him back at a moment’s notice. The warriors left that evening, and they pushed through the night. The men kept moving and finally approached their base camp when Geronimo made another prophecy. “Tomorrow afternoon as we march along the north side of the mountains, we will see a man standing on a hill to our left. He will howl to us and tell us that the troops have captured our base camp.”¹⁷³

The warriors continued their march early the next morning. That afternoon they heard a “howl from the hilltop to the left” just as Geronimo had predicted. “There stood an Apache calling to us. He came down through the rocks to tell us that the main camp, now fifteen miles distant, was in the hands of US troops. General Crook with some cavalry and Indian scouts had taken all the rest of the Apaches into custody.” Betzinez never overcame his astonishment, and in his old age when he was about one hundred years old, he frankly stated, “I still cannot explain it.”¹⁷⁴

As it turned out, Geronimo’s revelation on May 15, 1883, proved to be accurate. On that day, the Apache scouts with the US Army under the command of Captain Emmet Crawford took the camp of his followers in a surprise attack. The scouts killed several people in the camp, and they

¹⁷¹ Betzinez, 113.
¹⁷² Betzinez, 113.
¹⁷³ Betzinez, 115.
¹⁷⁴ Betzinez, 115.
burned thirty *wikiups*. They also captured a herd of forty-seven horses and mules. Most of the men in the camp were with Geronimo at the time, and there was little chance for immediate retaliation. Calling from the hills, the defeated warriors vowed revenge. “You are doing this way with us now, but some time we will do the same way with you.” The actual losses in the attack were relatively small, but this raid proved to be a stunning victory for the US Army and its scouts. The mental impact of this attack was devastating for Geronimo’s followers when they realized they had more to fear from the Apache scouts with the army than the white troopers themselves. They had long thought they were perfectly safe in their mountain retreat, but they then realized that they were vulnerable and could be struck at any time. They even began to think that they might be safer on the reservation where they at least would be alive.175

For his part, General Crook realized he was in a dangerous position. He doubted that he could hunt down Geronimo’s followers in the formidable Sierra Madre Mountains, so he decided on a bluff. He persuaded one of his captive Apache girls named Dja-na-il-tci or Antelopes-Approach-Her to carry a message to the others. She left on May 16, 1883, and within days, groups of warriors began to come in to get food and to hand over their weapons in an act of surrender. One of the warriors, Fatty, explained. He hated the Mexicans for killing his parents in the 1860s, and he said he would kill them any time he saw them “and chop them into little pieces.” But the war was wearing him down, and his enemies seemed to be everywhere at least in his imagination. In Mexico “I heard footsteps. Before I went to bed, I heard footsteps.” He frankly admitted, “I am getting tired of living in the mountains like a beast.” He wanted to end his fears. “I want to live on the reservation. I want my wife and children to live in peace.”176

The next day, May 17, 1883, members of Chihuahua’s group came in which included forty-five women and children. Captain John G. Bourke, who led the scouts, was much impressed. “The women  

. . . showed the wear and tear of a rugged mountain life, and the anxieties and disquietudes of a rugged . . . war. The children were models of grace and beauty, which revealed themselves through dirt and rags.” By May 20, the number of Indians who had surrendered reached 121—men, women, and children—but more were still to come. “All said that ‘Chihuahua’ and his comrades were hard at work gathering the tribe together and sending them in.” 177

On the morning of May 20, 1883, the men in Crook’s command became very concerned when they learned that Geronimo and his warriors had returned, and they had taken up positions in the hills above the army camp. The Apache scouts retrieved their arms and took up a position in a grove of trees for protection. The situation was tense, but then some of the Indian women, who had been taken prisoner a few days before, called to the warriors in the hills telling them that Crook had not come to fight but to make peace. Geronimo and the warriors were still concerned and debated among themselves what they should do. Finally, one warrior, maybe Ahnandia, “raced into [the army] camp and threw his gun and [ammunition] belt on the ground” in a gesture of peace. This courageous gesture and the fact he embraced Toclanny, an Apache scout, calling him brother, did much to ease the tension. Geronimo and the other leaders came to see Crook that evening. 178

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178 Sweeney, Geronimo, 309.
The army officer and Indian leader met a number of times over
the next few days, and Geronimo admitted later that he “was much
astonished to see General Crook there.” In fact, the war leader thought
that no white man or American could have found his camp in the vast-
ness of the Sierra Madre Mountains unless he possessed some kind
of supernatural power. Geronimo even stated that the General “was
so powerful that he could command the sun, the moon, and every-
thing.” This meant he would listen to anything Crook proposed, and
the General was clear in why he had come. “We had just come . . . [to]
take them back with us, and not to fight with them, but to join with
them like friends.” In a very courageous gesture that was sure to move
Geronimo’s warriors with his sincerity, Crook stated: “I’m not going to
take your arms from you because I am not afraid of you.”

In the next few days, three hundred and eighty-four Indians
came to meet with Crook. While many of the Apaches were tired of
war and willing to take a chance on the federal government again, some
remained at large in Mexico, and the bands were scattered over a large
area. Even though Geronimo had sent some young men to gather these
dispersed people, not every group could be located or were convinced
that they should surrender. A few others remained in Mexico hoping to
find a way to recover relatives still held in captivity, so some of them
slipped away before they reached the border of the United States.

General Crook then continued his journey with three hundred
and twenty-five Indians. Of these, fifty-two were men, presumably
warriors, and two hundred and seventy-three were women. The
differences in the ratio of males to females clearly demonstrated the
losses the men suffered in their many raids and battles. The fight
had gone out of many of the Apaches who were willing to surrender.
No doubt, Crook was pleased at his successful foray into Mexico, but
the Indians were as well. “We Apaches felt the same way about it. It
was a great relief to give up to a superior authority, to have someone

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179 Sweeney, Geronimo, 309.
180 Sweeney, Geronimo, 311-12.
181 Debo, 189.
take charge. No more worries, no more sleepless nights, fearing attacks by an enemy.”182 By all appearances, it was the women who took the initiative for the surrender. They wanted a more secure life, and the challenges of war had little appeal for them. They also did not share the men’s desire for revenge or to prove themselves.183

On their journey back to the United States, the soldiers and the Indians passed the location of the Alisos Creek where the Mexican forces under Garcia had ambushed the Apaches the year before. The scene was ghastly because many bodies still remained unburied. As described by John Rope, “We shouldn’t have gone to look at this place, but did anyway.” What they saw was most disturbing. “There were many bleached-out bones, pieces of women’s dresses, and lots of beads scattered on the ground.”184 Captain Bourke gave further details, “Human bones, picked white and cleaned by coyotes, glistened in the sandy bed of a stream. Apache baskets and other furniture were strewn about. A clump of graves headed by rude crosses betrayed the severity of the loss inflicted upon the Mexicans.”185

General Crook’s army contingent crossed into the United States with their Indian captives, and they arrived at the San Carlos Indian Reservation on June 23, 1883. At that time, the soldiers saw American newspapers for the first time in weeks. The reporting in these news sources was inflammatory, and they called for the execution of all the hostile warriors. Also, the women and children should be separated from their Apache groups and dispersed among the various tribes in the Indian Territory of what is now Oklahoma. When the Apache warriors heard of the content of these newspapers, they were shocked.186

Fear of reprisals drove some of the Indians to take refuge in the mountains. As Captain Bourke reported, “Several of the chiefs and many of the head men hid back in the mountains until they could learn

182 Betzinez, 116.
183 Debo, 189.
184 Rope in Goodwin, 2: 70.
185 Bourke, 109.
186 Debo, 191-2.
exactly what was to be their fate.” 187 Crook tried to allay such fears by stating that a plan of execution and separation would cause a disaster. “To attempt their removal would bring on the bloodiest Indian war this country has ever experienced.” 188 Despite such warnings, the situation at the San Carlos Reservation was tense from the very beginning, and it remained to be seen if the Apaches could live there without being abused and mistreated.

Betrayal at the San Carlos Reservation

When the Apaches started to arrive at the San Carlos Reservation in Arizona, the Indians already there felt fear and hatred for the newcomers. The US soldiers also were mistrustful of the new arrivals, but Lieutenant Britton Davis was quite surprised by their character. While the other Indians only interacted with the white Americans when the need arose, some of the formerly hostile Apaches were more friendly than expected, and sometimes, they were even jovial. “We soon came to feel toward some of them as we would feel toward any other class of people. In fact, we began to find them decidedly

187 Bourke, 111.
188 Crook in Debo, 191.
human. Much to my surprise, I found they had a keen sense of humor and were not adverse to telling jokes on themselves as well as on others.”

Groups of Apaches continually came to the reservation, many of them in small bands. On November 16, 1883, a much larger group of about ninety people arrived, led by Mangus and Chihuahua. Before the month was over, about four hundred and twenty-three Indians had come in—these had been raiding in Mexico for months. Among them were eighty-three warriors. Others arrived in December and still more in February 1884, which included Geronimo who had returned to Mexico to bring his cattle to the reservation.

Lieutenant Britton Davis was sent to intercept Geronimo and escort him to the reservation. The Indian leader was “angry” and demanded “to know why there was a need of an escort for him and his people to the Reservation. He had made peace with the Americans, why then was there danger of their attacking him?” The Lieutenant explained that there were bad men among the Americans, who when they were drunk, might cause trouble. “This satisfied him; he shook hands with me and assured me that he and I were thenceforth brothers.” Davis then noticed that the cattle numbered “three hundred and fifty head of beeves, cows, and half-grown calves, stolen from the Mexican ranches just below the international line.” This realization caused the army officer to become very excited, and “my heart beats went up to a record!”

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189 Britton Davis, *The Truth about Geronimo* (Lincoln, N.B: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1929), 72.
190 Debo, 196.
The military escort under Davis tried to march the herd to the reservation rapidly, and they often covered eighteen or twenty miles in a single day. This caused concern for Geronimo who came to Davis and stated that they were “running all the fat off the cattle and they would not be fit for trading when we reached the Reservation.” The Lieutenant explained that just as Crook had the right to cross into Mexico to meet the Apaches, so too did the Mexicans have a right to pursue his people into the United States, and it was wise to get as far from the border as rapidly as possible. Geronimo was not impressed with this argument. “Mexicans!” he stated in disgust, “Mexicans! My squaws can whip all the Mexicans in Chihuahua.” He further added that the warriors did not need bullets to fight the Mexicans. “Cartridges cost too much. We keep them to fight white soldiers. We fight Mexicans with rocks.”

Before Lieutenant Davis and the Indians reached their destination, two customs officials from Tucson, John E. Clark and William Howland, approached the officer. They stated that Geronimo was smuggling cattle into the country, and they demanded that the Apache leader be arrested for illegal entry into the United States. They also said that “Geronimo and his men are wanted for the murder of Arizona citizens.” The Lieutenant was shocked and complained that he had to have permission from General Crook to carry out an arrest. He then pointed out the obvious. Even with the addition of a posse from nearby towns, “we would be outnumbered nearly three to one by the most determined and skillful guerrilla fighters in the West. We might make a few ‘good Indians’ [by killing them] but it was morally certain that few of us would be left to boast about it.”

Clark and Howland were unwise to press their demands, which could have led to a bloody confrontation, but then Davis got some unexpected help when an old friend from the US Military Academy at West Point, Lieutenant John “Bo” Blake, showed up and “brought with him a quart of good Scotch whiskey.” Blake perceived that the

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192 Davis, 87-8.
193 Davis, 89-90.
194 Davis, 90-1.
customs officials might have a weakness for strong drink, and said, “Say, this Arizona of yours is sure one damn dry country . . . don’t you fellows want a drink?” The men complained that their liquor had given out three days ago, and they welcomed the chance to share the whiskey. By the evening, the two men were sleeping off the effects of heavy drinking.  

At first, Geronimo was reluctant to go along with the plan, but he was convinced when Lieutenant Blake left with the Apaches and their cattle during the night. When the customs officials awoke, they accosted Davis and demanded to know where the Indians had gone. Davis blandly responded that Blake had not told him his plans. “You are lying,” one of the officials blurted out. “Perhaps I am,” was Davis’s reply, “but you can’t prove it.” Davis then pointed out that Blake and the Apaches were ten hours ahead of them, and they could not be overtaken. The officials were beaten, and they knew it. Davis stated that if the men no longer had any need of him, he would return to San Carlos. One of the men replied, “You can go to hell as far as I’m concerned, and I wish you a happy journey.” The man finally gave appropriate praise when he left, “It was a mighty slick trick, Lieutenant, . . . but I would never have believed it possible if I had not seen it.”

However, the situation did not turn out well for Geronimo because the cattle were taken from him when he arrived at San Carlos, where the animals were sold for over $1,700. The federal government gave the Mexican officials this amount to be distributed among those who had lost the cattle. Geronimo felt he had been cheated, and he was still angry about the loss of the cattle two decades later. “These were not white men’s cattle, but belonged to us.” He saw the animals as just booty from the war. “For we had taken them from the Mexicans during our wars. . . . we did not intend to kill these animals, but that we wished to keep them and raise stock on our range.”

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195 Davis, 94-5.
196 Davis, 100-1; and Sweeney, Geronimo, 356-7.
197 Thrapp, Conquest, 294.
198 Geronimo’s Story, 135.
ly removed a means by which Geronimo and his people could have made a living. Davis believed that this loss was the main reason why Geronimo again went to war. “The loss of his prized possessions, after all he had gone through to obtain and preserve them, became a thorn in Geronimo’s side and one of the main factors in the outbreak a year later, when with one hundred and forty-three of the five hundred and fifty Chiricahua under my charge near Fort Apache, he left the Reservation and made history in the Southwest by what has become known as the Geronimo campaign.”

When the Indians arrived at the reservation, they faced the problems of insufficient rations, inedible food, and corrupt administration by white officials. The challenging condition of many of the Apaches at the San Carlos Reservation and many other Indian reservations was well known, but too little had actually been done to help them. In his numerous meetings with the Indians at San Carlos who had not fled to Mexico, General Crook “quickly concluded that they had been robbed, cheated, and abused by Indian agents, traders, and contractors; in fact, he reported, the Apaches had ‘displayed remarkable forbearance in remaining at peace.’ No victory could be final, he knew, as long as conditions on the reservation were bad.”

Lieutenant Britton Davis had been at San Carlos since 1882, and he summarized how the Indians were cheated. The Apaches knew “that rations approved for them by the Government were being openly sold to neighboring towns and mining camps.” Beef was a big part of the Indian diet and was “so thin that was hardly more than skin and bone.” The Native Americans were issued flour as “the other principal portion of ration” which was supposed to last an entire week, “would hardly suffice a family for one day.” While “the other components of the ration were almost negligible when issued and frequently not issued at all.”

199 Davis, 101.
200 Robert M. Utley in Foreword in Davis, ix.
201 Davis, 33.
General Crook gave Captain Emmet Crawford, an officer who had the reputation for honesty, the assignment of making sure the Indians were cheated less. The Apaches had to stay on the reservation, so they had to buy all their food from an Indian trader who set the prices, and the Indians “could take it or leave it.” Crawford confronted the trader, and soon the cost of many articles were reduced by half. When cattle were brought to the reservation, they were placed on scales to make sure the Indians got the proper amount, but the scales had never been tested. The Captain had them examined, and he found that the contractor, who sold the animals, was paid for fifteen hundred pounds of meat that did not exist.

Some of the problems were hard for Crawford to fix. The cattle were often allowed to drink their fill of water before they were weighed, so that much of their weight was then water. Plus, “there was not enough fat on the animals to fry a jackrabbit, many of them being mere skin and bones.”202 After eating what little they had, the Apaches either had to starve until the rations were issued again every week, or

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202 Davis, 41-3.
Captain Crawford turned to Archie McIntosh to help resolve the problems of cheating the Indians. It seemed that McIntosh was a reliable person. He was a trusted scout for General Crook for twenty years, was married to an Apache woman, and appeared to be well liked by the Indians. Yet the honest Captain learned on March 28, 1884, that McIntosh was stealing rations to be sold away from the reservation. When Crawford investigated, he confirmed that the reports were accurate, and he was shocked. “I sent for Archie & he acknowledged that [the accusation] was true & he had the impudence to tell me that it was done at every Military Post in the Dept.”204 The fact that the Indians were cheated everywhere was no excuse for McIntosh. More surprisingly, some of the Apache leaders said they supported the former scout and wanted him retained in his position. Apparently, McIntosh had made sure that those leaders were well fed, so they would support him, while it was the women and children who suffered most.205

McIntosh resorted to an old trick. He sent a long telegram to General Crook. The item was supposedly signed by leaders of the Apaches, but it is doubtful they knew anything about it. The message claimed that McIntosh had treated them well, and that they wanted him retained on the reservation. Crawford saw through this sham and ordered McIntosh to leave the reservation and never return. He also gave the scout a severe warning. “If he ever attempted to again call the Indians together for the purpose of breeding discontent, I would put him in irons.”206

Geronimo and the other leaders wanted to settle in an area of the reservation that had a pleasant climate and was suitable for raising cattle and sheep. Both Captain Crawford and Lieutenant Davis thought

203 Davis, 44.
204 Crawford in Debo, 208.
205 Debo, 208.
206 Debo, 209.
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this was a very good idea as the Lieutenant observed. “Crawford and I favored establishing them as a pastoral rather than as an agricultural people.” But the federal government had other ideas, and “the Indian Bureau at Washington was again in the saddle, and farmers they must be.”207 Those officials had little understanding of the condition on the reservation or of the culture of the Apaches, but they demanded that the Native Peoples take up farming and sent agricultural implements including plows and harnesses for the Indians to use.208

Indian Farmers

The situation became ludicrous when the Indians tried to farm. As Davis observed, “Then the fun began. The Indians’ ponies would weigh some seven to eight hundred pounds; the harnesses sent them were for horses double that size.” The officers “Crawford, West, Elliot, and I laughed till we ached over the efforts of the Indians to harness their ponies in harnesses big enough for two of them.” He added, “I honestly believe that some of them could have crawled through the collars put on them if given a little time.” The situation was so comical that the Apaches enjoyed it as well. “The Indians, whooping and laughing, were getting as much fun out of the circus as we were.” The efforts at plowing were also most amusing. “Now and then a point [of a plow] would strike a hidden root or stump; then the plowman would execute a somersault over the plow handles, to the great delight of his friends.” Under these circumstances, no furrow was successfully plowed.209 Despite the lack of skill in using plows, the Indians were successful in growing garden vegetables that required little or no plowing to plant. This included “corn, squash, pumpkins, pinto beans and other vegetables.”210 In most cases, these plants only required the use of a hoe to plant. Geronimo took to raising vegetables, and he was consid-

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207 Davis, 102.
208 Davis, 102-3.
209 Davis, 103-4.
210 Kaywaykla in Ball, 157.
ered to be a skilled farmer. In fact, he once proudly showed Lieutenant Davis a blister on the palm of one of his hands which he got from using farm implements. Even though some of the Apaches started farming relatively late in the summer of 1884, they had done well. Along with the food they had raised in their gardens, they were also successful in killing deer and drying the meat for later use.

General Crook took pride in the fact that everything appeared to be going well, and he thought he could take much credit for the relatively peaceful situation in 1884. In his annual report for that year, he stated, “for the first time in the history of the fierce people, every member for the Apache tribe is at peace.” In fact, there was no reported act of stolen cattle, and no white person had been killed. This was a remarkable circumstance, but the situation was tense, and many of the Apaches believed that the whites could not be trusted and would soon betray them. These fears would lead Geronimo to flee the reservation the next year.

Fear of Death

There were a number of rumors circulating in the summer of 1884 at San Carlos that Kaetenae was stirring up trouble among the Apaches, and that they might become violent again. The truth of this accusation has never been completely determined, and the accusation might have been little more than Chatto, in an act of jealousy, trying to stir up trouble. Whatever the case, Lieutenant Davis took the reports seriously and ordered Kaetenae’s arrest. Davis was sure that the accused warrior was the “rotten apple in the pile [that] would soon affect others.”

Kaetenae was brought to Captain Crawford who immediately had him chained and placed in the guard house. The incarcerated man

211 Davis, 136.
212 Debo, 230.
213 Debo, 233.
214 Davis, 128.
pleaded that he would be the best of Indians in the future, but the Captain clearly wanted to make his punishment as an example to anyone else who thought of making trouble. The trial, which began on June 27, 1884, was a farce of justice, and was anything but impartial. Crawford stacked the jury to assure a guilty verdict. From a pool of roughly three hundred adult Apaches, he chose twelve men whose real objective was not to do justice but to ingratiate themselves with the Captain. The accusations of misconduct were based largely on hearsay evidence from other Apaches who disliked him, and Kaetenae was not even allowed to know the names of his accusers let alone have the opportunity to cross examine them. Additionally, Crawford took the roles of both judge and prosecutor in the trial. All the hapless man could do was to protest his innocence, but he had no chance at acquittal. The jury deliberated only forty minutes before they returned with a guilty verdict and the recommendation that the defendant be given a severe penalty.215

According to US law, any person found guilty of a crime may make a statement to the court before the sentence was passed. Kaetenae repeated that he was innocent. He reminded the court of his good faith and good conduct in the past, and he also promised to have proper behavior in the future. His statement was touching, emotional, and passionate, and it fell on deaf ears. Crawford handed down the sentence that Kaetenae be placed in irons for three years, taken to a prison far away, and forced to do hard manual labor. The condemned man was then sent to the infamous military prison at Alcatraz Island in San Francisco Bay.216

General Crook clearly saw the injustice of such a severe punishment, and he soon modified it. He ordered that Kaetenae be held in chains only one month. After that, the prisoner would have the freedom to wander around the Alcatraz Prison and even into the city of San Francisco, so he would be impressed with the standard of living of the white people there and bring that information back to his people on the

215 Sweeney, Geronimo, 376-7.
216 Sweeney, Geronimo, 377-8.
reservation. Kaetenae’s arrest, trial, and deportation “alarmed and angered Geronimo” and other Apache leaders, because the condemned man had been involved in raids with many of them.

The fact that Kaetenae had been taken away where no one could see him led to fears that he was not incarcerated, but that he had been killed, and the leaders had serious concerns that they might be next. The situation was made much worse by the soldiers who often ridiculed, mocked, and threatened the Apaches. Common practices included one of the troopers asking an Indian, “Which is Geronimo?” The soldier often also asked about another leader. When that person was pointed out, the troopers would make a gesture of cutting off the head of that leader by drawing his hand across his throat “when the officer wasn’t looking.” The soldiers also amused themselves by trying to frighten or intimidate the Apaches, but the Indians certainly did not know how to interpret those gestures, and they often said, “That soldier . . . might be a good man trying to let us know just what they are going to do to us.” Some of the Apaches who knew little English believed they heard the troopers say, “Those Indians ought to be killed.” This fearful news was then reported to the others.

The Breakout

Tensions continued to increase in the spring of 1885, which included accusations of drunkenness and wife beating. The drinking of crude beer made from corn called tiswin (tizwin) led to many problems. General Crook had tried to crack down on its use, and stated that the Indians could neither make nor consume it. He also demanded that the men stop the practices of beating their wives and cutting the noses off unfaithful spouses.

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217 Crook in Thrapp, Conquest, 308.
218 Betzinez, 126.
219 Debo, 231.
Even though the making and drinking of the beverage was then forbidden, many Apaches still enjoyed it, which led to problems including domestic disturbances. Soon Lieutenant Davis heard of this abuse, and “reports of brutal beating of women came to me, but the women refused to complain.” This situation turned even more ugly when “a young woman came to me with her left arm broken in two places, her hair matted with blood, and her shoulders a mass of welts and bruises.” Davis stated that her husband “had disciplined her with a stick of wood.” The gallant Lieutenant could not let that pass unpunished, and he immediately arrested her husband and locked him in a jail at Fort Apache. While Davis thought this treatment was fully justified, some of the Apache “chiefs” thought it was too severe and called for him to be set free. The officer “refused pending his serving a two weeks’ sentence.”

Davis tried to crackdown on the problem of the Indians getting drunk on *tiswin*, and he arrested a man for being inebriated on the crude beer made from corn. The thought of losing access to the alcoholic drink brought out vigorous protests from important leaders including Chihuahua and Mangus. The participation of Mangus in these statements of dissent was surprising because the leader had “been one of the most tractable of the Indians,” demonstrating that the fear of losing *tiswin* had hit a sore spot for many of the Apaches. The situation was heightened by the fact that one of Mangus’s wives was Huera, and she was renowned as a “skillful *tiswin* maker,” whose product was in “great demand.” Mangus and Huera wanted her to continue to make the brew because they liked it, but the sale also gave them extra income. Huera was a strong, outspoken woman who hated the whites, and who browbeat her husband into making the protest.

The situation became increasingly tense after many Indians got severely drunk on *tiswin* on May 14, 1885. By one estimate, there were about one hundred and twenty Apache men on the reservation, and

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221 Davis, 139.
222 Davis, 139-40.
perhaps ninety became drunk. A few tried to resist, but Geronimo was successful in convincing them that the corn beer was just too good to refuse, and they joined in the merriment. The orgy on \textit{tiswin} lasted the entire night, and many of the men were emboldened by inebriation to confront Davis the next morning, May 15, 1885, on the issues of drinking alcohol and on how they treated their wives. After all, there were no restrictions on how much liquor the whites could drink, and the Indians thought they should enjoy the same privilege.

No doubt believing that their numbers would intimidate the young Lieutenant, eight prominent leaders walked into his tent. They were all hung over, and four were clearly still inebriated including Geronimo. Chihuahua spoke forcefully and stated that the army should keep out of their private affairs, and they would drink and treat their women any way they liked. Nana agreed and stated about Davis, “He can’t advise me how to treat my woman. He is only a boy. I killed men before he was born.” The Lieutenant did not think any action needed to
be taken on the spot, and he told the Apaches he would send a telegraph to General Crook and do as the officer directed.\textsuperscript{223}

As the effects of the alcohol wore off, Geronimo became increasingly concerned about his actions, and he was “very serious and scared.” By May 16, 1885, the lack of information from Crook convinced him that his situation was precarious. As the chief, Chatto, had observed on an earlier occasion, “talk of troops made Geronimo like a wild animal.” Unfounded and untrue rumors swept among the Apaches, including the threat that Geronimo and Mangus would be arrested, and that their families would be removed from Arizona. Geronimo still thought that his spirit guided him to make correct decisions, and this inner voice advised him to flee.\textsuperscript{224}

Mangus’s wife, Huera, had a reputation of possessing special powers, and she gave strong advice. No doubt also fearing she would be punished for making tiswin, she told the men. “Are you me, old women or children? If old women and children, you will stay here and wait to receive your punishment. But if you are warriors, you will take to the warpath and then the Gray Fox [General Crook] must catch you before you are punished. May-be-so you go to Sonora [Mexico], and he not catch you. I have spoken.”\textsuperscript{225}

Before the day ended, Geronimo had gathered as many as twenty men who had decided to flee the reservation. By the evening of the next day, May 17, 1885, when they all fled, the group included one hundred and forty-four people in all including about “thirty-four men . . . and eight teenage boys” who were believed to be of sufficient age to fight.\textsuperscript{226} This small group of warriors and a few youths were about to be the object of the most serious and extensive man hunt in American history. Surprisingly, the number of Apaches who left the reservation was relatively small, and they included less than three percent of the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{223} Sweeney, \textit{Geronimo}, 397-9.
\item \textsuperscript{224} Sweeney, \textit{Geronimo}, 400-2.
\item \textsuperscript{226} Sweeney, \textit{Geronimo}, 402, 404.
\end{itemize}
approximately five thousand Indians who remained at San Carlos.\textsuperscript{227} In addition, the Apaches on the reservation gave neither more recruits nor support to the renegades. Also, those who remained at San Carlos provided numerous scouts to help pursue Geronimo and others.\textsuperscript{228}

The renegade Apaches had to have the means of fighting, and they still retained their weapons. General Crook had made a serious mistake by not disarming the warriors when they came to the reservation. He reasoned that such an action was impractical because the Indians would always hide some weapons. Besides, there were treacherous white men who would sell weapons to the warriors. Perhaps most importantly, Crook feared that the Apaches needed a means of protection from “the disreputable class of white men” willing to take advantage of their former enemies when these foes were unable to protect themselves. Crook’s mistake would be very costly.\textsuperscript{229}

Geronimo’s Escape

When the Apaches, led by Mangus and Geronimo, left the reservation, they realized that the US Army would soon come after them. While the Indians enjoyed certain advantages in mobility, the army had the telegraph, which could alarm towns and military detachments of the location and movement of the warriors, so the renegades decided to cut the wire. If they had simply cut the wires and left the wires on the ground, where they could easily be found, then they could be easily located and repaired. To avoid this, the Apaches cut the wires but then bound the broken ends with leather. That way the communications were severed, but it was most difficult to see where the break had been made, so repairs would be slow and difficult.\textsuperscript{230}

The Apaches were correct about the army’s pursuit, and an army contingent under the command of Captain Allan Smith, also with

\textsuperscript{227} Sweeney, \textit{Geronimo}, 423.
\textsuperscript{228} Sweeney, \textit{Geronimo}, 483.
\textsuperscript{229} Debo, 226-7.
\textsuperscript{230} Sweeney, \textit{Geronimo}, 408.
forces under Lieutenant Davis and Charles Gatewood, followed them all night. Early in the morning of May 18, 1885, the soldiers reached the banks of the Black River, a major contributor to the Gila River, where Smith called a halt. He wanted to rest his men and wait for the pack train with supplies to catch up to them. This proved to be very unwise. When the contingent stopped at the river, the Indians were perhaps six miles away, but the wait lasted about sixteen hours. By that time, the fleeing Apaches had traveled another sixty miles leaving them far out of reach of Smith’s command. The army continued to follow the fleeing Indians, but the soldiers were unable to overtake them.\footnote{Sweeney, \textit{Geronimo}, 409.}

The warriors soon scattered to strike at any whites near their path to kill and plunder, and Smith and his command soon came upon their victims. The dead included six whites. The Apaches realized that they needed food, weapons, ammunition, and fresh horses, and they killed to take what they needed.\footnote{Sweeney, \textit{Geronimo}, 410.} The movement of the Indians was so rapid that the troopers rarely saw them even at a distance, but within days the number of white people they had killed rose to at least seventeen.\footnote{Debo, 241.} Mounted on stolen horses, the Indians made rapid progress covering ninety miles in one day, supposedly “without a halt for any purpose and did not make a camp until they had reached the Mexican border.” The Apaches had successfully stayed ahead of their pursuers, but these hasty movements came...
at a high price. As Lieutenant Davis observed, “On the trail that day we found two [dead] babies, newly born.”

A key factor in the army becoming more effective was the use of Apache scouts to track their adversaries and to engage them in combat. These men were no doubt attracted for army pay, a spirit of revenge against those they mistrusted, and also to show their manliness and courage. Even before the soldiers went after the renegades, Apache scouts volunteered to help. Before these men left to help the army, a holy man urged them to show courage and skill. They exhorted Chato, an important scout. “Chato you are a man...known to be a great warrior. You have fought your enemies in close battle.” Chato soon “sprang out there, shooting into the air” to show his support. Others were also called to serve, and they followed Chato’s example. At that point, there were about twenty-six scouts, and others soon joined. They eventually numbered in the hundreds. The scouts who served with the army greatly outnumbered the renegades they were sent to apprehend.

When an army command under Captain Allen Smith tried to apprehend Geronimo and his band, the soldiers fell into a clever trap. On May 22, 1885, Smith had his troopers rest in Devil’s Canyon, while Geronimo and his warriors took up positions in the ridge line above, and they nearly surrounded the soldiers even though they were heavily outnumbered. Geronimo fired the first shot which was the signal for the others to open fire as well, and a heavy fusillade followed. The troopers had to scramble to defend themselves as the warriors unleashed volley after volley. Very fortunately for the frightened soldiers, the Apaches overshot their targets, not realizing they did not need to aim as high when firing downhill. Showing great grit, the army pressed into the rocks near the warriors. When the Indians lost the advantage of their position, they withdrew, leaving one wounded scout and two soldiers. Captain Smith followed the Apaches for a distance, but he soon gave up the chase.

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234 Davis, 153.
235 Sweeney, Geronimo, 4014.
236 Sweeney, Geronimo, 416-18.
Fight at Guadalupe Canyon

The army pressed the chase after the rapidly fleeing Apaches. The Indians went past Skeleton Canyon, but they soon learned the cavalry was in close pursuit. They crossed into Mexico and then doubled back to find the soldiers camped at Guadalupe Canyon, where the warriors crawled forward without being seen on June 8, 1885. The troopers on guard were called for their evening meal and unwisely left no sentinels to watch their position when they were gone. The warriors opened fire from a short distance, and killed three men on the spot including the man who did the cooking. The sergeant in charge of the group was shot and badly wounded. He was in grave danger of being killed when Private John P. Schnitzer from Germany came to his aid. Schnitzer had already proven himself to be a very brave man when he rescued Private Edward Leonard on April 23, 1882. At that time, he had retrieved the severely wounded man by bringing him back, when he was under heavy fire. For his courage and resourcefulness, Schnitzer was later awarded the Medal of Honor.237

At Guadalupe Canyon, Private Schnitzer saw a similar situation and carried the wounded sergeant “on his back and climbed with him out of the canyon.” Unfortunately, the wounded man was between Schnitzer and the warriors, so he was fired upon during the rescue, “the sergeant was shot a second and third time while on Schnitzer’s back and killed.” The failure to rescue the sergeant in no way detracted from Schnitzer’s courage, and he “was duly rewarded for his gallant conduct.” The soldiers returned to the area after the Apaches had left to bury their dead.238

Corporal William Bladen Jett gave more details on the fight at Guadalupe Canyon. The troopers did not think the Apaches would attack. Neihaus, a German who had been in the army for thirty years, stated that the warriors would not dare attack a soldiers’ camp, but he was mistaken. When the sentry on duty left his post without orders to
get something to eat, everyone was “surprised by a thundering volley from the hills nearby.” Neihaus paid a high price for underestimating the Indians. He was right next to Jett, when he “was killed by a bullet in his forehead.” He died instantly with his mouth full of a “biscuit and a piece of meat.” The guard, who left his post at the wrong moment, had only recently joined the army, and he had stated he wanted to participate in a battle with Indians. This was an unfortunate wish because he was killed almost immediately. At the start of the engagement, he ran to take cover, but he was shot and killed before he could reach safety.239

In fear for his life, another trooper ran into his tent and fell upon his knees in clear supplication that the Lord would save his life. Sergeant Munich ordered him to come out, and they fled for cover in the nearby hills. Only four men, including Jett, were left in the camp, and they took cover behind the wagons. These men kept shooting for an hour. They could not clearly see their adversaries, so they directed their shots towards puffs of smoke from the warriors’ rifles. Somehow, the wagons started to burn, and the troopers thought the ammunition in them would soon begin to explode. The Sergeant was next to Jett, and he was shot three times, and he stated, “Boys, I’m done for.” But Schnitzer would not abandon him. He placed “his arm under the sergeant’s arms and helped him” flee to the relative safety of the hills. Unfortunately, Munich was hit a “fourth time and killed in the German’s arms.”240

Jett, Schnitzer, and a trooper named J. L. Sprinkle hid in the hills and kept shooting at the puffs of smoke from the Indian rifles as the ammunition in the wagons started “to explode with a mighty roar.” From the location of the rifle smoke, the soldiers knew they were surrounded, but during the entire ordeal, they never saw a single warrior. The troopers managed to hold out until night fell when they snuck away and found safety at a ranch. One of the soldiers named Roberts had left the others at the beginning of the battle. By resourcefulness, he survived, and finally found his way alone to the ranch as well.241

239 Jett in Cozzens, The Struggle for Apacheria, 495.
241 Jett in Cozzens, The Struggle for Apacheria, 496.
Skirmishes with Geronimo

Apparently, not everyone had received word of Geronimo’s outbreak, or perhaps some white men did not take the reports seriously. This was a grave mistake, because Geronimo’s band found and killed three men soon after the fight at Devil’s Canyon.\(^\text{242}\) Geronimo’s skill in avoiding the many army groups sent to apprehend him almost seemed to be providential. Fortunate reconnaissance had allowed the soldiers and scouts to locate Geronimo’s camp, which they surrounded and planned to attack on the morning of July 24, 1885. Everything appeared to be peaceful, and the troopers had every reason to believe that their advance would be met with little resistance, but when the soldiers approached the camp, they found it to be deserted. Just the day before an old, crippled woman came to Geronimo with the message that if he

\(^{242}\text{Sweeney, Geronimo, 418.}\)
stayed there one more day, there would be trouble. Initially, the experienced warrior paid little attention to the old woman, but others pointed out that she had great powers and was completely reliable. Fortunately for the Apaches, Geronimo then took her seriously and abandoned the camp just in time to avoid an ambush.\textsuperscript{243}

No magic prevented Indian scouts under Lieutenant Mathias Day from attacking Geronimo’s camp on August 7, 1885. A braying mule warned the camp of imminent danger, and Day was unable to encircle the encampment completely before launching the attack, but his men killed a few unfortunate victims. Geronimo bravely tried to save members of his family, and he picked up a young son and ran away through a hail of gun fire. But his bravery did not prevent others from being captured. The number of prisoners taken was about fifteen women and children. Among them were Geronimo’s three wives and five children.\textsuperscript{244} The old warrior felt the loss of his family keenly. The Apaches thought a lot of their close relatives, and they often contributed not only to their emotional comfort but also to their survival because women helped by finding and preparing food as well as making and repairing clothing.\textsuperscript{245} No matter what the risks, Geronimo would clearly try to get them back.

Six days after Day’s surprise attack on Geronimo’s camp, the army picked up the trail of his group and tried to apprehend them, but the Apaches were too careful to be caught. He led his pursuers into the high country of Mexico where the warriors were able to outmarch and outwit the soldiers, who soon lost their trail. On September 11, 1885, Geronimo struck and killed several unsuspecting victims, including Martin McKinn who was only seventeen years old. His little brother, Santiago McKinn, age twelve, attempted to hide in some bushes, but the Indians found and captured him. The warriors spared the child’s life, but Santiago was shocked to see Geronimo take the shirt and coat off his brother’s body and wear them.\textsuperscript{246}

\textsuperscript{243} Sweeney, \textit{Geronimo}, 443.
\textsuperscript{244} Sweeney, \textit{Geronimo}, 444-5.
\textsuperscript{245} Debo, 245.
\textsuperscript{246} Sweeney, \textit{Geronimo}, 462-3.
Geronimo clearly had informants among the Indians on the reservations, and he learned that some of his family members had been taken to Fort Apache. He planned to get them back, and he carefully snuck up to the position shortly after midnight on the morning of September 22, 1885. Upon his approach, he found an Apache woman who told him where to find one of his wives, She-gha, and their three-year-old daughter, both of whom had been captured in an earlier raid. After freeing his small family, Geronimo and his group grabbed some horses to flee fast, and they left quickly before a pursuit could be organized. Geronimo had a big head start over his pursuers, who gave up the chase early in the morning. Not satisfied with only retrieving one woman, his war party captured several other Apache women to take them as wives.247

Many of the army officers, including General Crook, became greatly frustrated over the success of the renegade Apaches in raiding and then fleeing before they could be apprehended. In an open threat, Captain Cyrus Roberts, an aide to General Crook, wrote to Lieutenant Charles Gatewood on September 30, 1885, “The general [Crook] will give $100 for each head of a hostile Chiricahua buck [Apache warrior] brought in by an Indian scout or volunteer. Tell the White Mountain Indians that the general . . . is getting tired of doing all the work for them.”248

General Crook had real reason for concern because the renegade Apaches had done considerable damage in the five months since Geronimo and others fled the reservation in May 1885. During that time, the army and scouts had chased them relentlessly, but they only succeeded in capturing or killing “about thirty women and children.” However, they “had not put a dent in the ranks for the forty-two fighting” warriors who were still raiding far and wide with little hindrance from the soldiers and their Indian scouts.249

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247 Sweeney, Geronimo, 469-70; and Debo, 246.
248 Roberts in Sweeney, Geronimo, 473.
Chasing Geronimo

By June 10, 1885, most of the Indian groups who had fled from the reservation had crossed the international border into Mexico. On the following day, an army detachment under Captain Crawford followed the Apaches into their retreats in the Sierra Madre Mountains of Mexico. A month later another army unit under Captain Wirt Davis followed. General Crook tried to keep the escaped Indians south of the border by placing various army units at key locations where the Apaches might attempt to cross the border back into the United States.250

The army expeditions into Mexico took place in the rainy season which largely lasts from May through September. Usually, the rains consist of short cloud bursts late in the afternoon which soon clear up. But the rains in the summer of 1885 were unusually severe, contributing to the misery of the troops and the challenges in tracking the Indians. As General Crook reported, “Their [the Indians’] trails are so scattered that it is almost impossible to follow them, particularly over rocks which often delays the party following the trails for several hours even if the trail isn’t entirely lost.” The weather was so wet that “the troops have been almost continually drenched to the skin.” The Bavispe River under normal circumstances almost never caused problems and could easily be forded. Yet at this instance, the river became so treacherous because of the rains that one army detachment had to cross it eleven times in one day. The Indians continued their practice

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249 Sweeney, Geronimo, 476.
250 Thrapp, Conquest, 329-30.
of splitting up their numbers to confuse any pursuers, and the troopers often concealed themselves in narrow canyons to keep the Apaches from seeing them. But the frequent rains made this a dangerous activity because flash floods threatened to drown the soldiers and wash away their provisions.251

Lieutenant Charles P. Elliott accompanied Captain Crawford when their command crossed into Mexico. Then there occurred a most unfortunate instance of mistaken identity. An American was living in Mexico, and the Indian scouts were advancing as usual at the head of the army’s command. The American knew of the Apaches fleeing into Mexico, and he attempted to drive his cattle into an area where the animals would be hard to find. Much to his great concern, he saw three Indians riding toward him, whom he believed to be hostile, but they were friendly scouts. The man feared for his life and found a location where he thought he could make a stand. He opened fire on the three Indians, and he “killed one, wounded another, and put the third to flight.” The loss of the scouts was most regrettable.252

Another encounter on June 23, 1885, proved to be more successful. Chatto was among the most able of the Indian scouts, and he and the others pressed ahead of the soldiers. They attempted to trap and overwhelm a group of renegade Indians. The scouts took an advantageous position and opened fire on the hostile group, who immediately tried to escape. Taking the women and children with them, the warriors ran “through several deep canyons which joined near the camp.” The scouts attempted to apprehend them “and for several miles a running fight was kept up, but the canyons were so very rough that the pursuit was slow.” This allowed eight warriors, as well as four boys and three women to get away, while the remaining women and children, fifteen in number, fell into the hands of their enemies. Much to the satisfaction of the soldiers who came to Chatto’s aid, the scouts found weapons, saddles, and cartridge belts that had belonged

251 Crook in Thrapp, Conquest, 329-30.
252 Elliott in Cozzens, The Struggle for Apacheria, 432.
to the troopers killed at Guadalupe Canyon. At least, this was a small amount of revenge.\(^\text{253}\)

Another case of mistaken identity almost led to disaster. When the troopers were following the scouts into Mexico, the Mexican Army clearly thought that the approaching Indians were hostile, and their men set an ambush for the advancing Apaches. One of the watchful scouts said to Crawford in his naive language “Natan, No-ki-ai” which meant “Captain [Crawford], Mexicans.” The officer told the Indians that there was no danger, “when a volley burst from the crest of the hill where the Mexican had been seen, and the leaves were cut from the tree over my head.” Crawford ordered the packers to take cover, but the Indians needed no admonition and had already sought shelter. A couple of the scouts fired back at the Mexicans, but the officer ordered them to stop. Then with great bravery, Crawford “ran from under the tree to open ground . . . calling to the Mexicans that I was a friend and American officer.” The firing stopped. “While I [Crawford] was standing there, alone and unarmed, the fire was by command, for I heard it, to concentrate on me.” Luckily for the officer, all the shots missed, and Crawford kept yelling until the Mexicans realized their mistake and came to greet him.\(^\text{254}\)

**Crawford’s Death**

One of the most unfortunate incidents of the entire campaign came with the untimely death of the highly-respected Captain Crawford. Early in January 1886, the command under Captain Crawford and Lieutenant Maus tried to apprehend the fleeing Apaches. On the morning of January 11, 1886, the situation became very tense when the Americans approached the Mexican command or “peace party” under Major Mauricio Corredor. There was some confusion when the Mexicans appeared to believe that the Indian scouts with Crawford


were renegade Apaches. The Mexicans cautiously began to circle the Americans, and the scouts became very nervous. The situation became even more dangerous when the American soldiers heard the “snap of breechloaders” from trapdoor rifles wielded by the scouts that were being loaded in case they were needed to shoot.

Crawford ordered Maus “For God’s sake, don’t let them fire.” Major Corredor was also fearful that the US Army scouts would open fire, and he yelled, “No tiros, No tiros” (Don’t shoot. Don’t shoot). Lieutenant Maus reacted swiftly, and he ordered the scouts to hold their fire. Captain Crawford was very bold trying to keep the situation in hand, and he stood on a rock, yelling that his men were peaceful. He also waved a white flag of truce to keep the Mexicans from firing. One Mexican soldier ignored this courageous request, took careful aim, and shot Crawford in the head.255 Henry W. Daly gave further details. After the Captain was shot, he fell “from the boulder, his right arm was broken and one of his eyes blackened, and when found a few minutes later, he was unconscious.”

This ill-timed shot set off heavy firing by both the Americans and Mexicans. Once the battle began, nothing seemed to be able to stop the fight. Rather than trying to stop the firing, Major Corredor became involved in the fracas, and he shot the unarmed scout, Tom Horn, wounding him in the arm. Corredor then sought to get out of the line of fire, but one of the scouts named Bindy, shot the Major in the chest, killing him on the spot. Crawford’s orderly was an Apache scout, Dutchy, and he soon killed the man who had shot his well-respected Captain. Corredor’s second in command, Lieutenant Juan del la Cruz, attracted much fire, and he was hit thirteen times. The altercation was over in a matter of minutes, and the scouts had killed or wounded nine of the ten Mexican soldiers.256

Henry W. Daly arrived shortly with the packers to bring badly-needed ammunition and food to the scouts. He soon learned

255 Sweeney, Geronimo, 502-3.
256 Sweeney, Geronimo, 503.
from Lieutenant Maus that the Mexicans had shot Crawford, and that he had been mortally wounded. The Americans had found the Captain laying near the boulder with his brains splattered all over his face.\footnote{Sweeney, \textit{Geronimo}, 504.}

The men did their best to comfort the fallen Captain. They brought him a broth made of beef, but the badly wounded man could only swallow some of it with great pain. They constructed a “\textit{travois}” or stretcher to carry him which was dragged by horses, and they also made a shelter on the device to protect him from the sun and rain, but Crawford never said a single word. Daly watched over the dying man, but much to his surprise, the wounded Captain seemed to regain consciousness. “Taking his hand, I asked if he knew me and if he could understand what I said, to which he replied by a pressure of my hand. I then asked him if, in case of his death, he wished to be buried by the Masonic [Freemason] fraternity, and he again replied by pressing my hand, and also by a grateful look in his eyes.” The concerned soldiers took turns sitting with the wounded man at night. The column moved out several days later. “On January 17, [1886] while on the march, one of the men lifted the canvas that protected Captain Crawford and saw that he was dead.”\footnote{Elliott in Cozzens, \textit{The Struggle for Apacheria}, 460-1.}

The men took the death of Crawford very hard. They buried him on January 21, 1886, in a cemetery near the village of Nacori. “There was no funeral oration, no dirge, no taps, but we moistened the graves with our tears and on bended knee repeated the Lord’s Prayer.” Daly gave his fallen friend a fine tribute. “He was the bravest among the brave; gentlest among the gentle; he forgave and overlooked the faults and frailties of others while being the most chivalrous and gentlemanly officer and man that I have ever known, in or out of the service.”\footnote{Elliott in Cozzens, \textit{The Struggle for Apacheria}, 461.}
Geronimo Meets General Crook

Crawford’s severe wound left Lieutenant Maus in command of the expedition, and he continued to pursue Geronimo. Shortly after the fight in which Crawford was wounded, Geronimo sent word that he wanted to talk with Maus right away. The two men met on the morning of January 15, 1886. The Apache leader asked the young Lieutenant what his objective was on his foray into Mexico, and Maus answered directly, “I came to capture or destroy you and your band.” The forceful response apparently shocked Geronimo, and he clearly recognized the determination of the American forces. He thought that his best course of action was to meet with General Crook to discuss the situation further, and he agreed that he would meet Crook in one month’s time.  

260 Sweeney, Geronimo, 505.
The situation had a heavy impact on Crook. He believed that by the end of 1885 some of the renegade Apaches had killed at least thirty-eight people in Arizona and Mexico and had run off with hundreds of heads of cattle. In the process, the raiders had lost only one warrior. It is equally likely that Crawford’s death had unnerved the General, and his increased anxiety led him to make serious errors of judgement. Before meeting Crook, Geronimo continued to raid. On January 31, 1886, he and his men killed two men and wounded another.²⁶¹

The meeting between Crook and Geronimo finally took place on March 25, 1886. Geronimo’s band included twenty-four warriors. Each was well-armed with Springfield trap-door rifles or Winchester lever-action repeaters with plenty of ammunition. All their equipment was in good condition, and the warriors gave the impression that they had not been defeated, but were willing and able to continue the war.²⁶² Geronimo started the discussion by stating his reasons for leaving the reservation including fear of arrest and fear of being killed, and he accused Crook of being hostile toward him because the General would not look at him with a “pleasant face.” But Crook was clearly tired of what he considered to be lame excuses. The General asked the old Apache leader why he had been afraid of rumors as though he were a child, why he had lied, and “why did you kill innocent people, sneaking all over the country to do it?” Crook then stated succinctly, “You must make up your mind whether you will stay out on the war-path or surrender unconditionally. If you stay out, I’ll keep after you and kill the last one if it takes fifty years.”²⁶³

At first, the great Apache leader stated that he was going to surrender to Crook and famously observed, “Once I moved like the wind. Now I surrender to you and that is all. . . . My heart is yours, and I hope yours will be mine.” Yet he changed his mind over the next several days. He and his men got wildly drunk, and in

²⁶¹ Sweeney, Gerónimo, 511, 513, and 516.
²⁶² Bourke, On the Border, 477-8; and Sweeney, Geronimo, 522.
²⁶³ Bourke, On the Border, 475-6.
their inebriated condition, or suffering from the resultant hangovers, started to believe negative and unfounded rumors. They thought that Crook’s unfriendly manner meant that he wished them harm. They also thought that one of the Apache scouts for the army, Chatto, whom Geronimo hated, would be placed as leader over them, and they deeply mistrusted a man whom they thought was hostile towards them. In the early hours of March 30, 1886, Geronimo led his men away, and he went back on his promise to surrender.264

Nelson Miles Takes Command

Initially, General Crook was pleased that he had again negotiated Geronimo’s surrender, but he was soon shocked by the turn of events. Geronimo’s flight was a bitter blow for the General who thought he had again brought peace with the renegade Apaches. He also soon learned that Grover Cleveland, the President of the United States, and Philip Sheridan, the Commanding General of the United States Army, had both undermined his negotiations with Geronimo. These men affirmed that the Apache leader had to surrender unconditionally and would only be assured that he would not be killed. Crook felt undermined at every turn. Even though he had done his best to deal fairly with everyone, his efforts had failed, and he also felt betrayed by the President and the Head of the Army.

264 Sweeney, Geronimo, 526.
In effect, the government had ordered Crook to kill any Indian that refused to surrender even under the harshest of terms. In frustration, Crook offered to quit his post and to surrender his commission. Sheridan, who had long distrusted Crook, readily accepted his resignation. Within days, Sheridan appointed General Nelson A. Miles to take the post which Crook had vacated.265

General Crook and General Miles differed in their approach to their subordinates. Crook expected his orders to be obeyed, he did little to endear his men to him, and they showed little affection for him. Miles did much better in getting his men to like him and to want to follow him. Of the two, Miles was to be the more effective leader. General Sherman wanted Miles to approach the capture of Geronimo by a different method because Sherman no longer trusted the Apache scouts

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265 Sweeney, Geronimo, 526-30.
used by Crook, believing that they must have aided the renegades in some way to allow them to escape and continue raiding. Instead, the Commanding General wanted his subordinate to make use almost exclusively of soldiers.

With at least forty-six companies of infantry and forty companies of cavalry, each of which outnumbered Geronimo’s renegade band, to watch the area, Miles had a considerable force. In fact, he had about five thousand troops at his command in an attempt to catch eighteen warriors.\(^266\) The most important aspect of his pursuit was to track and intercept his enemies. This was a very difficult task, especially because he could not use Indian scouts, and Miles deployed his cavalry to hunt the enemy and the infantry to man strategic locations, to watch known water holes, and to protect supply trains and storage locations.\(^267\)

General Miles also decided to rely on technology to give him an advantage. He set up twenty-seven heleograph posts on mountain tops in Arizona and New Mexico within sight of each other. These heleographs reflected sunlight and directed it by the use of mirrors to another station. When the light was interrupted by long or short intervals, dots or dashes, it effectively served as a means of sending messages by the use of Morse code. Many years later, Miles still believed that his use of such signaling devices was essential in success against the renegades, but they were almost totally ineffective because the Apaches were accustomed to move at night when they could not be easily seen and when no messages could be sent.\(^268\)

**Geronimo Shows His Military Genius Yet Again**

Despite Miles’ troop dispositions and his technical innovations, the Apache raiders still held the initiative, and much depended on what

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\(^{266}\) Debo, 269.

\(^{267}\) Sweeney, *Geronimo*, 534.

they did. The war soon became vicious as the raiders found many vic-
tims to kill. In early April 1886, Geronimo and his warriors killed two
men and three women on the Mexican side of the border. A few days
later, they killed another three men. When local troops were sent to the
scene, the Apaches ambushed them, killing another two soldiers. Later
in the month, Geronimo and his men killed three Mexicans and one
American near the town of Nogales on the American side of the border,
and they soon killed another man in the area. Nearby an Apache killed
a woman, Petra Peck, who was attempting to flee while holding her
baby. The warrior then took the small child by the legs and smashed out
its brains against a wall. The white girl, Trinidad Verdin, might have
suffered a similar fate, but Geronimo approached just in time to spare
the child’s life. Even though the raiders killed another man, Geronimo
was feeling generous and he also spared the life of Artisan Peck. By the
end of the month, the raiding party killed another man. 269

By the beginning of May 1886, Company K of the 10th Cavalry
was in pursuit of Geronimo’s band. The famous 10th Cavalry was an all
African-American unit, and they wanted revenge for Geronimo’s re-
cent raids. Even though Company K had no Indian guides, the soldiers
were able to follow their trail by following a line of butchered bodies of
horses. On May 2, Company K had reason to believe they would shortly
be in for a fight and deployed in a skirmish line. They then advanced to
meet the enemy. In the skirmish, the troopers suffered one man severely
wounded. He was only spared death by the heroic actions of Lieutenant
Powhatan Clarke who pulled the man to safety while under heavy fire.
For his courage, Clarke later received the Medal of Honor. His citation
reads, “Rushed forward to the rescue of a soldier who was severely
wounded and lay, disabled, exposed to the enemy’s fire, and carried him
to a place of safety.” Despite this heroic action, the cavalry company
had been turned back by a handful of Apaches, numbering no more than
eighteen men and boys, who suffered no casualties in the encounter.270

269 Sweeney, Geronimo, 536-8.
270 Sweeney, Geronimo, 538-9.
Soon another company from the Fourth Cavalry relieved Company K and attempted to keep up the pursuit in the hope of wearing the Apaches down, but it was the cavalry that became worn out. This time using Indian scouts, the new company found the trail. On May 10, 1886, they found the bodies of five more victims, two Americans and three Mexicans. Geronimo and his men led the soldiers into harsh areas. Then the Apaches doubled back and left the troopers not knowing that they were in the wrong area. With the army temporarily out of the picture, the renegades killed two additional men. On the next day, Mexican forces marched into an ambush in which two more men were killed.271

An American cavalry troop under Captain Charles Hatfield was ambushed as they crossed the top of a mountain range on May 15, 1886. Yet the attack was poorly planned because the soldiers controlled the high ground, and the renegades soon withdrew rather than fight at a disadvantage. From a distance, the troopers recognized Geronimo surveying the scene using binoculars. The soldiers thought they had won a victory because they captured some of the Apaches’ stock and supplies including saddles, food, and ground covers. This success proved to be short lived because the warriors waylaid the soldiers a few hours later, killing two men and retrieving their captured cattle and materials.

On May 16, Company I under Lieutenant Robert A. Brown surprised Geronimo, and the soldiers captured several horses and a few Winchester rifles with ammunition. The troopers saw Geronimo make good his escape by riding away on a white mule. That night the renegades struck back and replaced all their losses by taking twenty-five horses.272

The leaders of the renegade Apaches decided to send five warriors from the main group to distract the soldiers, while the main group would follow a different trail. These five men in a separate party came across a group of five Mexicans on May 17. They killed two and captured the remaining three, sparing them because they were unarmed. One said, “You may go; you had no rifles [so] we will not harm you.”

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271 Sweeney, Geronimo, 539-40.
272 Sweeney, Geronimo, 540-1.
Two days later, this group of warriors killed an additional man and wounded another.\footnote{273}{Sweeney, *Geronimo*, 541-2.}

Meanwhile, the main group of Apaches under Gernomio killed the Andriade brothers on May 17, and on the next day, they killed an additional two Americans on their way into Arizona. The army under General Miles did well to pursue their adversaries, but they had little success. In the entire time that Miles led the US troops in the area, his men had been unable to kill even one renegade Apache.\footnote{274}{Debo, 271.} In fact, many of his men campaigned for weeks without seeing one enemy. While Geronimo’s raiding party was in Arizona for eighteen days, they killed at least thirteen people. The killing of so many people was brutal and completely unnecessary. Years later one of the leaders with Geronimo,
named Naiche, explained. “We were afraid. It was war. Anybody who saw us would kill us, and we did the same thing. We had to if we wanted to live.” By May 20, 1886, they had killed an additional two men.\(^\text{275}\) Geronimo gave a similar reason. “On our return through Old Mexico we attacked every Mexican found, even if for no other reason than to kill.” The biographer of Geronimo, Angie Debo, stated succinctly. “There is no doubt that Geronimo killed Mexicans wantonly because he liked to see them die.”\(^\text{276}\)

Even though General Miles had been in Arizona for about six weeks by late May, he still had no ideal how to capture, kill, or persuade his enemies into surrendering. Miles kept up the military pressure on the Apaches, and he also tried his hand at intimidation. He offered a reward of two thousand dollars, a huge amount of money, for Geronimo “dead or alive [and] fifty dollars for each [dead] warrior.” With the General’s approval, Captain Thomas Lebo made an appeal to the Mexicans for more volunteers and offered them “four dollars a day” to campaign “and two thousand dollars if they get Geronimo.” In effect, Miles had placed a bounty on the head of the Apache leader as though he was an animal to be hunted. But the territorial delegate from Arizona to the U.S. Government, Curtis Bean, went much farther, and he said the government should offer twenty-five thousand dollars when Geronimo’s scalp was taken, which would prove that the great warrior had been killed.\(^\text{277}\)

Some of the Apache raiders went into Arizona in an attempt to meet with their family members. The effort proved to be unsuccessful, and the warriors killed two Americans on May 30, two on June 1, one on June 3, one on June 4, and one on June 6 on their way back to Mexico where they reunited with other renegades. The next day General Miles reported that the warriors had killed thirteen Americans on that raid. Soon after the groups came together again, they decided to divide their forces once again. This time six men went in one direction, nine

\(^{275}\) Sweeney, *Geronimo*, 542-3.  
\(^{276}\) Debo, 270.  
\(^{277}\) Sweeney, *Geronimo*, 544.
in another, and Geronimo’s group of six warriors went yet in another
direction.\textsuperscript{278}

A Mexican force under Patricio Valenzuela found some butch-
ered cattle on June 16, and began to follow the Apache trail. The next
day, June 17, 1886, about noon, they were surprised to meet Geron-
imo’s group. Geronimo saw that the Indians were at a disadvantage
and gave orders for everyone to flee. All his men scattered in different
directions, as Valenzuela and his men charged the Apache camp. The
Mexicans opened fire and wounded Geronimo’s wife. She got off her
horse, pulled out her revolver, and emptied the weapon at her adver-
saries, who soon shot her down with a volley of rifle fire. Valenzuela’s
men later cut the hair off her corpse, no doubt wanting to get the bounty
Sonora still offered for an Apache scalp.\textsuperscript{279}

Geronimo attempted to get away as rapidly as possible when
his horse stumbled throwing him to the ground. He then fled to cover
among some boulders in a box canyon with steep sides, and the great
warrior was trapped there inside a cave. All he had was a single-shot
rifle for defense. The Mexicans surrounded one of the most famous
and resourceful warriors in American history, and they moved toward
him. Valenzuela ordered his men to be cautious because Geronimo had
the reputation of being a very good shot, a fact he would soon prove.
But Francisco Valenzuela y Manguia exposed himself to the warrior’s
line of sight. The Apache leader “brought him down with one shot and
he rolled down the cliff.” In all, Geronimo wounded one man, and
killed three others in the skirmish. Each of the dead was struck by a
well-aimed bullet in the head. Not wanting to lose any more men in a
futile effort, Valenzuela called off the attack at nightfall. On the same
day that Geronimo held off the Mexicans by shooting so well, another
group of seven Apache warriors, about seventy-five miles away, killed
four Mexicans.\textsuperscript{280}

\textsuperscript{278} Sweeney, \textit{Geronimo}, 547-9.
\textsuperscript{279} Sweeney, \textit{Geronimo}, 549-50.
\textsuperscript{280} Sweeney, \textit{Geronimo}, 550.
Geronimo’s marksmanship was demonstrated again many years later, long after his surrender, when he challenged the portrait painter, Elbridge Burbank, to a shooting contest using a .22 caliber rifle. The wager was that each one would pay the other ten dollars for each shot that hit the target, but Burbank said they would shoot just for fun. He was wise to do so, or he would have had to pay a lot of money. The aged warrior took a piece of paper about the size or a quarter, and placed it on a tree several yards away. Geronimo hit the small target with every shot, but Burbank missed each time. The great warrior later came to Burbank bragging that no bullet could kill him. He took his shirt off and Burbank stated, “I was dumfounded to see the number of bullet holes in his body. I knew he had been in many battles and had been fired on dozens of times, but I had never heard of anyone living with at least fifty bullet wounds in his body.” Some of the scars were so large that Geronimo placed small pebbles in the scars stating that “Bullets cannot kill me.” No doubt, he was correct.281

Geronimo’s raids against the Mexicans continued. On July 23, 1886, he and his men laid an ambush in the Mazatan Mountains and struck a mule train of sixty animals. They killed five men, took fifteen mules, and killed the rest of the animals, so their enemies could not make use of them. On August 8, 1886, the Apaches staged four attacks in five days, killing two Mexicans and three Americans. One of the Americans was killed in a dramatic fashion, much like the legends of the old Western shootouts where two desperate men faced each other and fired. The American faced the warrior, Naiche, and the adversaries fired simultaneously. The American’s bullet struck Naiche’s rifle, which deflected the projectile. After grazing the Apache’s arm and chest, the bullet hit the warrior’s leg doing no serious damage. Naiche’s first shot missed, but the second killed his adversary. Geronimo was wounded in this encounter and was seen with his arm in a sling for days.282

282 Sweeney, *Geronimo*, 559-60.
Geronimo’s Final Surrender

No matter how successful Geronimo had been, and no matter how skillfully he outsmarted and outmaneuvered his enemies, the constant campaigning was wearing him and his men down. He finally decided that he could not continue fighting. He wanted to see his family, and he wanted to surrender yet again, but he would never surrender to the Mexicans. When he met with members of the US Army, he frankly admitted on August 27, 1886, with some exaggeration, “We have not slept for six months and are worn out.”

Geronimo and his men finally met with Lieutenant Charles B. Gatewood at Skeleton Canyon on August 26, 1886, and the officer repeated the army’s demands to the warrior. “Surrender and you will be sent to join the rest of your people in Florida, there to wait the decision of the President [of the United States] as to your final disposition. Accept the terms or fight it out to the end.” The warriors had hoped they could return to the reservation in Arizona, and they were reluctant to agree to go to Florida, but their families were there already. They had no choice but to agree to Gatewood’s terms.

The formal surrender took place on September 4, 1886, when Geronimo and his band met with General Miles, who claimed more credit for the Apaches’s surrender than he had actually earned, but he still praised his adversaries’ skill. He stated that “the hostiles” had fought long and hard. They had covered “more than 2,000 miles over the most rugged and sterile districts of the Rocky and Sierra Madre Mountains, beneath the burning heat of midsummer.” He forgot to mention that Geronimo and his men dictated the terms of every engagement, won every skirmish and engagement, eluded their pursuers at will, and outsmarted the armies of the United States and Mexico which badly outnumbered his small band. When Geronimo came to

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283 Wood, 104.
284 Sweeney, Geronimo, 563-4.
285 Debo, 298.
surrender, he was indeed worn down, but he certainly could have continued to fight and evade his enemies if he had decided to do so. General Miles could take little credit for the surrender of such a courageous and resourceful group of Apaches, and the General was no match for Geronimo. The Apaches’ surrender ended twenty-five years of warfare in the American Southwest, which started in 1861.

Geronimo and his warriors thought or at least hoped they would stay only two years in Florida, and they long maintained that they had been misled when they surrendered to Miles. Instead, they were treated as prisoners of war and housed there for twenty-seven years at Fort Pickens, Florida. In one of the most cruel and unjust actions of the entire war, the loyal Apaches who had served General Crook and General Miles so faithfully as scouts, were given the same treatment as the hostiles. They were sent to the same prison and endured the same hard-
ships. As one prominent historian of the Apache wars has observed, “this was just another in a litany of broken promises and treaties dating back to Puritanical times in Colonial Massachusetts.” This had started in the early seventeenth century. “It remains today a national betrayal and an egregious disgrace unworthy of a country founded on the democratic ideals of liberty, equality, and justice for all.”

The conditions at the prison at Fort Pickens, Florida, were unhealthy, and many of the Apaches and their families died of various diseases. In the first seven months of captivity, of the five hundred and two Apaches confined there, three hundred and sixty-seven tried to get medical help for bronchitis, malaria, and dysentery, but tuberculosis was the biggest single problem. “By the end of the year, twenty-one Chiricahuas [Apaches] had perished, about half from tuberculosis.” In addition, the federal government attacked the weakest of the Apaches, their children. The army soon took forty-four children from age twelve to twenty-two years old, and shipped them to Carlisle, Pennsylvania, to force them to adopt the white men’s culture and language. Later, this number was increased to one hundred and six children. By the middle of 1889, twenty-seven children had died. Such crimes have forever stained the United States’ policies against the Native Peoples in their country.

Geronimo spent his last years at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, still as a prisoner, and he was never allowed to return to the American Southwest. By this time, he had become something of a celebrity, and he showed himself to be a shrewd businessman. He often sold his autograph, and he demanded to be paid when photographers came to take his picture. Unlike many of the other well-remembered Indian warriors where few likenesses exist, there are many photographs of Geronimo. He died in 1909 and is well-remembered as the most able and successful warrior the United States ever faced in the conquest of the Indians.

~ Utah Valley University

286 Sweeney, Geronimo, 575.
287 Sweeney, Geronimo, 577-9.