

Lieutenant Faison's Account of the Geronimo Campaign

By Edward K. Faison

Introduction

The Sky Islands region of southeastern Arizona and northeastern Sonora consists of 40 wooded mountain ranges scattered in a sea of desert scrub and arid grassland. To the west is the Sonoran Desert. To the east is the Chihuahuan Desert. To the north are the Arizona–New Mexico Mountains, and to the south is the Sierra Madre Occidental Range where elevations rise almost 10,000 feet from canyon floor to forested ridge. This “roughest portion of the continent,” in the words of General George Crook, was the setting of the Apache Wars—an American Indian–US Army conflict (1861–1886) unparalleled in its ferocity, physical demands, and unorthodox tactics. For a young lieutenant raised on North Carolina’s coastal plain and schooled in traditional warfare, Arizona in the 1880s was no ordinary place to embark on a military career.¹

From this formative experience came this memoir by Lieutenant Samson L. Faison, which chronicles his eleven months of service in the Southwest during the Geronimo Campaign of 1885–1886. He wrote it in 1898 while serving at West Point as senior instructor of infantry tactics. It was never published.²

Faison’s account begins two days after the May 17, 1885 breakout of Geronimo, Natchez, Nana, and 140 Chiricahua Apache followers from the San Carlos Reservation in Arizona. Along the way, we revisit important milestones such as the death of Captain Emmet Crawford at the hands of Mexican militia, the surrender conference between Geronimo and General Crook at Cañon de los Embudos, and Geronimo’s subsequent flight back to



**Faison's 1883 West Point Graduation Photo
(USMA photo)**

Mexico followed by Crook's resignation. But the most interesting parts of the narrative are the personal anecdotes: Faison's thoughts on being left to guard a field camp while the cavalry pursued the Apaches, a spirited discussion with Crook on his Indian policy, and traversing a dark canyon unescorted by troops.

Like most army officers' accounts from the Southwest during the 1870s and 1880s, the grueling physicality of the campaign serves as an inescapable backdrop to the memoir. We follow Faison deep into the Sierra Madre during winter, endure two-day fasts and one-day rides of 75 miles, and witness the remains of an army camp wiped out by Apaches. Faison and seven other officers were later recognized by Crook (1887) "for bearing uncomplainingly the almost incredible fatigues and privations as well as the dangers incident to their operations."³

That Faison endured the Southwest at all is testament to the difficulties of the Apache Wars. Born November 29, 1860, Faison was just two months old at the time of the Bascom Affair, the incendiary meeting in February 1861 between Lieutenant George Bascom and then-Chiricahua Apache chief Cochise that ignited the Apache Conflict. Remarkably, twenty-two years later, Faison's first posting upon graduating

from West Point in 1883 was Arizona to assist with the ongoing conflict. Faison later became a brigadier general in World War I and a recipient of the Distinguished Service Medal.⁴

In stark contrast to the hundreds of thousands of American soldiers amassed upon the plains of northern France in 1918, the fighting US Army in the deserts and mountains of the Southwest in 1885–1886 was largely a handful of American officers and, ironically, a few hundred Apaches. General Crook believed that US troops lacked not only the



17853 (186G8). Brig. Genl. S. L. Faison, commanding Sixtieth Brigade, Thirtieth Division. Watou, Belgium. July 30, 1918.

Faison as brigadier general in 1918 (North Carolina State Archives)

tracking skills to find the Apaches but also the toughness to withstand long expeditions into the Sierra Madre. The general believed only Apaches could solve the “Apache problem.”⁵

This unorthodox approach was controversial in the ranks of the army, which was deeply divided about the trustworthiness of the scouts, a division most prominently displayed between Crook—who trusted the scouts unequivocally—and his superior, General Sheridan, who did not. As one of the officers selected by Crook to lead Apache scout companies, Faison’s interactions with and views of the scouts are revealing when juxtaposed with his commanding officer’s. Faison was not a man given to nuance when he judged matters of right and wrong, and his views of the Apaches are correspondingly more severe than those of some other officers who led scout companies. A late-night encounter with an Apache scout, discussed in the memoir, undoubtedly left a strong impression on him.⁶

The unorthodox tactics and physical demands of the Geronimo Campaign are perhaps best understood in light of the ecology of the Southwest. In this arid region, primary productivity increases with elevation, leading to greater biomass of large game and high-energy plant foods in the mountains. In non-arid regions, the reverse is generally true, offering little incentive for hunter-gatherers to inhabit high peaks. The Apaches, who apparently migrated into the Southwest from western Canada in the early 1500s, naturally gravitated to the more productive mountains and traveled frequently among the isolated ranges. With the arrival of the Spanish in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries came a novel food source, domestic cattle, and a means to obtain it—the horse. Raiding on horseback became an integral part of Apache subsistence and invariably resulted in frequent warfare with the Spanish. In other words, extraordinary mobility, courage, and stealth in mountainous terrain were necessities of daily life for Apaches, particularly the non-agricultural Chiricahuas. Such a lifestyle undoubtedly acted as a powerful selective pressure on these people, making them a uniquely formidable foe for the US Army.⁷

The relentless pursuit of the US Army in the 1870s and 1880s, however, brought danger and physical and emotional stress to the non-reservation Apaches that exceeded even the extreme lifestyle to which they were adapted. “Until I was about 10 years old I did not know that people died except by violence” wrote the Apache James Kaywaykla, who was born ~1876. The Apaches in turn killed hundreds of American and Mexican settlers during this period. Faison’s unsentimental and unsympathetic account of the Apaches and the conflict reflects this brutal and tragic setting. Still, at least to this descendant of Lieutenant Faison, it is a transporting story from the southwestern frontier in the final years that the American West and its original inhabitants remained unconquered.⁸

Memoir

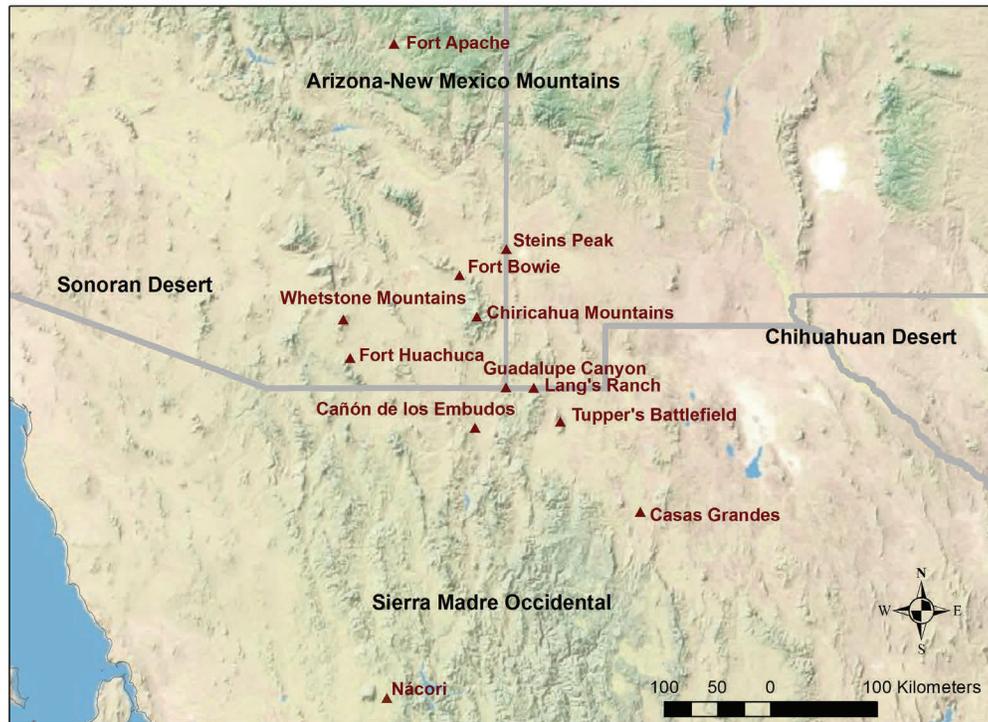
The night of the 19th day of May 1885 was almost as bright as day and as still as death at Fort Huachuca, Arizona, except that the stillness was occasionally broken by the monotonous call of the sentry or the dismal yelps of the cowardly coyote down the valley. The silent “prairie queen,” known to naturalists as the skunk, was really louder than either the sentry or the coyote. The post was wrapped in sleep at 11:30pm when a loud blast of the trumpet aroused us from our peaceful slumbers and sent us scurrying to the office of our commanding officer. I had never heard “officer’s call” before in my life but instinctively I knew what the call meant, and my first thought was: “The Apaches.” In a few minutes all the officers of the post were in the presence of Colonel W.B. Royall of the 4th Cavalry. He is since deceased. He bore upon his bald head a scar extending almost entirely from his forehead to the back of his head, which a cruel, sharpened saber had left there during the Civil War. The scar was my barometer in all my dealings with the gruff but kindly old gentleman—whenever it assumed a livid hue, it was time (to use a slang phrase) to stand from under. His eyes were well set back in his head and looked like two beads peering out from under heavy and grizzly eyebrows. The livid hue of the scar was not missing at this time.



Fort Huachuca, Arizona in 1880 (Fort Huachuca Museum Photo)

He told us in a few moments that General Crook had telegraphed him to send three troops of the 4th Cavalry (B, D, and I) stationed at Huachuca immediately on a scouting expedition in the direction of Guadalupe Canyon to intercept the Chiricahuas who had left their reservation at Fort Apache on the evening of the 17th. Part of the Chiricahua Apaches, numbering 34 men, 8 well grown boys, and 92 women and children had, indeed, left the reservation two days before, cutting the telegraph wires behind them. The leaders of the war party included Geronimo, Mangus, Nana, Natchez, the son of old Cochise, and Chihuahua. Captain Allen Smith, 4th Cavalry, immediately took the field from Fort Apache and by dark the next day he had covered a distance of 60 miles over exceedingly rough and difficult trails and followed the Indians with all celerity and energy but was unable to do more than shove them along and prevent them from leisurely killing all the scattered settlers in that forbidding country. The Indians themselves traveled 120 miles across this rough country before stopping for rest or food, and I afterwards learned that a squaw gave birth to a child on this

terrible ride and kept up with the raiding party. It seems incredible, but it is true. Twenty troops of cavalry and 100 Indian scouts were immediately put in pursuit of the Chiricahuas in Arizona and New Mexico, covering their usual trails and the water holes, but they nevertheless escaped into Mexico without the loss of a single soul. Troops B, D, and I, 4th Cavalry, left Fort Huachuca at about 3:30 AM with plenty of ammunition and one month's rations, which were carried in wagons.



The setting of the Geronimo Campaign in the Southwest. Important place names from Faison's memoir are labeled in red.

After a great deal of persistent persuasion, the Colonel permitted me to accompany these troops. We marched 50 miles the first day and 55 the next, which brought us to Guadalupe Canyon where we went into camp. Near this camp is a monument, which marks the point where Arizona, New Mexico, and Mexico come together. Scouting parties were sent out the next day in three different directions to hunt for Indian trails. I was left in the camp with eight men to guard the rations. Just above the camp was a high peak upon which a man was constantly kept to look out for the Indians. He could see the country for many miles in all directions. I do not remember how long I remained here, but I do remember I never felt so completely alone in my life. It was during this period that I fully appreciated the comforts of a garrison. The truth is I was simply disgusted at the

duties that I now had to perform. Being a very young graduate and having Napoleon's Campaigns at my finger ends, I could not but feel that the government was being cheated of my most valuable knowledge and skill. I boiled with indignation, but I remained in that same camp to do my boiling. I had remained there three or four days when one of the Captains returned with his troop and informed me that the Indians had passed into Mexico. That trail that he had been following we shortly afterwards learned was that of a Mexican smuggling party. He of course took command of the camp and relieved the picket. On the next day, I think, he left on another scouting expedition, and I was again left to my own thoughts. Captain Lawton returned on the following morning, and he was perfectly furious that the picket was not where he had left him. Of course I told him by whose orders and why the picket was removed, but he never forgave me for relieving him.

The other two troops came in the same day. By entreaty and threats to return to the post unless my desires to do some scouting were appeased, I was regularly attached to a troop of cavalry, and the three troops started out in different directions scouting again. A sergeant and seven men were left to guard the camp. Strict orders were given in reference to keeping a picket on the lookout. I went north with Captain Hatfield in the direction of Skull and Skeleton Canyons of the Stein Peak Range. Some very funny incidents occurred on this scout in the way of lying in ambush and nearly freezing to death at night, but nothing of any importance transpired. We scouted through the Chiricahua Mountains and finally back to Guadalupe Canyon by way of San Bernardino.

When about three miles from Guadalupe [Canyon] on our return we met a soldier riding at breakneck speed with a message from Captain Lawton to push on at once to the canyon, as the Indians had cleaned out the camp. We charged as fast as we could go down through the canyon and then found that Wood and Lawton had returned to find our wagons burned and everything completely destroyed. Three dead soldiers were all that remained of the camp.¹ Five soldiers had made their escape and gone to Lang's Ranch in New Mexico about 15 miles farther east. Three of them deserted, having had sufficient amusement. We learned afterwards that the sergeant in charge had as soon as we left relieved the picket and no guard whatever was kept over the camp. A

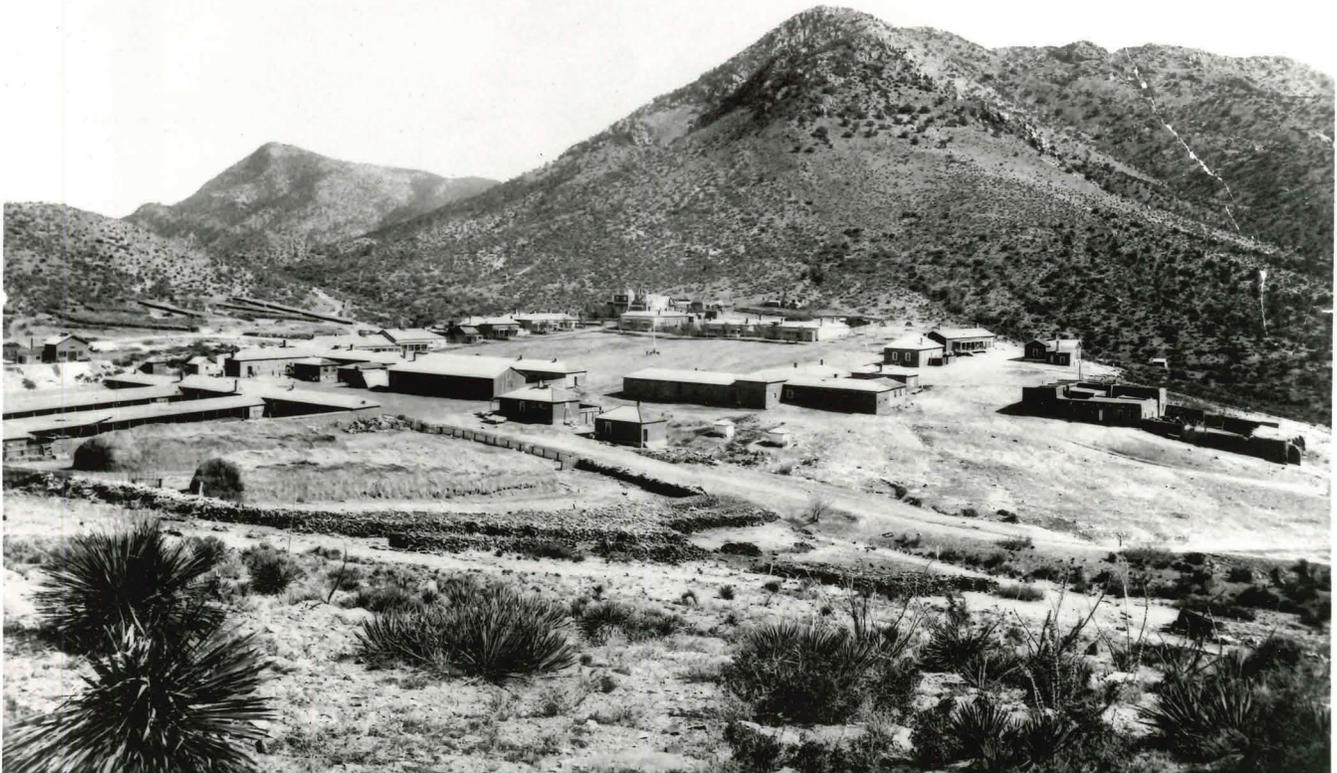
few days afterwards, a party of about 10 Indians were passing within about 100 yards of the camp along the ridge which crosses the canyon at this point and discovered it. It was just as the soldiers were eating their dinner. The Indians dismounted and sneaked up to the camp and opened fire at not more than 25 feet. We found the body of one soldier reclining against a tree with a piece of bacon protruding from his lips, a tin cup about half full of coffee still raised in his hand as if to drink. He had \$60.00 on his person. The body of another soldier was found some 60 feet farther away shot entirely through the body from the back. The sergeant was in the tent at the time, and he was shot through both thighs. A brave soldier grasped the sergeant in his arms and started up a steep incline fully 400 yards in length. He stopped from time to time, placing the sergeant behind rocks, and answered the fire of the Indians. He eventually got the sergeant to the top of the hill, and as he was disappearing over the crest of the hill with him on his shoulder, a chance shot penetrated the sergeant's heart, killing him instantly. It was here that we found his body. This brave private afterwards rejoined us and told the tragic details of the fight. He is still in the service and proudly and justly wears a medal of honor. He also possesses a certificate of merit.

The bodies were not mutilated with the exception of an almost imperceptible cross cut with a sharp knife on the forehead. The three soldiers were buried together, and we took up the Indian trail leading over very rough and mountainous country into Mexico. We had not enough rations to follow more than a few days, and we then returned to Fort Huachuca. We had been gone just a month.

These three troops of cavalry afterwards did some hard and arduous service following these Indians on their many raids into Arizona. It is not my purpose, however, to follow them any further. Two expeditions, mainly of Indian scouts well supplied with rations and pack mules, had been in the meantime organized by General Crook's orders and placed under the command of Captain Davis, 4th Cavalry and Captain Crawford, 3rd Cavalry, and sent into Mexico to run the Indians out and do what damage they could to them. The cavalry and some infantry were stationed at the water holes along the Mexican frontier to guard them as well as to scout and follow Indian trails whenever opportunity arose.

Those of you who know anything about that arid country know what it is to be kept from water, but the Chiricahua and Warm Springs Apaches know that entire country and for at least 200 miles south of the Mexican border as well as any of us know this post. No place that has a drop of water is unknown to them. I was sent shortly after my return to Huachuca to a water hole in the Whetstone Mountains about 15 miles from the post with about 15 men of my own company. I needed no better lesson than the one I already had to appreciate the necessity of pickets. Many wild reports were brought to me by neighboring settlers and Mexican wood choppers of the presence of Indians, claiming that some settlers had been killed at no great distance from my camp. One of my own pickets reported to me one evening that he had seen some Indians on the top of a mountain some seven miles away. By the use of strong field glasses I was led to believe he was right; so at dusk I took my little band of men and started after them. Without going into the many ludicrous things that happened on this night's outing, it will suffice to say that at about 2:00 AM next morning I captured at the very muzzle of 15 rifles in a little swale on the very top of the mountain, 7 or 8 of the most frightened human beings I ever saw. They were Mexican wood choppers.

I got back to my camp at sunrise thoroughly worn out and utterly disgusted at my night's work. Other officers had also been fooled by the terrorized settlers. I soon returned to Huachuca under orders and was shortly afterwards sent in charge of a paymaster's escort to pay the troops along the Mexican border. While on this duty, I was overtaken by a courier with a telegram from General Crook directing me to report in person to him at Fort Bowie where he had some time before established his headquarters in the field. Lieutenant Britton Davis (Class of 1881), who had been with Captain Crawford in Mexico, had resigned from the army, and I was to take command of two companies of Indian scouts, largely made up of Chiricahua and Warm Springs Apaches, which he had commanded. It was their own kith and kin they were expected to run to earth.² I proceeded to Bowie at once in a wagon that happened along at that time.



Fort Bowie, Arizona in 1886 (Photo courtesy of the Arizona Historical Society)

I had never been thrown with Indians in my life and therefore knew all about them, and at the general's request and command, I at once proceeded to point out the errors and follies of his campaign. The "Old Grey Fox" as the Indians called him listened with amusement and almost with enthusiasm to my frank opinion of his Indian policy and at once selected me remarking, "You have nothing to unlearn and everything to learn." I have not yet fully digested that remark. With a few encouraging words from General Sheridan, who happened to be at the post, I was within two hours on my way to Mexico to join [Captain] Crawford, who was then in camp about 85 miles south of the border or about 140 miles from Bowie. It took but a few days to join him.

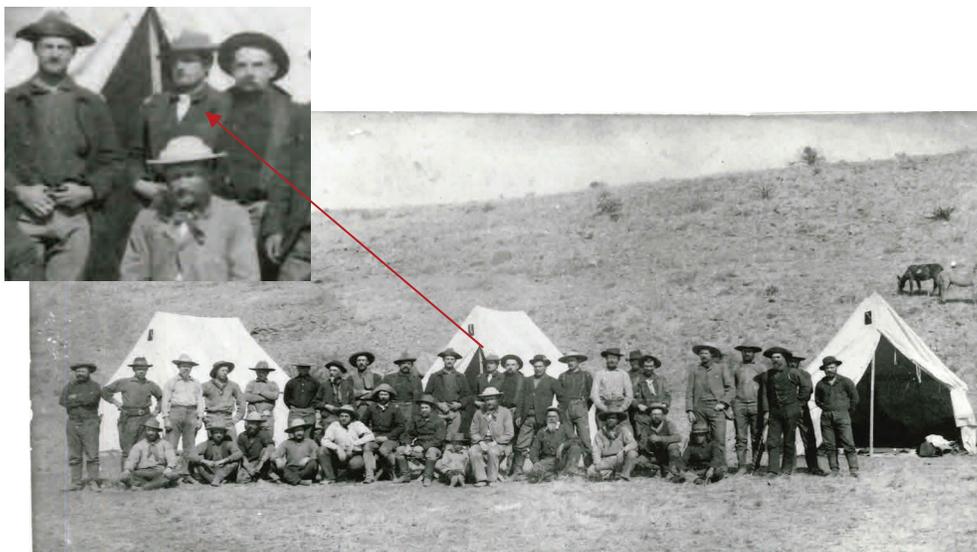
Crawford was a very tall, sparely built man, mild of manner, with a constitution of iron, of but a few words, but with the determination of the devil. [Lieutenant] Elliot [West Point class] of '82 was with me when I reported. Crawford greeted me cordially and grunted "all right" or something of equal meaning to me. Late that afternoon, he sent for me and directed me to take three Chiricahua scouts and two packers and start at daylight the next morning for Casa Grande in Chihuahua to make some inquiries about the Indians, as he had heard they were near this town and trading American booty for Mexican bullets. The round trip was 140 miles

and a good deal of it over rough country. I was directed to be back on the afternoon of the third day. I started out early on Monday morning and on Wednesday afternoon at 3:00pm I was back, having in the meantime gotten a Mexican Lieutenant Colonel of Cavalry paralyzed on mescal, but deriving no other benefit from the trip. I returned to find not a single soul in camp, the entire command having taken after the Apaches who passed within half a mile of camp the very day I left it.

We proceeded to clean out all the rations we had left, and at once took up Crawford's trail. It led in a northerly direction towards Arizona. At 11:00 o'clock that night on an open prairie, we ran into a small band of Apaches who had doubled on their trail and were returning to Mexico with many horses.³ We made a dry camp about 100 yards farther on, having ridden 75 miles that day and pushed on early next morning. At about 3:00pm, I struck a water hole of stagnant water covered with green scum, but we were very thirsty, neither water nor food having passed my lips that day. One of the Indians had one or two ears of green corn and a pod of green pepper, which he had hooked in Mexico and a few grains of coffee. We found an old tin can and made a stew of the corn and pepper as best we could, and the six of us made a wretched meal. It made me deathly ill, but the rest of the crowd seemed to suffer no special inconvenience. I was nauseated unto death. I pushed on, however, in an hour or so to "Tupper's Battle Field,"⁴ where I had camped a few days before and where I remembered having seen the cook throw among some reeds a fine piece of bacon rind. If I had had a fine tooth comb I could not have searched more closely than I did for that rind. My heart sank within me when I gave up an unsuccessful search. The mountains, of which this famous Indian battle field is really a pocket, abound with mountain lion and one of them no doubt had robbed me of my supper.

I got up early next morning and took another cinch in my belt in lieu of a better breakfast and taking one packer with me sent the rest of the party into the mountains to follow Crawford. At about 1:00PM I was at Lang's Ranch in New Mexico, a distance of about 30 miles, where our old friend Jim Pettit gave us everything we needed. It had been 46 hours since food had passed my lips except the corn and pepper referred to heretofore. So when Pettit pressed me to his heart, I fear that a gaunt and hungry eye pierced the cast iron sides of his cooking stove to see what he had for dinner. I was not in humor for sentiment.

I pressed on next day through Cloverdale (Camp of Major Tupper, 6th Cavalry) where he gave me a champagne lunch and then on through Skeleton Canyon arriving on the opposite side at 11:00 O Clock at night. This canyon is through a high range of mountains (Stein's Peak Range) and is [so] contracted that in one place it is not more than 5 or 6 feet wide. Major Tupper insisted on sending a platoon of Cavalry through with me, as it was thought the Indians Crawford was following were somewhere in the range. I declined any escort but finally took one Indian scout and my packer. The scout was afraid to go through the canyon and tried to take me across the mountain by a short cut. He finally came to a place where it was impossible to go farther. We kicked him out and sending him back to Tupper's retraced our steps in part and made for the mouth of the canyon, which we reached at about sunset. Knowing and feeling keenly, too, the dangers that beset us, I advised my packer to return to Pettit's camp, reminding him that he had nothing to gain and everything to lose in the hazardous ride. I also told him that nothing but honor would induce me to go forward. He stuck by me and nothing happened except that just as we got to the narrowest part of the canyon and the only place in which there was water, we ran into a bear. It was now as dark as Egypt. I could scarcely see my hand before my eyes. Quicker than thought both of our mules turned and were a hundred yards to the rear before we could stop them. I was in the lead going to the front, and I still found myself in the lead. And yet, my young friends ask me why I am so gray.



General Crook (seated center with white helmet) and staff in Mexico in 1886. Faison is standing behind Crook 11th from left. Lt. Shipp is standing 10th from left. Lt. Maus is seated 6th from left (CS Fly Photo, courtesy of Arizona Historical Society).

I joined Crawford a couple of days afterwards. He and the command were completely worn out. The Cavalry stationed along the border and at various waterholes had joined in the pursuit, but the Indians escaped back into Mexico after murdering many settlers and rounding up considerable stock without the loss of a single soul. To show the daring of the devils, I will state that on one night on this raid they passed within a few hundred yards of a camp in which there was almost an entire regiment of cavalry, and the Indians knew it too.

Reports were received from time to time of several engagements the other expedition, or rather part of it, was having with the hostiles down in Mexico, and several casualties in the way of deaths among the “bronchos” were reported. One report went as far as to state that Geronimo himself had been killed. Some eight months afterwards, Geronimo and his entire command—except Mangus and his band—surrendered to us, one boy and one man having been killed in a campaign of 11 months duration.⁵ The man was killed at Fort Apache by another Indian.

Captain Crawford and I returned to Fort Apache, leaving [Lieutenant] Elliot at [Fort] Bowie, he being unable physically to stand the hardships of a winter campaign. There we were later joined by Lieutenant Maus, 1st Infantry and Lieutenant Shipp, 10th Cavalry. I gave up the command of my scouts to induce Shipp to accompany us, I taking the position of quartermaster and commissary in the field. I knew Shipp to be brave and strong, true of steel, and of most excellent judgment. Crawford protested, I am proud to say, against this arrangement, but I was willing to make any sacrifice to get Shipp. I made no mistake either as far as Shipp was concerned. But once afterwards, I inwardly bitterly regretted that I had not the command of the scouts. You will appreciate my feelings in a moment.

We enlisted 100 Indian scouts, made up of the Chiricahua, Warm Springs, and White Mountain Apaches. We had four regular company organizations so as to have more chevrons, which the scouts loved to wear. Incidentally, they thus received more pay. The scout who afterwards located Geronimo in his mountain fastnesses of the Sierra Madre refused to go except under my immediate orders.⁶ He had become attached to me personally, so I made him Sergeant Major, procured his cavalry chevrons as such, mounted him on a mule, and we started for Mexico.



Apache scouts with US Army officers and packers in Mexico, March 1886. Faison is seated in upper right corner of photo (see red arrow; CS Fly Photo, courtesy of Arizona Historical Society)

I had 187 pack animals and 35 packers, plenty of provisions, 1000 silver dollars with authority to purchase forage, fresh meat etc. in open market. I converted our money into Mexican dollars paying \$80.00 per \$100.00, and before I got back into the United States I converted what Mexican dollars I still had into American dollars, again paying \$80.00 on the 100. I was enabled by this transaction to spend a good deal more money than I was accountable for.

We plunged at once into Mexico and went as far as Nacori, about 200 miles south of the border and in the heart of the Sierra Madre in Sonora. I will mention one little incident on this march to illustrate the kind of soldiers we had or rather that had us on this expedition. One night about 2:00 O'clock I woke up and although it was raining and as black as ink, I buckled on my revolver and sallied forth. I unaccountably and instinctively felt that something was wrong. I could not tell then nor can I tell now what impelled me to go out. I had not gone but about 20 feet before I stumbled against something that was crouched upon the ground. I knew at once that it was a human form. In a moment my revolver was whipped out and cocked, and I asked who it was. An Indian rose to his feet. He stood close to me and between me and the dim light of a small fire some distance off, I saw that he had a long vicious-looking knife in his hand. He readily told me (he spoke English, and I at once saw that he was drunk) that he was going to kill Captain Crawford. I took him back to his people and turned him over to them. Captain Crawford had found it necessary in the former expedition to send him back to [Fort] Bowie in irons for insubordination. I never told Crawford of this incident. This Indian was a Chiricahua Apache named Dutchy. He was one of the most cold blooded, cruel, and wily cutthroats that ever infested Arizona. He was afterwards brained with a club by one of his fellows in a drunken brawl at Mt. Vernon Barracks, Alabama—a fitting end to such a life of rapine, blood, and cruelty.⁷ We had others.

But to return to my story. I had three well organized pack trains and at Nacori I was ordered to return with two of them to Lang's Ranch for more supplies, placing all surplus supplies in a small hut, which I hired for that purpose. It was here that I regretted having voluntarily given up the command of my scouts. We had been reliably informed about where the Indians might be found, and it was reasonably certain that a clash would soon occur. I turned my face northwards once more, never to see Crawford again. Leaving a few scouts with the pack train to guard the rations, he took 79 well equipped scouts, 12 days rations packed on a few mules, and pushed on in the direction of the hostiles. Every man was afoot including officers and each individual carried one blanket apiece, the only bedding allowed.

It was now about the last of December and in a high mountainous country. The marching was done late in the afternoons and up till about mid-night.⁸ No fires were permitted at night and in the day time only in sheltered spots and then only of dry wood to avoid smoke. During the last two days no fires were allowed at all, everybody living on hardtack and raw bacon; shoes were also abandoned, and every man wore moccasins. The hardships were terrible. On January 9th, 1886, my Sergeant Major, Noche by name, discovered the Indian camp. A few scouts were kept far in advance of the main body, and at this time the main body was about 12 miles from the “bronchos.” They were notified at once by a runner, and they marched all afternoon and reached the hostile camp at daylight on the following morning. Their presence was made known to the hostiles by the braying of some burros. An officer writing on this subject says “these watch dogs of an Indian camp are better than were the geese of Rome.” Some of the hostiles went immediately to see what the trouble was and discovered that our scouts were endeavoring to surround their camp; they immediately opened fire on the scouts.

The camp was situated on a high rugged mountain called the Devil’s Backbone between the Haros and the Satachi Rivers in Sonora. The hostiles escaped into the mountains afoot with their women and children, but all of their stock and camp effects fell into the hands of the scouts. Geronimo had congratulated himself that this camping place of his could not be found, so when he was so rudely awakened and made to flee for his life with bullets whistling about his cowardly head, his spirit was broken within him.

The scouts had made a continuous march of 18 hours over this almost impassable country even in the day time, and they were too exhausted as were the officers to immediately take up the pursuit. Early in the morning of the same day a squaw came into camp and told Captain Crawford that Geronimo and Natchez desired to have a talk with him with a view of surrendering. He [Crawford] was so completely exhausted by the long and weary marches of the past ten days, lack of proper food, want of rest, nearly freezing to death at night, and possibly because he did not want to appear too eager to bring the hostiles to an end, [that] he appointed the following morning for the time of the interview. This delay cost him his life, the army a most valuable officer, and I believe many months of hard and tiresome service in the field.

The Indians knew him well and had every confidence in him, and I believe the entire band would have surrendered to him unconditionally. But this is mere conjecture—a conjecture, however, shared by many other officers, including General Crook. It was certain that there was no danger of an attack from Geronimo's men, so the usual precautions were not taken against attack. But at daylight the camp was attacked by some irregular Mexican troops. At first it was feared that the attack was made by Major Davis's scouts who were also operating in Mexico. Three of our scouts were wounded at the first fusillade. The mistake as well as the true condition of affairs was almost immediately discovered, and our officers ran to the front and caused the firing to cease. [Lieutenant] Shipp says that our scouts fired only in self defense to keep the Mexicans back. Our interpreter yelled over to the Mexicans explaining everything to them, including the fight with Geronimo of the preceding day and its result. He was not a hundred yards from the Mexicans at the time.

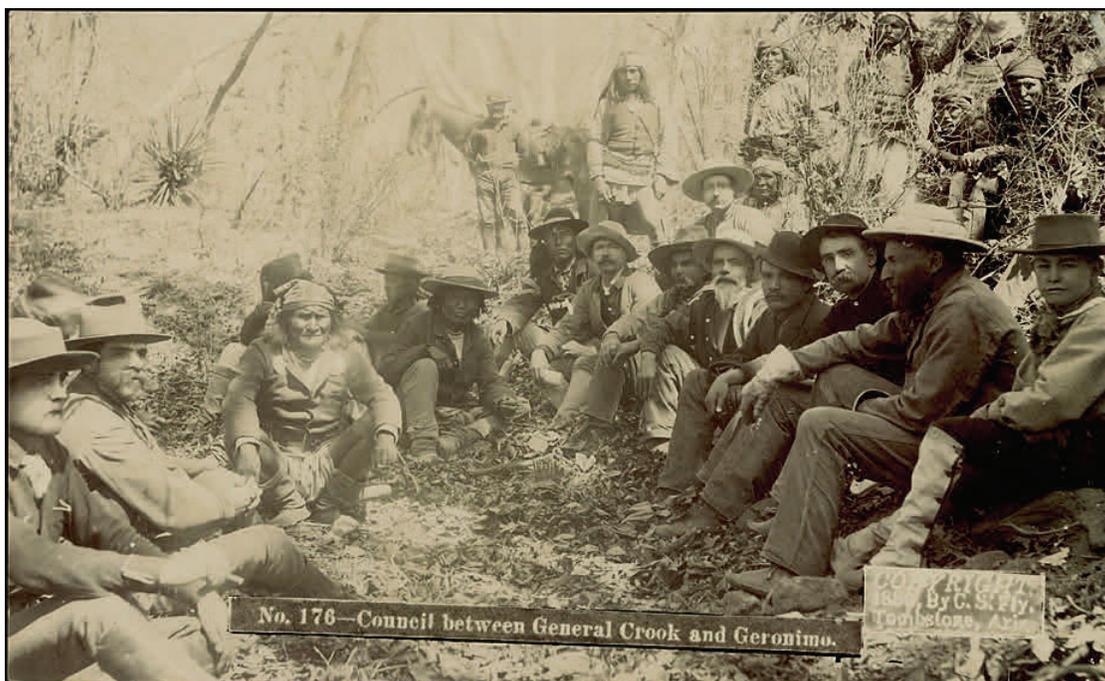
Shipp says that Crawford had taken a position on a high projecting ledge of rocks, dressed in the uniform of an American soldier, and he was pointing to his uniform when a shot rang out followed immediately by a fusillade. No one seems to be absolutely certain where the shot came from, but our scouts thought this first shot killed Crawford. Our interpreter was wounded while still crying out to the Mexicans. Four Mexicans were killed, including the two officers in command and five were wounded. They were driven beyond rifle range this time before the officers could stop the firing.

The officers present and the Chief of Scouts and Acting Hospital Steward made official reports of this fight, and they can be found in the report of the Secretary of war of 1886, forming part of General Crook's official report. In this report, General Crook says "The death of Captain Crawford was in any event an assassination." I think it was a cold blooded murder.

By a lying subterfuge, [Lieutenant] Maus was induced to enter the Mexican camp that day, and he was made a prisoner. He was released only upon furnishing the Mexicans with six pack mules, as much food as he could spare, and medical attendance for their wounded. The hostiles had the interview with Maus at the appointed time, and as much as they would do was to express a desire to talk with General Crook. This was arranged and immediately steps were taken by Maus to return to United States soil. On the eighth day, Crawford expired never having spoken a word after he was wounded. His remains were buried at Kearney, Nebraska. He sleeps in a soldier's grave; his soul is in heaven.

I met the command one day's journey from Nacori where I had left them. We were harassed and annoyed by the Mexicans nearly every day by reason of the fact that they wanted to seize all the stock the scouts had captured from the hostiles, claiming that they belonged to Mexican citizens. Every mother's son of our scouts would have sacrificed his life rather than to have given up a single pony. This is part of the campaign I will not discuss.

The hostiles did not accompany us, but they kept their appointment and met General Crook about 25 miles south of San Bernardino on Mexican soil on March 25, 1886. We met them at the bottom of a rugged canyon. They were sullen and suspicious, armed to the teeth and were so arranged either through accident or design as to place us (the officers) entirely at their mercy. Our scouts were placed on somewhat higher ground surrounding the hostiles as well as ourselves. As I took in the situation at a glance, I thought of treachery and of the Canby Massacre.⁹ General Crook refers to the same thing in his report. Nothing but unconditional surrender was held out to Geronimo. For two days he stoutly refused. His braves wanted to surrender, but the wily old scoundrel had pictured to himself that he would probably be hung while the lives of the cutthroats under him would be spared. He was forced by his braves into a surrender, but he immediately began furnishing mescal, appealed to their fears, spoke of the traditions of their people etc. until he induced Natchez, 20 bucks, 14 women, and 2 boys to go back into the mountains with him two nights later.¹⁰



Council between General Crook and Geronimo at Cañon de Los Embudos, Mexico on March 25-27, 1886. Faison is far left. Crook is 2nd from right. Geronimo is 3rd from left, facing camera (CS Fly photo, National Archives)

None of us knew anything about the escape until early that morning. Maus and Shipp took most of the scouts and started in pursuit. Nothing came of it. I took the rest of the scouts and the remaining hostiles, numbering about 12 men and 35 women and children and conducted them to [Fort] Bowie, where I turned them over to General Crook. I don't think he said six words to me. This was April 2nd. Five days later these Indians were sent under escort to Fort Marion, Florida.

It will be borne in mind that these Indians were and could not under the circumstances have been disarmed. They were in no sense prisoners, going and coming as they pleased.

General Crook has been most severely criticized about the escape of Geronimo; in fact the criticism was so vehement that he asked to be relieved from the command of the Department of Arizona, and his request was promptly granted. General [Nelson] Miles succeeded him. The latter divided the department into as many districts of observation as there were posts in the southern and central parts of the territory. Each

commander was to keep the hostiles out of his district. He also established heliograph stations on high peaks all over the theatre of operations in Arizona, and I believe in New Mexico. He lays great and well deserved stress on these heliograph stations.¹¹

In the latter part of April, the hostiles made a raid through Central and Northern Sonora, thence into southern Arizona. Their trail was struck by Captain Lebo, 10th Cavalry. He overtook them in the Penito Mountains, Sonora on May 3rd, and an engagement followed. A corporal was wounded and Powhatan Clark, [West Point class] of '84 rushed out, took the corporal, a colored soldier, in his arms and at the imminent risk of his own life carried the corporal to a place of safety. Several minor engagements were had with the hostiles in rapid succession in widely separated places. They traveled like a mad cyclone, hotly pursued by the regulars of our army. Meantime on May 5th, Captain H.W. Lawton 4th cavalry, left Fort Huachuca with a command consisting of 35 cavalymen, 20 Infantry men of company "D" 8th Infantry, 20 Indian scouts and pack trains with 60 days rations. The officers were Dr. Leonard Wood, Lieutenant Finley, 10th Cavalry, Henry Johnson, 8th Infantry, and H.C. Benson. Finley and Johnson have since died.

I was offered by General Miles, the command of the Infantry, and then of the scouts, both of which commands I declined. I wish to state here that in so doing I made a very grave mistake.¹² It was true that my company was under orders to go to San Francisco, but this was not the cause of my decision, for I offered to transfer to the 8th Infantry and remain in Arizona. I offered to take a detail of my own company and go with Lawton, but as there were five officers of the 8th Infantry at Huachuca at the time, it was natural and somewhat pardonable that I should feel a delicacy about taking their men. The Indians I would not take at any cost. I stated further through Colonel Royall that if forced into the expedition either as commander of the Indians or of the 8th Infantry Detachment, I would telegraph my resignation to Washington. He knew the reasons of my determination and respected them. I do not care to repeat them here.

The hostiles were followed by Lawton some 300 miles into Sonora toward the Yaqui River over mountains reaching as high as 10,000 feet above sea level, across deep and almost impassible canyons. The heat was almost intolerable. The hostiles turned northward followed by Lawton. At Fronteras, some 30 miles south of the Mexican border, it was learned that the hostiles were endeavoring to make terms of surrender and peace with the Mexican authorities. Meantime Lieutenant Gatewood, 6th Cavalry, since deceased, had joined Lawton bringing with him two Chiricahua Indians, one of whom had deserted the hostiles after a fight with Captain Hatfield in May and succeeded in making his way back alone to Fort Apache and there surrendered. Geronimo's camp near Fronteras was located by these Indians. Gatewood accompanied by them alone rode into Geronimo's camp at the imminent risk of his life and demanded the surrender of the entire band. This they refused to do, but on the following morning, August 24th 1886, Geronimo and Natchez entered Lawton's camp and expressed a desire to talk with General Miles.

Lawton and the hostiles then moved northward, a courier having been dispatched to General Miles at Fort Bowie. Geronimo sent his own brother to Fort Bowie as a hostage to prove his good faith. On the 3rd of September, General Miles met Lawton with the hostiles at Skeleton Canyon. On the following day, they surrendered unconditionally. General Miles escorted by a troop of cavalry started at once for Fort Bowie taking Geronimo and Natchez with him. Just before reaching Bowie, he sent the commander of the escort on ahead to tell the good news and let it be known throughout the length and breadth of this land. The officer was Captain Wilder, 4th Cavalry. In the meantime General Miles had caused all the Warm Springs and Chiricahua Apaches at Fort Apache including my ex-scouts to be disarmed, and with their women and children they were shipped to Florida, where Geronimo and his fellow cutthroats afterwards joined them.¹³ One of the former band escaped from the train while passing through Kansas and made his way back to Fort Apache without even once being seen. He caused some trouble, but he eventually met a well deserved though bloody death. Mangus, the leader of one of the raiding parties[,] separated early from Geronimo and the rest of the hostiles, but he and his party have since been captured or destroyed. Thus ended the last Apache campaign.

Notes from Introduction

¹Information on the physical geography of the Southwest gathered from Warshall (1995); McLaughlin (1995); Coblenz and Riitters (2004); the US EPA web page on North American Level III Ecoregions, http://www.epa.gov/wed/pages/ecoregions/na_eco.htm#Downloads; and personal communication with David Yetman. The Sky Islands or Madrean Archipelago region is located predominantly in southeastern Arizona and the northeastern corner of Sonora, Mexico; however, it extends partly into southwestern New Mexico and northwestern Chihuahua to include the Animas Mountains and the Sierra de San Luis Mountains, respectively. The region's topography of isolated yet roughly parallel mountain ranges and valleys is the result of basin-and-range faulting that took place roughly 20 million to 5 million ****[Correct as edited?]**** years ago. The region's flora has strong affinities with that of the Mexican Sierra Madre Occidental Range.

Thrapp (1967) and Brown (1970) state that the Apache Wars took more lives than any other Indian conflict; Dunlay (1982) discusses the unusually heavy reliance on Apache scouts by General Crook in the Southwest, including his unprecedented approach of enlisting Indians of the same band as the "hostiles." Crook (2001), who had military experience in the Pacific Northwest, the northern Great Plains, and along the eastern seaboard, discusses the unmatched challenges of campaigning in the Southwest, and his quote is found in this source.

²Details of Faison's career are found in the Association of Graduates of the United States Military Academy (1941).

³Thrapp (1967). The extraordinary demands of the Geronimo Campaign took a significant toll on US troops. Eighty-nine soldiers were discharged because of disability from Fort Huachuca alone in 1886 (Huachuca Illustrated 1999).

⁴Association of Graduates of the United States Military Academy (1941). The Bascom Affair is discussed in Thrapp (1967) and Brown (1970).

⁵Johnson (1921) outlines the physiography of World War I battlefields. Several thousand US soldiers were stationed in the Southwest in 1885–1886 to subdue Geronimo and his band and to protect settlers from their raids (Van Orden 1991). However, General Crook used regular troops primarily to guard the US-Mexican border, while Apache scouts were assigned to offensive operations into Mexico. The latter therefore saw most of the combat during 1885–1886; in fact, all of the “hostile” Apaches who died in combat with the US Army during this period were killed by Apache scouts (Crook 1887). Other details on Apache scouts and Crook’s approach in the Southwest were obtained from Dunlay (1982).

⁶Faison’s personality traits are discussed in the Association of Graduates of the United States Military Academy (1941). Details on the controversy surrounding Crook’s use of Apache scouts are found in Dunlay (1982).

⁷The relationship between primary productivity and elevation in the Southwest is discussed in Whittaker and Niering (1975) and Hunter-Anderson (1986). Productivity and elevation in other regions of North America are discussed in Hansen et al. (2000) and Whittaker et al. (1974). McNaughton et al. (1989) present data on the relationship between herbivore biomass and primary productivity in terrestrial regions.

The arrival, habitation, and diet of the Apaches in the Southwest are considered in Gunnerson (1979), Hunter-Anderson (1986), Ball and Kaywaykla (1972), Betzinez and Nye (1959), and Opler (1996). Western Apaches utilized limited horticulture (perhaps 30% of their diet), but the Chiricahua (including the Warm Springs) Apaches were exclusively hunter-gatherers and raiders (Goodwin and Basso 1971; Hunter-Anderson 1986). The arrival of the Spanish and subsequent incorporation of raiding into the Apache subsistence base is discussed in Spicer (1962), Gunnerson (1979), and Goodwin and Basso (1971).

Crook (2001), a remarkably broad-thinking military man, discussed how the southwestern environment shaped the physical attributes of the Apaches.

⁸Betzinez and Nye (1959); Thrapp (1967). Kaywaykla’s quote from Ball and Kaywaykla (1972).

Notes from Memoir

¹Both Thrapp's (1967) and Faulk's (1969) accounts report five men killed in this attack by Chihuahua's band, based on a report written by General Crook (June 11, 1885), who cited a "courier just in from Lawton's camp." Davis's (1929) account, however, concurs with this one that only three men were killed.

²Crook preferred to enlist scouts who belonged to the same subgroup or band as the "renegade" Chiricahua Apaches in order to best offset the latter's advantage of fitness and knowledge of the landscape. To this end, Crook was surprisingly successful, as more Chiricahua Apache men enlisted as scouts (50) to pursue Geronimo than left the reservation (34) with him in May 1885 (Dunlay 1982). Reasons for enlisting undoubtedly varied among individuals; however, the belief that resistance to the whites was futile and that it was in the best interest of one's family and subgroup to end the conflict as quickly as possible was one reason. The personal prestige and adventure that came with scouting (and was absent from reservation life) was also a factor (Dunlay 1982; Ball and Kaywaykla 1972).

³This encounter is mysteriously not discussed any further.

⁴Tupper's Battlefield is located in a place known today as the Sierra Enmedio not far from the modern-day village of Los Huerigos (Thrapp 1967). Here in late April 1882, Captain Tullius Tupper in command of the 6th Cavalry with Indian scouts surprised Chief Loco's band of Warm Springs Apaches who had been goaded into leaving the San Carlos Reservation by raiding Chiricahuas earlier that month. Approximately sixteen warriors and seven women were killed in the fight in one of the rare instances that US troops managed to inflict serious damage to a band of Warm Springs or Chiricahua Apaches (Thrapp 1967).

⁵Faison is referring to the period from October 1885 to August 1886. Nine Apaches were killed between May 17 and September 30, 1885, all by Apache scouts (Bourke 1892).

⁶Noche. He was considered the finest Apache guide in 1885–1886 (Shipp 2001; Dunlay 1982).

⁷Had Dutchy carried out his threat that night, it would have been a devastating blow to General Crook's strategy of relying heavily on Apache scouts. Crook spent considerable effort defending his strategy to both military and civilian authorities.

Lieutenant Britton Davis, Faison's predecessor as commander of these two scout companies, considered Dutchy a "fast friend" and one of his most loyal scouts (Davis 1929); Lieutenant William Shipp (2001) took an intermediate stance, as he described Dutchy as "a known murderer, brutal and mean, but in many respects a valuable scout."

⁸Faison is now describing Crawford's expedition. Faison had parted from the expedition by this time to obtain more supplies.

⁹During the 1872–1873 Modoc Wars, staged in the lava beds of northern California, General Edward Canby led a peace commission to talk with the Modoc leaders. During the council, Canby was shot and killed by Kintpuash ("Captain Jack"), the Modoc leader. A California clergyman accompanying Canby at the conference was also killed (Brown 1970).

¹⁰Faison doesn't mention that a disreputable bootlegger named Bob Tribolett furnished mescal to the Apaches, despite the army's—including Faison's—attempts to prevent him from doing so (Thrapp 1979). Geronimo said he bolted because he "feared treachery," and Tribolett apparently helped instill these fears in the Apache warrior by telling him the Apaches would be killed as soon as they crossed the United States border (Faulk 1969; Turner 1996). General Crook apparently offered a \$1000.00 reward for the capture of Tribollet afterwards (Van Orden 1991).

¹¹Faison originally wrote "[Miles] lays great stress on these heliograph stations, but personally I don't think they were of any material help to the troops"; however, he crossed out the second half of this compound sentence and inserted "and well deserved" between "great" and "stress." One wonders whether the original statement reflects the more genuine sentiment and the replacement the more pragmatic sentiment of a first

lieutenant not wanting to delay promotion to captain by criticizing the highest-ranking officer in the US Army, which by 1898 General Miles had become.

¹²Faison's assessment that refusing the commands was a "very grave mistake" undoubtedly reflects a feeling that he passed up an extraordinary opportunity to be part of the historic final surrender of Geronimo.

¹³The original surrender terms offered by Geronimo, Natchez, and Nana and accepted by General Crook in March 1886 were removal to Florida for two years followed by a return to their reservations in Arizona. President Cleveland refused to accept these terms, despite having authorized Crook the latitude to accept conditions if "it is necessary to secure their surrender" (Thrapp 1967). Geronimo's subsequent flight back to Mexico gave Cleveland and General Sheridan the excuse they needed to nullify Crook's agreement with the Apaches, even with respect to those Apaches who had not fled. After Geronimo's final surrender to General Miles, not only the "renegades" but most of the reservation Apaches and loyal Apache scouts were rounded up and shipped to Florida as well. Crook fought for the remainder of his life to overturn this decision and to enable the Apaches to move back to a western reservation more suitable to the climate to which they were adapted, but Crook died suddenly in 1890 with the controversy still unresolved. The Apaches were eventually moved to Fort Sill, Oklahoma, in 1894, but they remained prisoners of war for a total of twenty-eight years (Thrapp 1967; Dunlay 1982; Van Orden 1991)

Acknowledgments

My sincere thanks to Mrs. Elisabeth Dudley for her interest and generous support of this project and for introducing me to David Yetman at the Southwest Center. I am grateful to David for his encouragement and helpful comments on the manuscript. I enjoyed and benefited from conversations with Jay Van Orden of the Arizona Historical Society and am appreciative of Larry Ludwig and his staff at Fort Bowie National Historical Site for providing helpful references and access to their archives. Special appreciation goes to my wife, Brooke Faison, and father, George Faison, for their critical feedback and editing of the manuscript. Finally, I thank the grandsons of Samson L. Faison—Samson L. Faison III, Gordon L. Faison, Christopher M. Faison, and George W. Faison—for their support of this project.

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