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From Fort Marion to Fort Sill

Alicia Delgadillo

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FROM FORT MARION TO FORT SILL

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FROM FORT MARION TO FORT SILL

A Documentary History of the Chiricahua Apache Prisoners of War, 1886–1913

Edited and annotated by Alicia Delgadillo,
with Miriam A. Perrett

University of Nebraska Press | Lincoln and London

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PREFACE | *Alicia Delgadillo*

Gillett Griswold, director of the U.S. Army Field Artillery Museum from 1954 to 1979, accepted the position when the museum consisted of one building at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. By the time he retired his contribution to the museum complex had been significant: it consisted of twenty-six buildings, including eight exhibit buildings, and eleven sites listed in the National Register of Historic Places, more registered historic sites than at any U.S. military base at that stage. In 1956 Gillett proposed permanently marking more than three hundred Apache prisoner-of-war graves. Original burials were in family clusters scattered across the post, and Gillett's goal was to create a cemetery dedicated to the Apache POWs. In 1958, at the direction of Fort Sill installation commander Major General Thomas E. de Shazo, the project was authorized. Gillett's research was hampered by lost or inadequate records, maps, and burial plats; the original wooden headboards having suffered the effects of time, weather, and prairie fires; cultural barriers such as the Apache custom prohibiting naming of the dead; and tribal factionalism.

In addition to ex-prisoner-of-war informants, additional information came from interviews with non-Indians who had maintained a personal friendship with the Chiricahuas, for example Sergeant Morris Swett, who was stationed at the fort in 1917. Records housed in public repositories such as the National Archives were researched in a limited manner. In the 1950s retrieval of archival material was time-consuming and costly.

Gillett and his wife, Lily, created a museum souvenir shop to generate revenue to cover research costs because the army had not allocated funds for that purpose. He invested personal time corresponding with members of both tribes—those who settled on the Mescalero Reservation in New Mexico, and those who settled in Oklahoma—and shared his research with scholars Angie Debo and Dan L. Thrapp and with oral historian Eve Ball.

His interviews were conducted through the auspices of the Mescalero Apache Tribe in New Mexico and the ex-prisoners living in Oklahoma, there not being a Fort Sill Apache Tribe at that time. Principal Mescalero informants were John Allard Jr., Helen Chatto, Margaret Balatchu Bigmouth, Eugene Chihuahua, Edna Teenah Comanche, Eliza Coonie, Isabelle Perico Enjady, Eustace Fatty, Narcissus Duffy Gayton, Maude Daklugie Geronimo, Robert Geronimo, Jasper Kanseah Sr., Sam Kenoi, George Martine, Lena Kaydahzinne Morgan, Barnabas Naiche, Christian Naiche Jr., Dan Nicholas, Richard Jolsanny, Violet Alton Peso, Rufus Sago, Amelia Naiche Shanta, Lydia Daklugie Shanta, Wheeler Tissnolthtos, Azilia Spitty Uly, and Homer Yanozha.

Principal Oklahoma informants were Jason Betzinez, Casper Cailis, David Chinney, Helen Chinney, Mildred Imach Cleghorn, Bessie Hunlona Gooday, Robert Gooday, Talbot Gooday, Arthur Guydelkon, Irene Gooday Guydelkon, Blossom Haozous, Benedict Jozhe Jr., Harold Kawaykla, Mason Kawaykla, Pearl Jozhe Kawaykla, James Kaywaykla, Moses Loco, Norman Loco, Dolly Perico Mithlo, Watson Mithlo, Edward Simmons, Herbert Yuzos, and Minnie Nicolas Zurega.

Through the U.S. Army Gillett procured permanent markers and arranged for their installation in the Main, Chihuahua, and Baitso cemeteries at no cost to the prisoners or their families. At the dedication ceremony on June 3, 1961, ex-prisoners spoke of the past, the present, and their hopes for the future. Following the dedication, Gillett's research compilation, completed solely for that purpose, was placed in the collection of the Fort Sill Museum. Also placed there were photographs and cultural material from Gillett's personal collection: fifty original glass plate negatives, a gift from Jason Betzinez, and Asa Daklugie's personal papers, his saddle, and other cultural items he gave to Eve Ball, who in turn gave them to Gillett as a gift. A copy of the compilation was presented to the Mescalero Apache governing body and to the Fort Sill Apache Tribe's Business Committee.

Following several years of correspondence with Gillett, and given his growing interest in my research and my longtime affiliation with the Chiricahuas, he proposed a collaboration to publish his compilation in its original format and content, without photographs. Weeks prior to his death in 1995 he sent some selected personal papers and requested that I complete the project. In the following years, however, the effort took an unanticipated form—a documented history of the Chiricahua Apache

prisoners from 1886 to 1913. The intent of this volume is to reconstruct prisoners' lives from archival material, illustrated with unpublished photographs that provide an intimate look into their world; for additional archival photographs that are mentioned but not reproduced in this book, endnotes indicate where they can be found.

The names, tribal affiliations, and vital statistics are drawn from Gillett's compilation. They are acknowledged here and remain unchanged unless corrections are explicitly indicated. He did not cite individual informants' accounts, but when the material is attributable, the informants are cited. Gillett standardized the spelling of prisoners' names and added variations according to informants' recollections. Some extant families have since changed their surnames or use different spellings from those set forth in the original compilation.

Beginning in the 1870s, Chiricahuas' portraits were identified, albeit phonetically, by frontier photographers, the best known being A. Frank Randall, Ben Wittick, George Rothrock, John K. Hillers, Frank A. Rinehart, and by local photographers Reed & Wallace, John N. Choate, John Andrews, John Bates, and others. The result is various spellings and translations of Apache and Spanish names and the English translations. Some translations were not recorded prior to or during the POW period, which is why some biographies seem incomplete.

Where individuals who are mentioned in the text are also represented in biographies of their own, cross-references to the relevant biographies are provided. For individuals who are pictured, the biography includes a cross-reference to the relevant figure(s) in the gallery of photographs. Captions do not include cross-references to the text; most photos are of people profiled, and their biographies are thus readily found via the book's alphabetical arrangement. Some captions also include historic or phonetic names as used in collection accessions, given with quotation marks.

The Christian names assigned to prisoners prior to 1894 appear parenthetically in the biography subheads. George Wratten, the prisoners' interpreter and work supervisor from 1886 until his death in 1912, assigned the bulk of the names. Occasionally commanding officers and missionary teachers and missionaries assigned names. In many instances the fathers' Apache names became the surnames of their wives and children.

I have omitted Gillett's syllabic hyphenations of Apache names, but some names are hyphenated in quotations from contemporary sources. The Chiricahua had no written language, and late nineteenth-century lin-

guists and ethnologists—John G. Bourke and Albert S. Gatschat, for example—recorded words and phrases and spellings that differ from those recorded by Morris E. Opler, Harry Hoijer, and Grenville Goodwin in the 1930s and 1940s. Gillett’s informants disagreed on spelling and pronunciation too.

Unless otherwise noted, Indian boarding school terms were five years at Carlisle and three years at Chilocco and Hampton. All work assignments on and off campus were at the discretion of school superintendents. Employers, dates and locations of employment, and the type of work assigned to students are noted when known. Boys generally were employed as field hands and girls as domestics. There were cadet programs for boys at Carlisle, Chilocco, and Hampton. Vocational instruction typically began immediately upon arrival. Employment for boys began in the spring and ended in the autumn, coinciding with the agrarian cycle. Some students spent little time in the classroom and were sent to “country homes” as soon as they mastered enough English to follow simple instructions. Some students, like Jason Betzinez, willingly reenrolled and successfully sought employment on campus, locally, and out of state.

Fort Marion, Florida (formerly Castillo de San Marcos, a seventeenth-century Spanish fortress), was in a state of decay and unfit for habitation when the first group of prisoners arrived in April 1886. They spent weeks camped on Anastasia Island across the bay from Fort Marion until improvements were made. Deaths occurred soon after the prisoners arrived, and there being no cemetery at the fort, the deceased were buried on the north side of the island. The only death at Fort Pickens, which is on Santa Rosa Island in the Florida panhandle, was one of Geronimo’s wives, who is buried across the bay from the fort in the military cemetery of Fort Barrancas, near Pensacola. Mount Vernon Barracks, in Alabama north of Mobile, had no cemetery and the deceased were buried in unmarked graves in the forest surrounding the post. Only the men on active duty in U.S. Army Company I, Twelfth Infantry Regiment, were buried in the Mobile National Cemetery.

Allie M. Brennan, the field matron at Fort Sill, recorded Chiricahua POW deaths from 1894 to 1913. The deaths occurring at Fort Sill from 1894 onward are noted by date, when known, and by burial location, and grave numbers are bracketed: [NE1234] for example, is the northeast section of the cemetery, grave number 1234, and graves are in the Main Apache Cemetery unless otherwise noted.

Nine headstones in the present Carlisle Indian Cemetery are marked “Unknown.” That number coincides with the number of Chiricahua deaths known to have occurred at Carlisle but lack headstones. Those remains were “lost” during the relocation of the original cemetery in the 1920s, according to the former librarian of the U.S. Army War College, formerly Carlisle Indian School. With the death rate unabated, Carlisle superintendent Capt. Richard Henry Pratt ceased recruiting Chiricahuas because the statistics hindered his ability to generate revenue from the government and from philanthropists.

Subscriptions to the Carlisle campus newspapers funded the operation of the print shop, one of the vocational training programs. Between 1879 and 1923 the school published *Eadle Keatah Toh*, the *Morning Star*, *Arrow*, *Carlisle Arrow*, *Indian Helper*, *Indian Craftsman*, *Red Man*, and *Red Man and Helper*, either weekly or monthly. The enterprising superintendent devised a number of ways to generate revenue. Prizes were awarded to students who sold the highest number of subscriptions, and a photograph of the deceased Chiricahua infant Eunice Suison was sold for ten cents a copy.

Abbreviated tribal affiliations remain as originally set forth in Gillett’s compilation:

- AV = Arivaipa
- BD = Bedonkohe
- CH = Chiricahua
- MS = Mescalero
- MM = Mimbrenño
- NV = Navajo
- ND = Nednai
- SC = San Carlos
- WS = Warm Springs
- WM = White Mountain
- White = non-Indian

Chiricahua society was matrilineal, so a mother’s affiliation determined her children’s—if the mother was ND, for example, the child was considered to be ND.

If both parents of an individual were from the same tribe, for example ND, the person’s affiliation is shown here as ND without further distinction.

Following a plus sign (+) is the child’s patrilineage, where this differs

from the mother's tribe—thus if the mother was ND and the father was CH, the person's affiliation is shown as ND + CH.

Where an individual's parent also descends from more than one tribe, a slash (/) divides those affiliations, with the mother's tribe listed first in each case; that is, mother's mother/mother's father + father's mother/father's father.

So, for example, ND/CH + WS/BD means the maternal grandmother was ND and maternal grandfather was CH, while the paternal grandmother was WS and paternal grandfather BD. Conjectures are followed by a question mark—SC? or WM? Unknown affiliations are indicated as “Unidentified.”

Ethnocentric language is used only when quoting primary sources. Inevitably, a lot of the surviving contemporary comments about the POWs come from their enemies, captors, and other observers from the dominant culture, with their own prejudices, and not always fully understanding even when sympathetic; this should be borne in mind when reading the biographies.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful to many people whose help is appreciated and I would like to recognize them. Two people in particular, Edwin R. Sweeney and Miriam A. Perrett, are foremost for helping me achieve my goals.

I met Ed in 1987 at Cañon de los Embudos, Sonora, Mexico, the site where the Chiricahuas negotiated their surrender terms in March 1886, a fortuitous place to begin an extraordinary journey into all things Chiricahua. He was completing his research for the biography of Cochise, the celebrated Chiricahua Apache chief. From that time onward, we found mutually beneficial activities that blended well. We made numerous excursions to historic sites pertaining to the Chiricahua and Warm Springs Apaches in the U.S. Southwest and northern Mexico, often in the company of ex-prisoners of war and prisoner-of-war descendants. Our respective research topics inevitably became the subject of the next excursion with the Chiricahua.

While Ed pursued Mangas Coloradas and Geronimo as relentlessly as he had researched Cochise, we corresponded and spoke by phone regularly. In most of our conversations and letters we had some new information to discuss. Those exchanges invariably ended with his encouragement that what I was doing would matter. I am not from an academic background, and such an endeavor gave me pause. His encouragement and faith in me was inspiring.

Unfortunately, a severe, chronic illness occurred from which I am still recovering. As I regained my strength, my desire to complete the book manuscript was rekindled. Ed's friendship during those years had not waned. His comments, suggestions, and constructive criticism have been a tremendous help. I consider him a mentor from whom I have learned much. I am indebted to him in so many ways, and I feel privileged to call him a friend.

Miriam Perrett, who lives in Wales in the United Kingdom, first wrote

to me in 1993. At the time I was living in Cochise Stronghold in the Dragoon Mountains. The letter miraculously arrived from Wales addressed to “Cochise Stronghold, Arizona, USA.” Thus began a flurry of correspondence. We discovered that our respective studies on the Chirichuaa Apaches dovetailed nicely. On her first trip to Arizona we visited Chiricahua place names known well to her through her meticulous investigation. On subsequent trips she was a guest speaker at an international conference on Chiricahua art and became acquainted with Chiricahua prisoner-of-war descendants with whom she shared her research.

My goal for this book was to uncover obscure, unpublished images of prisoners that would provide a measure of humanity to their lives, a window for modern viewers. Miriam’s boundless enthusiasm made the pictorial sleuthing not only productive but fun. Each newly rediscovered image we found tucked away, sometimes in the most unlikely places, was like finding a long buried treasure. Her keen eye correctly identified many images previously unidentified or misidentified, and her effort lends no small contribution to this book.

Along the way I met some extraordinary people with common interests, especially Bud Shapard of Pisaga Forest, North Carolina, and Sherry Robinson of Albuquerque, New Mexico, who became special friends and colleagues.

Others whose comments and suggestion were important in the development of the book are Berndt Kühn of Stockholm, Sweden; Allen Radbourne of Taunton, England; Niels Jürgensen of Aarhus, Denmark; Helge Ingstad of Oslo, Norway; Cynthia Patterson Lewis and Steve Klein at the Martin Luther King Center in Atlanta, Georgia; Woody Skinner, Genevieve Bell, Bernice Tenhaken, and Bob and Linda Schut.

I would like to recognize the Chiricahua and Warm Springs Apaches whose generosity is appreciated. They are Meredith Magoosh Begay, Mildred Imach Cleghorn, Evelyn Martine Gaines, Arlys and Lida Kanseah, Berle and Lynette Kazhe Kanseah, Kathleen Kanseah, Anita and Parker Lester, Jordan and Annette Torres, Melferd Yuzos, and the director of the Mescalero Tribal Museum, Ellyn Bigrope.

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ican Indian Cultural Resources Center, Suitland, Maryland; and Charles Tingley at the St. Augustine Historical Society, St. Augustine, Florida. Other persons who were helpful are Donzella Maupin at Hampton University in Virginia; Edith Willoughby of the Overbrook School for the Blind, Philadelphia; and TSgt. David A. Byrd, USAF Inquiries Branch, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama. I need to thank the staffs at the Newberry Library, Chicago; WGBH Boston; the Smithsonian Institution's National Anthropological Archives, the National Museum of Natural History Department of Anthropology, and the National Museum of the American Indian, all in Washington DC; Sotheby's, New York; the U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle, Pennsylvania; University of Arizona Library, Special Collections, Tucson; Oklahoma Historical Society and the Duncan County Public Library, Oklahoma; the Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown, Ohio; and the Beinecke Library at Yale University.

It was Bill Hoy, former ranger in charge at Fort Bowie, Arizona, who first sparked my interest in Chiricahua history. I appreciate his generosity for the use of his library, treks to Chiricahua sites in Cochise County, his hospitality, and the encouragement he gave a fledgling researcher.

For her abiding support, I am grateful to my mother, Stella Young. For enduring more than two decades of archival and field research I would be remiss if I did not pay special tribute to my children, Marisol Chacón, Dennis Chacón, and Ernesto Delgadillo. They accompanied me to former homelands of the Chiricahua, Warm Springs, and Nednai Apaches in the United States and the northern Mexican states of Sonora and Chihuahua and to U.S. detention sites and Indian boarding schools. Their contributions ranged from camp keeping to serving as auto mechanics, which proved invaluable during off-road adventures traversing flooded rivers, quagmires, and sand traps, and of utmost importance were the IT skills that kept my data safe. During busy graduate studies they assisted with archival research. The final editing could not have been completed without Ernesto's help. They were steadfast in their support and were always cheerful companions on the Apache trail. It is they, and my closest friends Ruben Montaña and Daniel Chafetz, who have been my caretakers for several years due to a catastrophic illness. I am indebted for the physical care and the emotional support they selflessly give.

Incontrovertibly, without the support and encouragement of Jane Griswold Smith and Phoebe Griswold Holzman, this book would not have been possible.

INTRODUCTION | *Miriam A. Perrett*

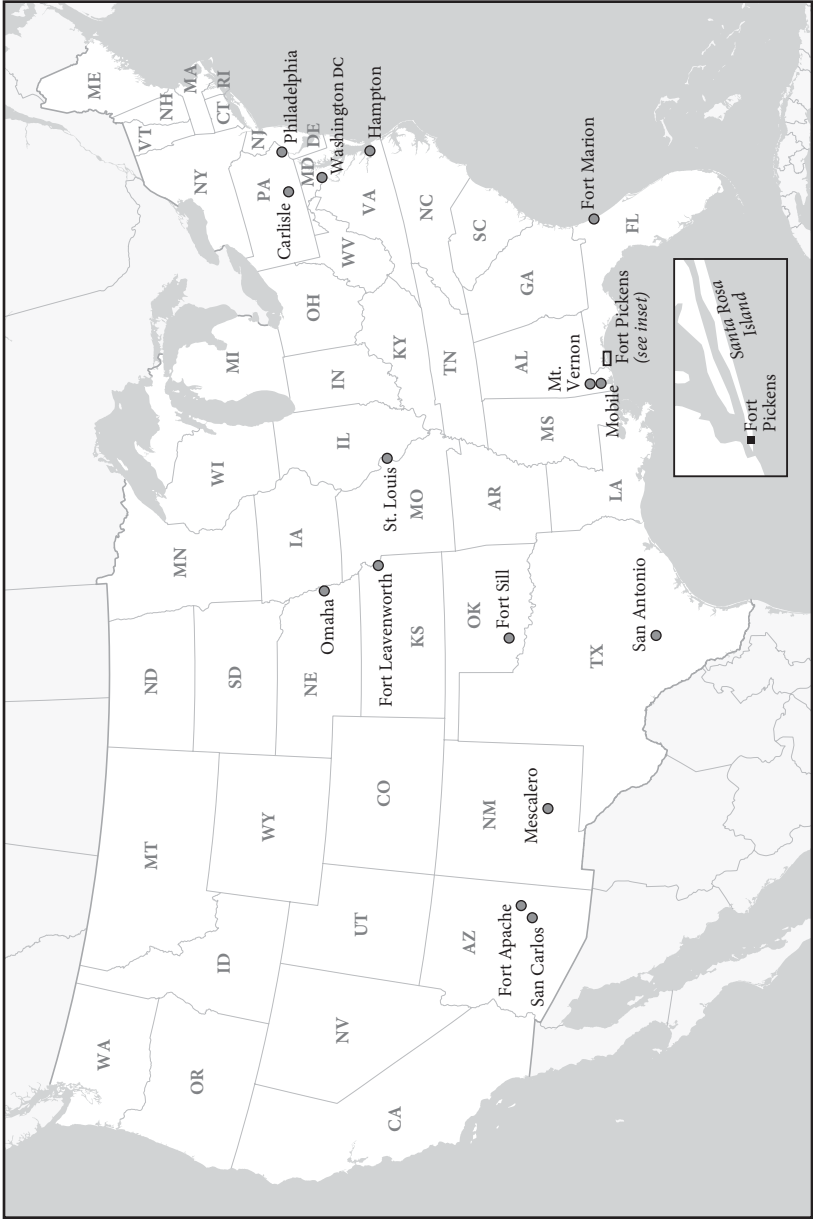
When Gillett Griswold compiled “The Fort Sill Apaches: Their Vital Statistics, Tribal Origins, Antecedents,” during 1958–61, the survivors and descendants of that people were mostly living in two widely separated locations: the area around Fort Sill, Oklahoma, and the Mescalero Apache Reservation in New Mexico.

Neither of these places was their historical homeland, which lay west and southwest from Mescalero, straddling the boundaries of today’s U.S. states of Arizona and New Mexico in the north and of the Mexican states of Sonora and Chihuahua to the south.

Adapting to twentieth-century life in Oklahoma and at Mescalero may have been only the latest stage in a very long journey indeed. The Fort Sill Apaches spoke—some of their descendants still speak—Chiricahua Apache, a member of the Athabascan language family. Based on the geographical distribution of these languages, it is surmised that the North (western Canada and Alaska) is the ancient Athabascan homeland, from which some groups gradually wandered southward, until the most southerly Athabascan outpost of all was established in the Sierra Madre mountains of Mexico by the subgroup of Chiricahua speakers known as the Nednai.¹

However, by the early decades of the nineteenth century, when the oldest of the future Fort Sill Apaches were being born, any southward migrations lay far and forgotten in the past. To be Chiricahua Apache was to be of the Southwest.² Survival depended upon an intimate knowledge of its natural resources and a clear understanding of its human relationships. Apache history was the history of its places—of what had happened to their people beside *that* creek, upon *that* mountain—often with a lesson to be drawn, so that the landscape, through its stories, became a moral as well as a physical resource.³

The relationship with the land ran deeper still. Even today, through the four nights of an Apache girl’s puberty ceremony, the medicine man sings



Map 1. Locations relevant to the prisoners of war



Map 2. Domains of the Chiricahua, Warm Springs, and Nednai Apaches

her, and she dances, into a right relationship with all natural things, from the sun above to the grass beneath her feet.⁴ All these things, in the Apache tradition, are powers in their own right. Not only are they aware of and responsive to the human beings that walk among them, but they may actively initiate contact and offer power for their use. Therefore when Cochise called the rocks of his mountain stronghold his “friends” he was expressing rather more than a whimsical fancy.⁵

Cochise’s stronghold was a natural refuge; the Apaches did not build stone dwellings. Nor did they settle permanently in one place, although they had favourite campsites. They migrated around and beyond their home territory according to season and expediency. Movement—often over many miles—to gather the best wild harvests, or in pursuit of game, loomed large in Chiricahua life. In times of peace a few groups also planted crops, such as maize, beans, and pumpkins.⁶

Other movements were dictated by their fourth and more controversial means of subsistence, namely raiding, especially for cattle and horses. Any surplus spoils would be traded elsewhere for items such as guns, knives, or cotton cloth, which the Apaches were unable to manufacture for themselves. The origins of Apache raiding are debatable, but by the time of the future Fort Sill Apaches it was an indispensable feature of the Apache economy and constituted a rite of passage into manhood for Chiricahua boys. The role of raiding in achieving manhood made adoption of a less provocative lifestyle culturally problematic.⁷

Interactions with neighboring Apachean groups—Navajos, Mescaleños, Western Apaches—were not always friendly, but with the latter two in particular there was a good deal of social contact, including intermarriage. As a result, when the Chiricahuas were sent into exile in 1886, some members of these other groups shared their captivity, while a number of Chiricahuas who had married away from their own people remained behind in the Southwest.⁸

Between the various bands of Chiricahua speakers, the links were closer still, such that it is not always easy to distinguish one from another in the historical record. Later nineteenth- and early twentieth-century accounts generally recognise the Chokonon (Cochise’s people), whose home territory spanned the Dragoon, Dos Cabezas, and Chiricahua Mountains in southeastern Arizona, and the Nednai, Nednhi, or Netdahe, who were more at home in the mountains of northwestern Chihuahua, Mexico.

Terminology for the northern and eastern bands was more variable.

Geronimo, for example, distinguished between his own people, the Bedonkohe, based around the headwaters of the Gila River in west-central New Mexico, and Victorio's people, the Chihenne, centered upon the Warm Springs of the Alamosa valley. Griswold uses three groupings: Bedonkohe (Geronimo's kin, the descendants of Chief Mahko), Mimbrenño (the connections of Mangas Coloradas), and Warm Springs (the bands under the leadership of Victorio and Loco).⁹

Within a sense of being at home in a particular area, the composition of local groupings larger than the extended family seems to have been fairly fluid, groups tending to coalesce around a strong leader and to fragment, or be absorbed elsewhere, if no acceptable successor emerged after his death.¹⁰ Kinship ties, however, were taken very seriously indeed. Unlike the European view of genealogy, which tends to emphasize descent in the male line, relationships through women were of prime importance to the Apache. This included marriage relationships. A son-in-law was likely to settle temporarily or permanently with his wife's family group (or that of his wives—the practice of marrying more than one sister was quite widespread) and was expected to give service to his wife's parents. Duty to one's in-laws outlasted the death of a spouse, with an expectation of remarriage within their kin group unless formally excused. Cousins, growing up in close proximity, counted as brothers and sisters.¹¹

Thus although formal political structures were lacking, kinships within and beyond the local group created a powerful alternative network of Apache loyalties. It often remained invisible and incomprehensible to outsiders. They were left to puzzle over such mysteries as why A had bolted from the reservation but B and C had not, and why B, but not C, would scout in pursuit of A.

This is one reason why Griswold's genealogy is such a treasure; it records marriages and kinships. In particular, it includes the names and connections of Apache women and children, who too often have been reduced in the historical record to mere statistics: so many dependants of a household head; so many killed or dead of disease. The records and recollections we do have indicate that Apache women—as well as being active providers for their families—were also influential (if not always public) participants in decision making. Some, too, served as peace envoys; others fought and raided alongside their men or achieved epic escapes from Mexican captivity through hundreds of miles of difficult terrain.¹² And as Apache women did not resemble the stereotypical nineteenth-

century “angel in the house” confined in stays and crinoline, so the famous warriors of Apache history are in many ways the antithesis of that male Wild West archetype, the lone stranger who drifts into a town, causes mayhem or cleans up, and drifts out again. Their decisions were made in the context of homeland, family, and community; they knew where they wanted to be, and they wanted their families with them.¹³

The traditional cultural toolkit of the nineteenth-century Chiricahuas was, with one notable exception, ideally suited to long residence in one region, building over the years and with each circle of the seasons a more intimate knowledge of its geography and natural resources, a stronger web of ties between its people, and a deeper sense of relationship with its powers. It could also accommodate gradual migration, a slow, exploratory drift over many generations, with time to become “landwise” as they went.

The exception, of course, was raiding, which always bore the risk of provoking a backlash too powerful to withstand; to that extent, Apache culture carried within it the potential for its own destruction. Nonetheless, it had survived everything thrown at it by other indigenous inhabitants of the region and by the authorities in Mexico—though the latter did persuade some Apaches to settle peaceably near towns and draw rations. But by the middle of the nineteenth century a new power was on the move, with an agenda in which the traditional Apache lifeway (with or without raiding) figured only as an obstacle to progress.¹⁴ What happened to the Chiricahuas in consequence was probably unprecedented in the history of their kind: a series of sudden enforced uprootings, one after the other, in which this alien power dictated not only the times of their departure but their destinations and, increasingly, the conditions of their lives when they arrived.

Euro-Americans had begun to filter into the northern parts of Chiricahua territory during the 1820s, as trappers, traders, and entrepreneurs. The United States–Mexican war of 1846–48 further established them in the area as a military and political power, and the Gadsden Purchase of 1853 moved the international boundary southward to the present U.S.–Mexican border. Thenceforth the homelands of the Bedonkohe, Mimbrenño, Warm Springs and Chokonon (though not the Nednai) lay under American jurisdiction, and their inhabitants—theoretically—were at peace with Mexico.

This was not the Chiricahuas’ perception. They had not signed any

treaty, and Apache-Mexican relations were currently hostile in the extreme. The oldest of the future Fort Sill prisoners had seen a decade or two of uneasy peace give way to open warfare as the struggle for Mexican independence (1810–21), and subsequent factional in-fighting, drew vital resources away from the presidios of northern Sonora and Chihuahua and the Apache *establecimientos de paz* they supported. With the rationing system in disarray, the old vicious circle of raids, reprisals, and revenge for reprisals began again. Vast tracts of Sonora and Chihuahua were depopulated as the inhabitants were killed or fled. Both states declared bounties on Apache scalps, prompting an unsavory trade in which several Anglo-Americans achieved notoriety.¹⁵

In 1846, nonetheless, the Mimbrenos welcomed U.S. troops as potential allies against the Mexicans. But after the peace, conflicts of interest and outlook became apparent. American insistence on repatriating the Apaches' Mexican captives was particularly resented, as there were many Apaches being held captive in Mexico.

Increased American settlement and enterprise followed hard on the heels of the peace and led to friction. As the Spanish had done earlier, the Americans resorted to treaties and rations, and during the 1850s the Mimbrenos and Warm Springs groups also began to experiment with farming, helped and encouraged by their agent, Dr. Michael Steck.

In the south Cochise's Chokonens reached a *modus vivendi* (of sorts) with the Butterfield Stage personnel and other local incomers, doing most of their raiding in Mexico.

Peace was always merely relative, however, and events at the end of the decade upset even this fragile equilibrium. The Santa Rita copper mines reopened; gold was struck in the mountains nearby in 1859; prospectors poured in; new towns sprang up—all in the heart of Mimbrenio territory. Deer and other game became scarce. The story of Mangas Coloradas's beating by miners has been questioned, but true or false, relations between the Chiricahua groups and the encroaching settlers were rapidly deteriorating.¹⁶

Then in late January of 1861 came the notorious "Bascom Affair." A mistaken accusation against Cochise, of kidnapping a Mexican boy named Felix Telles, was mismanaged into a hostage crisis.¹⁷ It ended with nine Mexicans, four Americans, and six Apaches (three of them close relatives of Cochise) deliberately and unpleasantly done to death, setting the tone for all too much that followed on both sides in the ensuing wars.¹⁸ The

murder of Mangas Coloradas under a flag of truce in January 1863 incensed the Chiricahuas still further.

By the end of the decade, although never conclusively defeated in battle, the Chiricahuas were war-weary and much reduced in numbers.¹⁹ The younger generation had grown up “sleeping with one eye open” in case the soldiers came.²⁰ The Americans, counting the human and financial cost of Apache depredations, were also ready for peace.²¹

Cochise, by treaty, secured a reservation on Chokonon territory.²² He died there in 1874, by which time it seemed as if the Warm Springs Apaches too would be settled on the land of their choice at Ojo Caliente.²³

By 1875 the various Apache groups in Arizona and New Mexico had been allocated reservations, many in their traditional homelands, and the army, under Brigadier General George Crook, was busy rounding up Apaches still loose in the mountains. Then officialdom in Washington rewrote the rules.

The new “concentration” policy, driven by administrative economies of scale and by pressure to open land for settlement, was applied first to the Western Apache and associated groups. Then a murder by Apaches on the Chiricahua Reservation provided a convenient excuse for closure, and early in June 1876 San Carlos agent John P. Clum arrived to remove the inhabitants. In consequence rifts already existing among the Apaches there were deepened, and less than half of them followed Cochise’s sons Taza and Naiche to San Carlos. Others left for Ojo Caliente, while the rest—four hundred or more—fled secretly to Mexico with Geronimo and the Nednai chief Juh.²⁴

Some of this group, including Geronimo, reappeared north of the border and settled at Ojo Caliente. There, in April 1877, he and others were arrested by John Clum and taken with their people to San Carlos.²⁵ With them, by order of the Indian commissioner, went also Victorio and around 340 Warm Springs and Mimbrenño Apaches.²⁶

At San Carlos they experienced a long summer of smallpox, malaria, short rations, and hostility from neighbors on the reservation. On September 2, 1877, Victorio and Loco’s people left the reservation, reappearing a month later at Fort Wingate in Navajo country. The army, pragmatically, allowed them to return to Ojo Caliente while their future was debated; the debate took several months.²⁷ Meanwhile, Geronimo endured San Carlos until April 1878 and then left for Mexico, apparently in the aftermath of a family tragedy.²⁸

In October the Apache settlement at Ojo Caliente was finally broken up on instructions from the Office of Indian Affairs. It was a fiasco: only Loco and 172 followers were brought to San Carlos; the rest scattered into the hills, including Victorio and most of the fighting men of his and Loco's bands.

The following year arrangements were in train to settle the Ojo Caliente bands on the Mescalero Reservation. But Victorio heard a rumor of indictments against him for horse stealing and murder, and in August 1879 his band, along with a few Mescaleros, broke away again and went to war in earnest.²⁹

Juh and Geronimo were negotiated back in by Lieutenant Harry L. Haskell, surrendering in December 1879. With around one hundred followers they joined Loco's people and the Chokonens who had been at San Carlos continuously since 1876. The latter were now led by Naiche, Taza having died in Washington in 1876, on an Apache delegation-cum-Wild West show trip organised by John Clum.³⁰

Soldiers have paid tribute to Victorio's exceptional skill as a military strategist, and he confounded his enemies for many months. But in May and June of 1880 he suffered heavy casualties in battles north of the border and fled south.

Mexico proved to be no safe haven. On October 15, 1880, as Victorio's people made for Tres Castillos, northeast of the Sierra de la Pagajosa in Chihuahua, they were surprised by Mexican troops under Joaquín Terrazas. Seventy-eight Apaches were killed; sixty-eight captive women and children, along with the scalps of the dead, were exhibited in a triumphal procession through the city of Chihuahua. Victorio himself was dead, some say by his own hand.³¹

The old Warm Springs leader Nana gathered up the few survivors. Receiving no guarantee of refuge at San Carlos or Mescalero, he raided through southern New Mexico in late July 1881 and then disappeared into Mexico again.³²

On the San Carlos Reservation 1881 had been an uneasy year owing to the activities of the Cibecue medicine man Nochaydelklinne. His increasingly popular medicine dances, talk of raising the dead, and alleged predictions of a time when all the white people would be gone from the country excited the Apaches and alarmed everyone else. Late that summer Nochaydelklinne and several others on both sides were killed in the violent clashes and Apache scout mutiny that followed his arrest.

No one in authority seems to have considered this a particularly “Chiricahua” affair, but two bands with both White Mountain Apache and Chiricahua connections (George’s and Bonito’s) were implicated. An attempt by troops to arrest the two leaders spread alarm among the Chiricahuas, and on the night of September 30, 1881, the Chiricahuas fled the reservation. Among them were not only the breakaway veterans Juh and Geronimo but many Chokonens, such as Naiche, who had never gone out before. It was not a unanimous decision, however; Loco and his Warm Springs people, in particular, stayed behind.³³

On the night of April 18, 1882, a band of the absent warriors slipped onto the reservation, rounded up those who had stayed behind, and led them away to Mexico—more of a kidnap than a rescue, according to some of those removed.³⁴ The expedition, as ever, was accompanied by depredations and killings, as the Apaches lived off the country en route.³⁵

Troops pursued them into Chihuahua and engaged but failed to halt them. Then disaster overtook them from another quarter: between Janos and Bavispe a Mexican force under Colonel Lorenzo Garcia attacked the straggling procession of Apaches, mowing down men, women, and children alike; seventy-eight were killed and thirty-three were taken into captivity.³⁶

Later that year a Mexican attack at Casas Grandes cost the Chiricahuas a dozen or more killed and around thirty captured, ambushed as they lay asleep after a drinking party.³⁷ Members of Juh’s family were killed, and his daughter Jacal was seriously wounded, in a later Mexican attack; and Juh himself died by drowning in 1883.³⁸

The Chiricahuas raided north of the border. Chatto’s expedition of March 1883, notorious for the killings of Judge and Mrs. McComas and the kidnapping of their son Charlie, proved a turning point in the Chiricahuas’ struggle with the U.S. Army.³⁹ Until then their Sierra Madre hideouts had remained terra incognita for the army. But the White Mountain Apache Panayotishn (“Peaches”), who had married into Chatto’s band, had had enough of the Chiricahua warpath; he left Chatto’s party, returned to the reservation, and expressed himself willing to act as an army guide.⁴⁰

With Mexican consent Peaches led Crook’s expeditionary force into the Sierra Madre during the summer of 1883. A strike by the scouts obtained several prisoners and demonstrated to the Chiricahuas that they were no longer safe in their mountain fastness. Crook was successful in

persuading them to return to the reservation, although it would be many months before the last groups trickled in.⁴¹

Now officially prisoners of war, the Chiricahuas were placed under the care of the army, initially at San Carlos in the summer of 1883, then from May 1884 at Turkey Creek on the Fort Apache reservation. There, under the watchful but friendly eye of young Lieutenant Britton Davis, they were encouraged to take up farming.⁴² One man rebelled: Kaahteney, a young leader from Victorio's band unused to reservation life, was convicted of plotting armed resistance and was sent to Alcatraz.⁴³

The Chiricahuas may have accepted the inevitability of farming, but they protested bitterly at other interference with their way of life. After their leaders had confronted Davis en masse over the army's bans on wife beating and drinking *tiswin*, their traditional fermented corn beer, their apprehension over the likely outcome led to another departure from the reservation, on the evening of May 17, 1885.

This time nearly three-quarters of the five hundred or so Chiricahuas on the reservation stayed behind. The women may well have influenced this, as they were reported to be heartily sick of life on the run.⁴⁴ Among the men who did not go out was Chatto, the raider of 1883; now hoping, via the Americans, to retrieve his children and wife Ish-chash from Mexican captivity, he was not about to jeopardize their goodwill or forgive anyone else for doing so.⁴⁵

Geronimo went out. So did the Warm Springs veteran Nana, who had taken a leading role in the row with Davis. Tzegojuni (known as Huera), a noted brewer of *tiswin*, left too, along with her husband Mangas, the son of Mangas Coloradas. So did Naiche and Chihuahua with their Chokonens, but there is evidence that Geronimo may willfully have alarmed them into flight. Certainly Chihuahua's people and part of Naiche's family tried to return to the reservation, but they ran into a fight with Davis's Apache scouts, who were in pursuit.⁴⁶

The army took the chase into Mexico, again with companies of Apache scouts—Chatto and other Chiricahuas now prominent among them. In attacks during the summer the scouts killed eight people and captured thirty women and children, marching their prisoners back over the border to Fort Bowie. Many relatives of Geronimo, Chihuahua, and Naiche were among those held.⁴⁷

Revenge on the scouts for these attacks undoubtedly underlay the ferocious raid to the White Mountains led by Chihuahua's brother Jolsanny

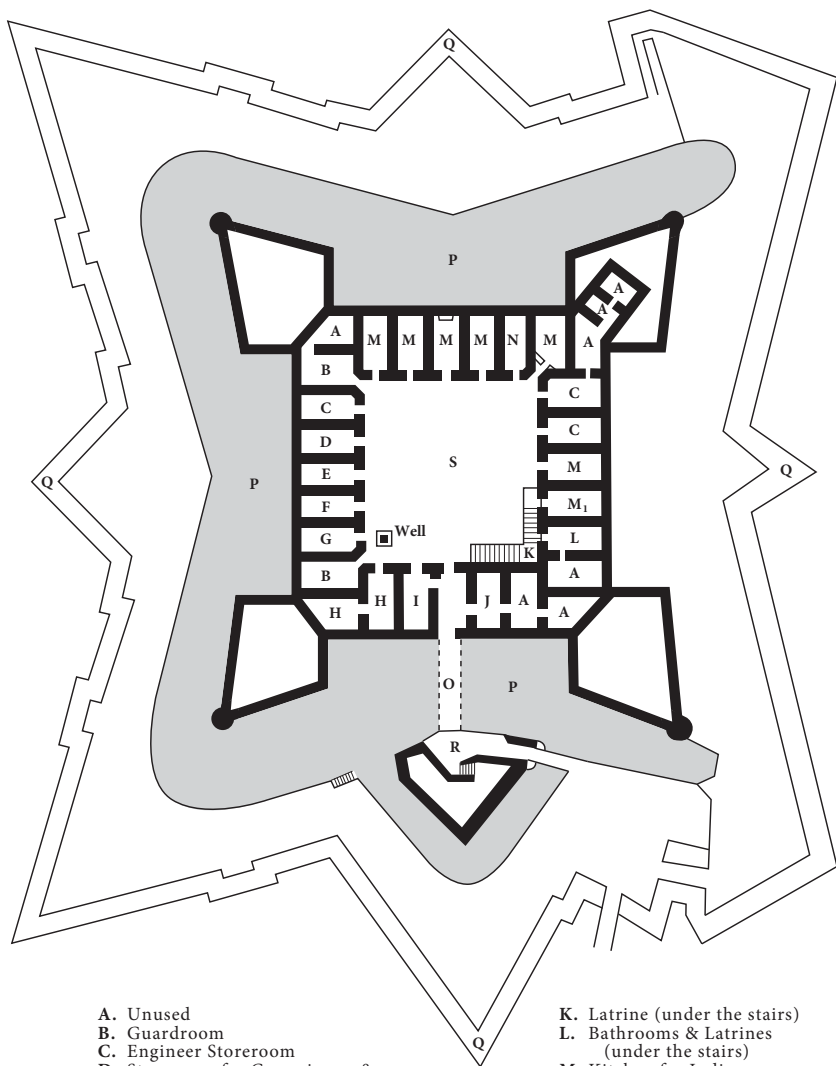
in November 1885, for twenty of his victims were Apaches of both sexes.⁴⁸ Meanwhile Geronimo and others had made up their losses by snatching women from the reservation to join their band.⁴⁹

A further scout expedition under Captain Emmet Crawford made contact with the holdouts in January 1886. Negotiations were complicated by the arrival of Mexican irregular troops, who fired upon the Americans, fatally wounding Crawford. However, his second-in-command, Lieutenant Marion Maus, was able to leave the area with nine Apache hostages and a promise from the rest to meet the army for talks.⁵⁰

The outcome of those talks, held with General Crook at Embudos Canyon on March 25 and 27, 1886, is well known: the surrender of Chihuahua, Jolsanny, “Catle” (probably Colle), Naiche, and Geronimo and the subsequent flight of the latter two, along with thirty-seven others.⁵¹ The Apaches had some trust in Crook as a fair dealer; the perennial question, however, was whether the army could protect them from indictment by the civil authorities. Geronimo, in particular, was all too aware that popular opinion in Arizona was not on his side.⁵²

Reunited with their captured kin at Fort Bowie, Chihuahua’s party of seventy-seven—including several relatives of Naiche and Geronimo who had stayed behind—was dispatched by train to Fort Marion near St. Augustine, Florida, which had a history of use for confining Indians in earlier wars. The fort was by now in a state of some disrepair, and Chihuahua’s group was obliged to camp elsewhere for two months pending repairs and the digging of a well.⁵³

Next to arrive at Fort Marion was a Washington delegation of thirteen Chiricahua men and women, headed by Chatto and Loco. Crook, faced with the need to take executive action at Embudos, had accepted the holdouts’ surrender on condition that “they should be sent East for not exceeding two years, taking with them such of the families as so desired.”⁵⁴ But Crook had been replaced almost immediately by Brigadier General Nelson Miles, and by July Miles was thinking in terms of a total Chiricahua removal from Arizona if this could be negotiated.⁵⁵ Hence the delegation to Washington; but when it became clear that Chatto’s company only wished to stay in Arizona and improve their farms, they were dispatched with fair words and (in Chatto’s case) a silver medal, while some furious confabulation went on behind the scenes. On the way home from Washington the delegates were suddenly rerouted to Fort Leavenworth in Kansas, where they were further cajoled and threatened into agreeing to their people’s removal to



- A. Unused
- B. Guardroom
- C. Engineer Storeroom
- D. Storeroom for Commissary & St. Francis Barracks
- E. Magazine for St. Francis Barracks
- F. Storeroom for Engineer & Ordnance
- G. Dispensary & Schoolroom for Indians
- H. Commissary for Indians
- I. Schoolroom and Office for Indians
- J. Storeroom

- K. Latrine (under the stairs)
- L. Bathrooms & Latrines (under the stairs)
- M. Kitchen for Indians
- M₁ Kitchen for Indians (under the stairs)
- N. Kitchen for Soldiers
- O. Draw Bridge
- P. Moat
- Q. Wall
- R. Ravelin
- S. Courtyard

Map 3. Fort Marion room usage

another reservation, location unspecified. The removal part of it began at once: the delegation was packed off to Florida, arriving on September 20.⁵⁶

Meanwhile, in Arizona, all the Chiricahuas who since 1883 had remained peacefully on the reservation or had served as army scouts were rounded up and herded into wagons to be taken to the railway. Having little or no idea of where they were going, many (not unnaturally) feared the worst; but even when they understood that their fate was to be exile in Florida rather than summary execution, they had good reason to feel acutely betrayed.⁵⁷

At Fort Marion they were not strictly confined, being allowed to come and go freely so long as they were back by nightfall; weekend excursions were arranged for them; and the women especially were on regular visiting terms with the St. Augustine residents, with Spanish speakers like the ex-Mexican captives Huera and Siki (Syekonke) being in particular social demand.⁵⁸

The frequent comings and goings that were permitted between fort and town no doubt distracted the Apaches somewhat from the misery of exile—but also increased their exposure to unfamiliar germs. With the arrival of the Chiricahuas from the reservation Fort Marion became seriously overcrowded.⁵⁹ Housed in tents crammed closely on the ramps, exposed to mosquitoes and an unfamiliar climate, and sharing limited sanitation arrangements, the Apaches were vulnerable to any infection or contagion in the area. Malaria, with dysentery, killed a man only weeks after Chihuahua's arrival; in due course respiratory infections and tuberculosis also appeared. There were 367 cases of serious illness during the year at Fort Marion, twenty-one of them fatal.⁶⁰

There were also difficulties with inadequate food rations and supplies of clothing, which no doubt contributed to the increase in sickness among the prisoners. Friends in town had to help out with food parcels and cloth for garments. In time the Apaches themselves were able to supplement the official issue from money earned by selling art and craft items, an activity they were to continue throughout their years of imprisonment.⁶¹ Besides providing an income, it helped to keep traditional Chiricahua crafts alive in the POW community, while also offering a chance to experiment with unfamiliar media and artistic styles that they encountered. Later artworks such as Naiche's hide paintings and the drawings by his brother-in-law Gokliz unite elements from Euro-American and Plains Indian art with a loving portrayal of the life of their own people.⁶²

Back in the Southwest, a desperate peace mission by a young army officer and two Chiricahua scouts finally achieved what military action had not. Lieutenant Charles Gatewood, guided by Kayihtah and Martine, found Naiche and Geronimo and persuaded them to surrender to Miles, which they duly did at Skeleton Canyon on September 4, 1886. They were tired and war-worn, and confirmation from Gatewood that all their people had been sent away into exile was a heavy blow indeed.⁶³

Seven of the band absconded after the surrender and fled back into Mexico.⁶⁴ The rest of the party—including Martine and Kayihtah, by way of gratitude for their services—were sent by train to be held at San Antonio, Texas, against a background of frantic and angry communications between Washington and Arizona about the terms of the surrender. Unlike Crook, Miles had committed nothing to paper. Naiche and Geronimo both maintained that the conditions had been safe conduct and reunion with their exiled families within five days.⁶⁵ If so, the terms were flouted from the outset, for although the women and children in Naiche's group were sent on from San Antonio to Fort Marion, the men and boys were instead imprisoned at Fort Pickens in Pensacola. In November they were joined by Mangas; his group had parted from the rest in the summer of 1885 and had refrained from raiding until giving themselves up.⁶⁶

Although a local order of nuns was by now providing schooling at Fort Marion, boarding schools were becoming a preferred instrument of Indian acculturation. There were several of these schools in existence, but for a variety of reasons, the War Department's attention focused on Captain Richard Henry Pratt's Indian School, established in 1879 on the former army post at Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Pratt had links with Fort Marion; indeed his involvement with Indian education had begun with the program he established for the Kiowa, Cheyenne, and other Plains Indians imprisoned there under his charge from 1875 to 1878.⁶⁷ Moreover, by 1886 there were already a number of young Apaches at Carlisle, recruited a couple of years earlier, Loco's son Dadespuna (Dexter Loco) being one.

Commandant Loomis L. Langdon, who was initially in charge of the Fort Marion prisoners, recommended that the children should attend Carlisle, but only if the rest of the Chiricahuas, or at least the parents among them, were sent to live there as well.⁶⁸ However, Langdon was shortly transferred to Fort Pickens to supervise Geronimo and Naiche's group, and matters were decided otherwise. In a series of three raids by the War Department, starting in October 1886, 106 children and young

people, including several married couples, were forcibly taken away from among the prisoners of war, to the great distress of parents and children alike. Others were later added to their number. Surviving Chiricahuas had vivid recollections of these raids—of children desperately hidden under bundles of cloth or women's skirts; young Nahdoyah (Mabel Jozhe) was carried off in such haste that she lost a shoe and traveled with only one.⁶⁹

Boarding school can be a traumatic experience for a child, even without the aggravating factors present in the case of the Chiricahuas. The avowed philosophy of Carlisle and other such establishments was to de-Indianize their pupils, by force if necessary; as Pratt himself put it, "I believe in immersing the Indians in our civilization and when we get them under holding them there until they are thoroughly soaked."⁷⁰ To this end the enrollees were stripped of markers signifying that they were Chiricahua. The boys' hair was cut short and both sexes had to wear European-style uniforms. Their names were amended or changed altogether to fit the Anglo norm: each child was arbitrarily assigned an Anglo first name.⁷¹ Surnames included approximations of the child's own name (for example, Eli Hunlona, Viola Ziah); the father's name, especially if well known (Ramona Chihuahua); the husband's name (Lucy Tsisnah); or an Anglo surname (Bruce Patterson, Miriam Patton). English was to be the language of communication.⁷² Euro-American values and Christian belief were to be inculcated, reflecting the contemporary confidence that these represented a higher evolution toward which others should aspire.⁷³ Discipline was strict, on military lines; although Pratt could be kind and genial, Geronimo's kinsman Betzinez remembered also Pratt's hostility to criticism and recalled the cell in which unruly students were confined.⁷⁴

An added indignity was that many of these "schoolchildren" were nearly or entirely adults.⁷⁵ They were accustomed to being treated as such in their own community—gatherers, providers, and young mothers, such as Annette Suison and Hulda Kinzhuna; or warriors, apprentice warriors, and Washington delegates.⁷⁶ Even the younger children had experienced hardships and dangers their teachers could scarcely imagine.⁷⁷

Cruel separation from family, followed by a serious and sustained assault on identity—truly, Pratt and others of a like persuasion were paving the road to hell with what they considered to be good intentions. A few Chiricahua pupils, such as Juh's son Daklugie, later expressed their outrage; what most of them felt and suffered will never be fully known.⁷⁸

Some, like Duncan Balatchu, escaped and ran home to their families; a few, such as Knox Nostlin (Neegonezn), managed to get themselves expelled.

Despite all this, some of the pupils recognized that they were gleaning valuable knowledge for the future.⁷⁹ They met young people from other tribes and gained awareness of a wider world than they had known, in which some of them settled after they had graduated.⁸⁰ Those who returned to their own people brought with them mastery of English and experience of how Anglo-American society worked and thought, essential tools for the Chiricahuas' interactions with their captors and with the surrounding communities.⁸¹

The Carlisle curriculum also laid a strong emphasis on the acquisition of practical skills. Activities for boys ranged from building and blacksmithing to printing and photography; girls learned cookery, sewing, nursing, and other arts considered appropriate to their sex. The school itself had a farm and was well equipped with a variety of workshop facilities from a dressmaking shop to a smithy.⁸² In addition students were sent out on lengthy paid work placements to farms and private homes, to extend their skills and learn about domestic life in the dominant culture. Some of these placements led to affectionate relationships with employers; and some students became very attached to the school community itself.⁸³

Yet, tragically, Carlisle was more dangerous for the Chiricahua children than life on the warpath with Mexicans and the U.S. Army in pursuit. Like Fort Marion, the school proved a fruitful ground for the spread of TB and other ailments, and many of the young people taken there never saw their parents again. By the end of 1889 at least forty-five Chiricahua children had died, and others had been sent back to their families mortally ill.⁸⁴ A collation of the individuals listed in the biographies in this book indicates that the overall premature death rate among the 177 POW children and youth known to have been enrolled in day and boarding schools was 43 percent.

Meanwhile at Fort Marion, after a high-profile visit and report by Herbert Welsh of the Indian Rights Association, conditions were proving an embarrassment to the authorities.⁸⁵ Something had to be done. The wives and children of the group at Fort Pickens (where nobody had died so far)⁸⁶ were allowed to join their menfolk in Pensacola. The rest of the Fort Marion contingent was transferred to Mount Vernon, near Mobile, Alabama, arriving on April 28, 1887. A year later the Apaches from Fort Pick-

ens were finally sent to join them—depriving Pensacola of a popular visitor attraction.⁸⁷

Their new location was an improvement in terms of space but little else.⁸⁸ The TB, malaria, and other diseases that had gained a grip on the Apaches in Florida continued their rampage through the community, no doubt assisted by the humid climate. At the end of 1889 an army investigation reported that “a number equal to one quarter of those brought East has died in three and a half years.”⁸⁹

General Crook visited, finding the prisoners thoroughly demoralized and despondent. He and others therefore attempted in 1890 to secure their removal from Mount Vernon to the army post at Fort Sill, which was then in Indian Territory. However, the idea of bringing the Chiricahuas even as far west as Oklahoma ran into strident opposition, there were plans to open Indian Territory to settlers, and Crook’s death that same year was a further blow to the campaign; nothing came of it.⁹⁰

Morale at Mount Vernon was improved somewhat by including the Chiricahua men in a current army initiative to enlist Indians. This was at least a nod toward their lost warrior status, and in May 1891 forty-six of them joined Company I, Twelfth Infantry. Some of the older men’s forenames found in Griswold’s compilation date from this enlistment, as do their short haircuts seen thereafter in many photographs of the prisoner-of-war period. The Chiricahua soldiers were not sent on active service, but were trained and drilled, and learned English, basic mathematics, and practical skills—such as carpentry, which they applied in building a new and better Apache village of frame houses.⁹¹

Now that they had houses, housekeeping matters became a major focus in the acculturation of the Chiricahuas. The women had already learned sewing in the American style at Fort Marion; now such issues as domestic cleanliness and the use of chairs and tables were urged upon them.⁹²

The Chiricahuas also became acquainted with Anglo-American sports and games. Strenuous physical training was a feature of the Apache upbringing for both sexes, for serious practical reasons—even children had to be fit enough to walk long distances and run fast when pursued. They had traditional sports of their own, such as horse racing, and the men’s hoop and pole game.⁹³ Now they began to add new ones to their repertoire. Soldiers of Company I took part in athletic competitions.⁹⁴ Young people schooled at Carlisle and elsewhere were introduced to new activities ranging from football and boxing to bag races.⁹⁵ Baseball was to be-

come a favorite sport in the captivity years and afterward; one of the Chiricahuas' first exploits after being freed was a resounding defeat of the baseball team at Cloudcroft, New Mexico.⁹⁶

Schooling was provided on site at Mount Vernon by the Massachusetts Indian Association. The Apaches' schoolteachers also functioned as missionaries. Christmas was celebrated from 1889 onward with presents for the children and a decorated tree, and some of the Chiricahuas seem to have been genuinely anxious to understand and practice the new religion.⁹⁷

Again a few of the older children were sent away to school, such as Naiche's son Paul, and Sophie, daughter of the former scout Toclanny, this time to the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute in Virginia and not in such numbers. There they were educated alongside not only Indians of other tribes but also black students, who were in the majority at Hampton.⁹⁸

As the years went by, frustration set in at Mount Vernon. Ostensibly the Chiricahuas were being encouraged to "live like white people," but an essential ingredient was missing—the opportunity to earn a truly independent living. Eight years after their removal from Arizona they were still asking—as they had done at every conference held with them—for farms to replace those they had lost on the reservation.⁹⁹ Under the circumstances it is hardly surprising that despair—in both sexes—found expression from time to time in drunkenness and quarrels; there were several violent deaths. Apaches were by no means the only heavy drinkers in the area, or indeed on the army post itself—two of the Chiricahuas who died (Dutchy and Ditoen) were murdered by white soldiers who were also the worse for alcohol.¹⁰⁰

At last, in the autumn of 1894, the War Department secured the permissions necessary to transfer the Chiricahuas to Fort Sill.¹⁰¹ There was still apparently no question of setting them free or returning them home, but with a better climate and land suitable for agriculture, Fort Sill offered at least a prospect that they might become self-supporting. Cattle ranching was to be the principal enterprise, with some growing of sorghum and other crops such as beans and melons—a congenial order of priorities for the men, who were accustomed to handling cattle from their raiding days. Returning Carlisle students, such as Daklugie, were able to contribute a good deal of farming expertise.¹⁰²

Here they were allowed to establish twelve separate villages, spaced out

across the post and based on kinship groups in the traditional manner. The Indian army unit at Fort Sill (Troop L, Seventh Cavalry) was disbanded in May 1897, but the village headmen and later a few others were retained on the army rolls as scouts, with responsibility for maintaining order.¹⁰³

The ranching and farming did not always run smoothly, but gradually the Chiricahua enterprise stabilized and began to make a profit.¹⁰⁴ Those in charge of the prisoners were impressed by the Apaches' hard work and by their trustworthiness in a situation where, of necessity, they could not be closely supervised at all times.¹⁰⁵

In the autumn of 1898 some of the group had a holiday of sorts. Twenty-two men, women, and children attended the Trans Mississippi and International Exposition at Omaha to represent the Fort Sill Apaches. They found at least one old acquaintance among the other Apache contingent there, who had come from San Carlos.¹⁰⁶

Missionary input was resumed at Fort Sill, with the Catholic and the Dutch Reformed churches providing not only religious but social services. These included an orphanage and a school for the younger children, although some use of boarding schools—notably those at Anadarko and Chilocco—also continued.¹⁰⁷

Churchgoing and church-related activities became a regular part of Chiricahua spiritual and social life, coexisting with traditional Apache beliefs and practices such as healing ceremonies, the girls' puberty feast, and the Mountain Spirit dancers.¹⁰⁸ This spiritual heritage, which they held onto in the face of disapproval and some outright opposition, was all the more valuable now that the outward symbols of identity, such as clothing, housing, diet, and occupation, increasingly reflected the new world of exile in which they had to survive.¹⁰⁹

One of the Apache customs that underwent an evolution during the years of captivity was marriage. Although some preexisting plural marriages (Naiche's to Eclahheh and Haozinne, for example) survived until death intervened, monogamy increasingly became the norm. However, divorce had never carried the stigma for Chiricahuas that it did for churchgoing Euro-Americans. Either partner could initiate it, and remarriage after divorce was, if anything, traditionally encouraged. Thus alongside lifelong attachment to one partner, divorce became a kind of serial substitute for polygamy and also, in effect, for polyandry, which was not a Chiricahua tradition.¹¹⁰

Despite their ranching successes and the continuance of their spiritual traditions, all was not well with the Chiricahuas. Even in the healthier Oklahoma climate, disease continued to claim alarming numbers of lives prematurely.¹¹¹ The old people, too, were dying in exile, still prisoners of war. From time to time there were discussions between the War Department and the Department of the Interior about a handover, but the vexed question was always: “Where will they live?”

Ostensibly (and vitally to the Chiricahuas’ morale), this question had already been answered: it had been promised that they were settled at Fort Sill in perpetuity and would take over the land if and when the military post was abandoned.¹¹² With this in view, any work they put into improving the land and the cattle herd was a long-term investment, and the younger people, at least—those who had been born in captivity and had never known the Chiricahua heartlands—could begin to feel they had a home.

However, as early as 1902, elements within the War Department were raising the specter of yet another Chiricahua removal in order to release Fort Sill for use in artillery training. Opponents of the scheme (including Richard Pratt of Carlisle School) managed to hold it off at that point, but the political maneuvering continued, and by 1906 the Chiricahuas themselves were well aware of the threat. Those who were not by now wholeheartedly committed to life in Oklahoma pleaded to be returned home to the Southwest.

The upshot was a discussion with Secretary of War W. H. Taft and permission to investigate the possibilities at Ojo Caliente. This proved premature—allowing the Chiricahuas back into Arizona or New Mexico was still a political issue, even twenty years on—but in the course of the investigations another idea emerged that was to become significant from then on: to join the Mescalero Apaches on their reservation.¹¹³ Asa Daulton, now a prominent figure among the prisoners of war, was a leading supporter of this option. Campaigning for the release and permanent settlement of the Chiricahuas continued, aided by Vincent Nahtalish, a grandson of Victorio living in New York. Then on February 17, 1909, Geronimo died. Although several of the last holdouts were still very much alive—such as Naiche, Perico, and Yahnozha—Geronimo was the man the public had loved to hate, and even now his death had symbolic value.¹¹⁴ At last it was admissible to think in terms of a return to the Southwest.

A conference between the Chiricahuas and their supervising officer

Lieutenant George Purington on August 22, 1909, revealed divided hopes for the future. Fourteen families wished at all costs to remain in Oklahoma, eighteen wanted to return to Ojo Caliente, and thirty-eight wanted to transfer to Mescalero.¹¹⁵

It would take a further three years to achieve resolution, during which the War Department first established the Field Artillery School of Fire at Fort Sill and then argued that the Apache villages and Apache cattle scattered across the post were inhibiting use of the school to its full potential. The department also claimed that most of the Chiricahuas wished to leave anyway, although in some cases “were resigned to leaving” would have been a more accurate description.

Support for the Chiricahuas’ right to remain at Fort Sill came from several quarters, including the Department of the Interior, the Indian commissioner, and the Reformed Church, both on the grounds of promises given and because it was feared that Apaches who had learned to stand on their own feet financially and culturally in the white world would “go back to the blanket” (as the saying then was) if transferred to the less acculturated society of Mescalero. For Daklugie and his Mescalero party, the prospect of a more traditional lifestyle in a place akin to and on the very borders of their old homelands was precisely the attraction. By contrast, others, among whom Jason Betzinez was prominent, viewed living at Mescalero in the care of the Department of the Interior as a retrograde step after all they had learned and achieved since leaving home. There was now no third option: owing to land degradation, Ojo Caliente had been ruled out as unsuitable for resettlement.¹¹⁶

Eventually, despite all promises, the War Department carried the day. Legislation was put forward to enable both Chiricahua relocation to Mescalero and (for those who wanted them) the purchase of individual allotments near Fort Sill left vacant by deceased Comanches and Kiowas. Freedom from prisoner-of-war status would be granted as soon as they were established in either of these locations. Even this proposal had a rough passage, with anti-Apache objections from New Mexico, objections on principle to spending money on farms for “criminals” (many of whom were not even born when the alleged crimes were committed), and problems in obtaining the necessary financial appropriations.¹¹⁷

By the autumn of 1912 a joint War and Interior departments board of inquiry was ready to review the disposition of the prisoners. A plan to confine the Oklahoma allotments option to fourteen named individuals

who were deemed sufficiently “progressive” and industrious to cope was discovered by church worker Hendrina Hospers and was averted by timely intervention from the Reformed Church.¹¹⁸ On December 1, 1912, all the Chiricahua heads of family were offered a choice between Oklahoma and Mescalero. Married women, it seems, were not directly consulted, though no doubt many exercised their influence in private.

The Mescalero contingent of 163 left Fort Sill on April 2, 1913, reaching their destination and official freedom two days later. Practical and financial problems and disputes delayed the purchase of allotments for the Oklahoma party, 78 all told, who were not resettled and released until March 7, 1914.¹¹⁹ The Chiricahuas’ difficulties were by no means over, but at last they were a free people.¹²⁰

It had taken more than twenty-seven years.