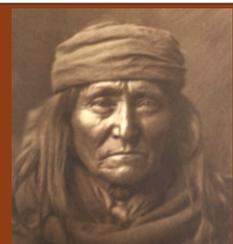


Apache Warriors

– Part 1



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On February 26, 2009, a news story broke across the country related to a lawsuit filed against Yale University and the Skull and Bones Society. Filed by Harlyn Geronimo, great-grandson to, well, Geronimo, seeks the return of his famous great-grandfather's skull. Geronimo died in captivity at Ft. Sill in 1909 – 100 years ago. Supposedly, his skull was stolen in 1918 and has been used during initiation rituals by the secretive Skull and Bones Society ever since.

The whereabouts of Geronimo's skull has been an historical mystery for nearly a century – if it is indeed missing. However, Geronimo is not the only Apache leader (he was never a chief) who lost his head or whose skull is missing. This present-day news story raises the question, “What happened to all those famous Apache Indian chiefs, like Victorio, Mangas Colorado, or Cochise?” This history article takes a look at some of the famous Apache chiefs and the so-called Indian Wars with the Apaches.

Early Apache History

The Apache Indian seemed to arrive in central North America from Canada around the 1200s. As a nomadic people, they were skilled hunter-gatherers and lived off the land. For the most part, they were very successful in their survival, except in years of drought or shortages of game.

Fortunately, they discovered New Mexico. Here were thousands of pueblo people living along the major rivers with fields full of crops and herds of sheep. When the Apache found themselves hungry, they simply raided the nearest Pueblo. These Apache raids and attacks were not the bloody, merciless attacks typical of the occurrences as in later years, but could be vicious none-the-less.

One of the mysteries of the Southwest is the unexplained abandonment of many of our pueblos. Did the pueblo people leave their homes due to drought? Or



Photo courtesy National Archives

Geronimo as he appeared after his 1886 surrender, posing for a photographer.

disease? Or to escape the relentless Apaches?

The unexpected Apache attack became the dread of the land to the pueblo people, and later to the Spaniards. The new government of Mexico, after 1821, had no less luck dealing with the Apache.

When New Mexico became a territory of the United States in 1848, it was quickly realized the region could not grow and prosper without first subduing the attacking Apache. At first, the Apache really had no beef with the Americans. The Army attempted to live among the Apache in peace, offering food and supplies as did the Spaniards.

Apache Clans

The Apache nation extended across much of present day Arizona and New Mexico, northeast into portions of Colorado, Oklahoma, Kansas and Nebraska, and into Mexico as far south as Chihuahua. This was not



one big united nation with a single leader, but divided into numerous bands, each having their own chief.

In New Mexico, the Jicarilla Apache occupied the northern portion of New Mexico into west Texas and Oklahoma; the Mescalero Apache called home from the Rio Grande into west Texas and south into Mexico. The Chiricahua Apache occupied the rest of southern New Mexico and southern Arizona into the Sierra Madre mountains of northern Mexico.

The Apache that occupied today's Socorro County were a branch of the Chiricahua known by several names: They called themselves the Tchihene, pronounced chee-hen-NAY; the Spaniards called them the Ojo Caliente Apache due to living central to the warm springs west of present day Monticello; upon the American occupation, the U. S. Army called them the Warm Springs Apache; and the people in the Gila region called them Membrenos, due to their camps located along the Mimbres River; some historians refer to them as the Eastern Chiricahua. The Warm Springs Apache was the most common term, and the one the descendants use today.

Compared to the Jicarilla or Mescalero Apaches, the Chiricahua bands were the most warlike and feared. Their raids extended from New Mexico and Arizona southward into the Mexican province of Sonora. They were very mobile people and very adapt at crossing great distances in a minimal amount of time.

Slaughter at Janos

In an attempt to discourage Apache raids, Mexico placed a bounty on Apache scalps in 1835. The Chiricahuas organized raids into Mexico to retaliate against the bounty on Apache scalps. These raids soon became so numerous, no area in northern Mexico was safe.

One such raid was led by a young warrior named Geronimo. On March 5, 1851, a company of 400 Mexican soldiers attacked his camp outside of Janos in northern Mexico. (See map accompanying this article). Many of the warriors were gone, leaving mostly the women and children to be the casualties. Among those killed in the slaughter were Geronimo's wife, Alope, their children, and Geronimo's mother.

The slaughter at Janos changed Geronimo's life forever. He vowed to kill every Mexican he could the rest of his life to avenge the lost of his wife and family. Mangas Coloradas made a similar vow. Geronimo was sent to recruit Cochise and his band of Chiricahua Apaches to help wage all out war with the Mexicans.

Born in 1829, Geronimo was a young 22-year-old man when he made his vow. Dying at age 80 proved to be a long bloody life for Geronimo – and for the countless number of people he killed along the way.

It was during these Indian Wars with Mexico, and later with the Americans, that the famous Apache leaders emerged: Managas Coloradas, Victorio, Cochise, Geronimo, and others.

Mangas Coloradas

In 1837, Apache warrior Dasoda-hae, whom the Mexicans called Mangas Coloradas, became chief of



Photo courtesy Native American History

A photo of Mangas, son to Mangas Coloradas, who bears a close likeness to this famous father. There is no known photograph of Chief Mangas Coloradas.

the Warm Springs Apache. Mangas succeeded Chief Compas who had been killed by Mexicans to cash in on his scalp. Born in 1793, Mangas Coloradas was 44 years old when he became the leader of the Warm Spring band of Apaches.

When the Americans arrived in 1846, Managas Coloradas promised the United States safe passage through Apache country. Later, he signed a peace treaty respecting the United States as the conquerors of their common enemy – Mexico. This was advantageous to the Apache, allowing them to enter Mexico to conduct their retaliatory raids and return to the safety of the newly formed Territory of New Mexico. It didn't take long for the Apache to learn Mexican troops would not cross the dotted line separating the United States from Mexico.

The peaceful coexistence with the Americans changed in the 1850s with the encroachment of miners into the Black Range and Gila Mountains. In 1851, a group of miners at Pinos Altos tied Mangas Coloradas to a tree and whipped him nearly to death. Similar incidents continued throughout the 1850s in violation of the treaty he had signed with the Americans.

In 1860, a group of miners launched a surprise attack on a band of Apaches at camp on the Mimbres River, killing four Apaches, wounding many others, and capturing 13 women and children. After that, Mangas Coloradas began launching small raids against the Americans in the area and burning their property to force them out of the Gila region. This anger towards Americans was confined to these miners and ranchers – not yet the U. S. Army.

Cochise

Cochise was the leader of the Chiricahua Apache, the band primarily occupying southeast Arizona. Born about 1805, he married Mangas Coloradas' daughter, Dos-Teh-Seh, in 1830. In 1846, at about age 41, Cochise succeeded Nachi as Chief of the Chokonen band of the Chiricahua Apaches. Cochise had two sons, Taza and Naiche, that would also become Apache chiefs in later years.

Like his father-in-law Mangas Coloradas, he would make frequent brutal raids into Mexico, but lived in relative peace with the Americans. Though Mangas Coloradas turned on the Americans following the 1960 Mimbres River attack, Cochise had no beef with the Americans.

That quickly changed in 1861 when Apaches raided a

West Point officer – a Brigadier General of the U. S. Army.

However, the betrayal to the Apache did not stop there. The following morning, soldiers cut the head off the Apache chief, boiled off the skin, and reportedly sent the skull to the Smithsonian Institute. The rest of his body was dumped in a nearby ditch.

The desecration of Mangas Coloradas' body infuriated the entire Apache nation. According to their beliefs, their revered chief will now have to go through eternity headless, unable to ride his horse through the spirit world, or unable to return to console the living Apache chiefs when summoned. To the Apache, this was an unforgivable crime.

Sending Mangas Coloradas through eternity headless was not the intent of beheading the Apache leader. Mangas Coloradas was a big man, about six-feet in height, with an unusually large head. His skull was supposedly sent to the Smithsonian Institute for study. Actually, it was sent and sold to phrenologist Orson Fowler in Boston. Phrenology was a popular science at the time that studied intelligence and human behavior based on the size and shape of the human head. It was determined the skull of Mangas Coloradas was larger than that of Daniel Webster, the previously known largest head on a human being.

The skull of Mangas Coloradas remained on display in Fowler's Boston and New York offices for years. In the 1920s, shortly after Fowler's death, the Apache skull disappeared. It has yet to be located to this day. Could it, too, be sitting along side the skull of Geronimo at the Skull and Bones Society?

The senseless killing of Mangas Coloradas, and the mutilation of his body, continued the Indian Wars for another 25 years and brought a distrust of the White Man that persists to this day. Future Indian raids, with the Apache trademark of mutilation, scalping, and beheading of the victims, was in direct retaliation for the desecration of Mangas Coloradas' slain body.

Chief Victorio

Upon the death of Mangas Coloradas in 1863, Victorio (Bidu-ya) emerged as the leader of the Warm Springs Apache. These indigenous people, once numbering in the thousands, were beginning to dwindle due to the Indian Wars and always being on the run. To preserve their strength, the various bands consolidated. Cochise remained chief of the western Chiricahua bands, basically southern Arizona, and Victorio chief of the

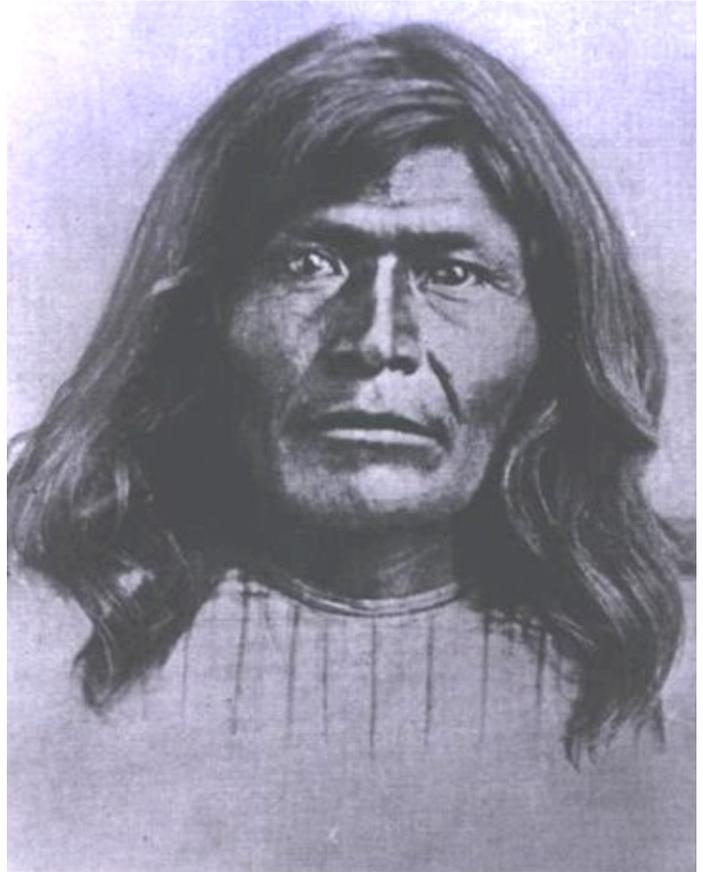


Photo courtesy Library of Congress

This pencil sketch is the only known image of Victorio – chief of the Warm Springs Apaches from 1863 until he was killed in battle in 1880.

Warm Springs Apache, basically southwest New Mexico.

They continued their raids into Mexico and throughout the Arizona and New Mexico territories. Due to the American Civil War, resources were limited and the Army's ability to apprehend the attacking Apaches was faint. During this period, the American, Spanish and Mexican people in New Mexico hugged the Rio Grande and fortified their villages from Indian attack. Still, there were occasional attacks reported on Lemitar, Polvadera, and travelers near Socorro. The Apaches would swoop down on these villages, leaving with all the sheep, cattle and horses they could and killing anyone that seemed to be in their way. Soldiers from Fort Craig would take to the trail to track the attacking Apaches with limited success. In the Socorro region, these were Victorio's Warm Spring Apache, which included bands led by Nana or Geronimo.

After around 1865, this situation began to change. Upon the conclusion of the Civil War, the U. S. Army in New Mexico was given the resources to launch a full scale war against the attacking Apaches. New Forts, such as Fort Selden north of Las Cruces and Fort

McRae, near present day Truth or Consequences, were built and manned with hundreds of soldiers to more quickly respond to Indian attacks, and provide escort service to travelers along El Camino Real.

This shift in Americans fighting themselves to fighting the Apache left Victorio and his warriors always on the run. As a result, they were not able to hunt for game or plant corn for survival. Most of the activity during this period of time were minor skirmishes. For the most part, Apache raids were not retaliatory raids, but those to obtain cattle or food for their survival. Following a raid, the Army responded in force, driving the Apache into the mountains of Mexico. There, the Mexican Army would drive them back into the Black Range or Gila mountains of New Mexico.

Tired and exhausted of this way of life, and watching their people dwindle and suffer, the Apache began to draw peace with the Army and submitted to reservation life. Many of Cochise's Apaches had settled on the San Carlos reservation in Arizona or the newly formed Chiricahua reservation south of Fort Bowie. Victorio agreed to settle on the Warm Springs reservation established southwest of Fort Craig. The Army built a post and Apache Agency west of present day Monticello called Ojo Caliente. This was actually quite agreeable to Victorio and the Warm Spring Apache as this was their native land.

The Death of Cochise

Cochise, living peacefully on his Chiricahua reservation, fell into poor health in 1874. His symptoms indicate he might have had stomach cancer. Growing extremely weak, he called for his good friend, Thomas Jeffords, Indian Agent at Fort Bowie. He told his friend goodbye, adding, "I think I will die at 10 o'clock tomorrow." The next day, at 10 o'clock in the morning, Cochise died. He was nearly 70 years of age.

With bitter memories of the desecration of Chief Managas Coloradas, the body of Cochise was secretly moved deep into the Dragoon mountains. In Apache tradition, his horse and dog were killed to join their leader in the after life. Cochise, his horse and dog, were lowered into a narrow deep fissure and covered with rocks and dirt. His friend, Thomas Jeffords, was the only White Man to participate in the burial. He never revealed the location of Cochise's grave. To this day, the burial site remains unknown.

Following the death of Cochise, the Chiricahua reservation was discontinued and his people moved



Courtesy Texas History Online

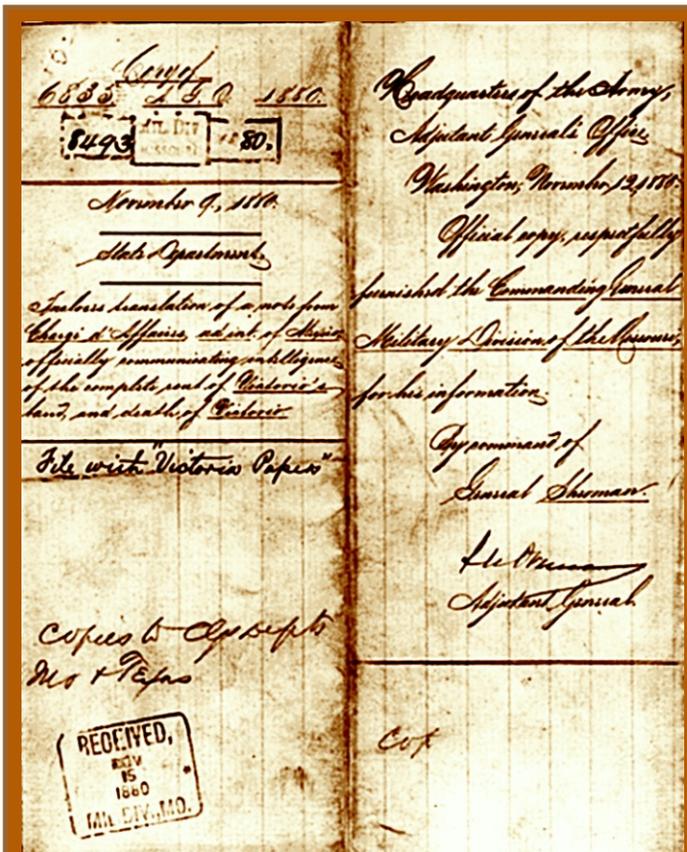
Loco was a Chiricahua Apache warrior who surrendered with Geronimo in 1886.

northward to the San Carlos reservation. Cochise's son, Taza, became chief to this band of the Chiricahua.

During this time, Victorio and his Warm Spring Apache lived in peace for several years, hunting for game in the San Mateo and Black Range mountains and learning to farm. The Army supplemented these efforts with food and supplies to keep the Warm Spring Apache well fed and happy.

However, in 1877, the policy from Washington, D. C. changed everything. It was decided to combine resources and move all the Apaches in the region to the San Carlos reservation in Arizona. Victorio's now peaceful band of Apache's were forced to relocate to San Carlos, leaving behind their homes, their fields, and their beloved land. The Army closed the post at Ojo Caliente. Victorio was bitter.

Consolidating all of the Apache people at San Carlos was a disaster. Conditions on the reservation quickly degraded to deplorable conditions. Furthermore, it put Victorio, Geronimo, and Chief Juh (pronounced "Whoa") under one roof. These dreaded Apache



Courtesy National Archives and Record Group
The cover letter from the Mexican government to the U. S. State Department that Warm Springs Apache Chief Victorio was killed by Mexican troops on October 15, 1880. Marked "Received Nov. 15, 1880," it took a month for the news to reach Washington.



Courtesy National Archives, Group 11
Nana was about 80 years old when he became chief of the Warm Springs Apaches upon the death of Victorio in 1880. He died at Fort Sill, Oklahoma at age 96.

leaders watched as their people slowly starved, got sick, and died. Worse, their Apache spirit was gone.

The Death of Victorio

In late 1877, Victorio, Geronimo, and Nana bolted from San Carlos, taking with them about 200 warriors. They roamed about raiding ranchers, miners, and villages on both sides of the border for several years. By this time, about 5,000 Army soldiers were in New Mexico and Arizona to pursue this last handful of attacking Apache.

Mexico had likewise built up a strong military presence to bring an end to the Apache attacks. For the next three years, this remaining band of marauding Apache had become expert at alluding thousands of American and Mexican troops.

In 1880, they were spotted between Socorro and El Paso. In June, the tired band entered Mexico to their mountain retreat in the Sierra Madre of Mexico. On October 15, they were located in the Tres Castillos mountains by the Mexican Army, commanded by Colonel Joaquin Terrazas. When the Mexican's

attacked, the Apache spread to form several strongholds. After two days of fighting, Victorio, and the majority of his warriors, lay dead. Most of the women and children were captured and sent to Chihuahua. It appeared the last of the renegade Apaches had finally been eliminated.

There remains a controversy as to how Victorio died. The Mexicans say he was killed by a soldier named Mauricio Corredor; the Apache said he drove a knife into his chest, ending his own life, rather than to be killed by a Mexican. Regardless, the handful of surviving warriors did not want the Mexican's to obtain Victorio's scalp, or worse, mutilated like Mangas Coloradas. They buried their fallen chief somewhere in the Tres Castillos mountains. The location of Victorio's grave has never been found.

Nana and the Final Surrender

Nana survived the massacre along with a handful of



Photo by Paul Harden

In 1882, two soldiers from Fort Craig were killed near Big Rosa Canyon in the San Mateo Mountains by Nana's band of Warm Springs Apache. The grave of one of those soldiers is located in the Rosedale cemetery, southwest of Magdalena.

warriors and several dozen women and children. Born about 1800, Nana was 80 years old as he fought the Mexican Army at Tres Castillos. He became chief to the surviving remnant of the Warm Springs Apache by default, not by blood line or inheritance. His people now depended on this old warrior for their very survival.

Against incredible odds, somehow Nana managed to elude the Mexican Army, sneaking his people out of Mexico on foot. He took his people to the San Andreas mountains west of Tularosa. There they were spotted and clashed with Army troops on several occasions. In a desperate measure, he led his people westward across the waterless Jornada del Muerto, crossing the Rio Grande south of Fort Craig, and into their old homeland near Ojo Caliente. Though the dust of the pursuing Army was not far behind, Nana somehow managed to remain in the lead without incident.

By this time, nearly all Apache people were either at the Mescalero or San Carlos reservations. Only Nana and about 30 warriors, and Geronimo and his small band (still somewhere in Mexico) remained on the war path. In 1881, Nana departed on a raiding party that has become known as Nana's Raid. He ambushed and killed some soldiers west of Socorro at Monica Springs; others near the Rio Salado; numerous ranchers lost their lives along his trail west of the Rio Grande between Socorro and Belen. When he retreated to Mexico, Nana and his small band had eluded hundreds of Army soldiers, leaving 40 to 50 people dead.

Over the following five years, Nana and Geronimo remained the only bands of Apache still conducting

deadly raids in New Mexico and Mexico. By 1885, the entire focus of the U. S. Army, and Mexico, was to capture the last of these warriors. In the meantime, the rest of the Apache nation were suffering on the reservation as all the resources were routed to capture Nana and Geronimo.

Finally, on September 4, 1886, the completely worn out band of Apaches officially surrendered to General Nelson Miles at Skeleton Canyon near the Arizona, New Mexico and Mexico border. This included Geronimo, Nana, Lozen (Victorio's sister), Chief Juh, Loco, and others. The Indian Wars were over. Or, was it?

What happened to the Apaches after the final surrender? Where are they today? How did descendants of Geronimo and Cochise end up in Mescalero? And, where is Geronimo's skull? The continuing plight of the Warm Springs Apache continues next month in Part 2 (these history articles generally appear in the first weekend edition of the month).

REFERENCES

Some of the references used in this article:

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Courtesy Socorro County Historical Society, J. Smith collection
Geronimo was not camera shy. Here he poses for Socorro photographer Joseph Smith in 1886 following his surrender at the Socorro train depot. The man sitting on the right is labeled "Natchez," the bungled name for Naiche, son of Cochise, and chief of the Chiricahuas at the time of this photo.