

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

---

Great Plains Quarterly

Great Plains Studies, Center for

---

Winter 1999

**Review of *The Chiricahua Apache Prisoners of War: Fort Sill 1894-1914* By John Anthony Turcheneske Jr.**

William T. Hagan

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly>



Part of the [Other International and Area Studies Commons](#)

---

Hagan, William T., "Review of *The Chiricahua Apache Prisoners of War: Fort Sill 1894-1914* By John Anthony Turcheneske Jr." (1999). *Great Plains Quarterly*. 1600.  
<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly/1600>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Great Plains Studies, Center for at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Great Plains Quarterly by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

*The Chiricahua Apache Prisoners of War: Fort Sill 1894-1914.* By John Anthony Turcheneske Jr. Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1997. Photographs, bibliography, notes, index. xv + 243 pp. \$29.95 cloth.

This is the first full-length treatment of the Chiricahua Apache prisoners of war, whose experience is unparalleled in Native American history. Many Indians underwent imprisonment, but no group for anything like the Chiricahuas' twenty-seven years as official prisoners of war. It took them from a reservation in Arizona to Fort Marion in Florida, from there to Mount Vernon Barracks in Alabama, then on to Fort Sill in Oklahoma; finally most were relocated to the Mescalero reservation in New Mexico while others remained in Oklahoma.

Each of these removals is discussed in detail and, since choices had to be made, there is usually more about the messy decision-making process than about the Chiricahuas themselves. The War and Interior Departments, Congress, several administrations, organizations of friends of the Indian, and local pressure groups all participated. Reading how the decisions were reached is not an elevating experience. Turcheneske identifies an abundance of villains, among them Colonel Nelson A. Miles and Senator Albert B. Fall.

The author has produced a thoroughly researched, well-organized, and readable narrative. He may, however, overemphasize the uniqueness of the Chiricahua experience.

Aside from being declared prisoners of war and controlled by army personnel, their lot was not that different from that of most other Indian groups. Once they left Fort Marion they were only nominally prisoners of war. Indeed, being under War Department control was probably preferable to being under Interior.

The Chiricahuas did suffer forced removals and were promised things never delivered—tragically common Indian experiences. But to suggest that the Chiricahuas could have retained the Fort Sill military reservation, even if the army had decided not to locate its artillery school there, is to ignore what was happening to all other Indians. White neighbors of the Chiricahuas would have mobilized the same forces against them that they arrayed against the Southern Plains tribes, forcing them to accept allotments and sell most of their land to the United States.

The author, in addition to researching in depth the usual documentary sources, draws upon the recollections of descendants of the prisoners of war. These reveal the deep emotions aroused by memories of what their forbears were subjected to. But reliance on the Indian voice requires that this source be subjected to the same rigorous evaluation accorded other sources.

The well-chosen photographs add a valuable dimension to this volume.

WILLIAM T. HAGAN  
Norman, Oklahoma