



Geronimo

Chiricahua Apache. (1829-1909)

To the Apaches, Geronimo embodied the very essence of the Apache values, aggressiveness, courage in the face of difficulty. These qualities inspired

fear in the settlers of Arizona and New Mexico. The Chiricahuas were mostly migratory following the seasons, hunting and farming. When food was scarce, it was the custom to raid neighboring tribes. Raids and vengeance were an honorable way of life among the tribes of this region. By the time American settlers began arriving in the area, the Spanish had become entrenched in the area, they were always looking for Indian slaves and Christian converts. It was the Spanish who raided and killed Geronimo's young wife and child and reportedly caused such a hatred of the whites that he vowed to kill as many as he could.

In 1876, the U.S. Army tried to move the Chiricahuas onto a reservation, but Geronimo fled to Mexico eluding the troops for over a decade. Sensationalized press reports exaggerated Geronimo's activities, making him the most feared and infamous Apache. The last few months of the campaign required over 5,000 soldiers and 500 scouts to track down Geronimo and his band. Geronimo finally surrendered on the urging of his followers in September after the Army promised that after a period of time he would be able to return to Arizona. Geronimo and his followers were shipped to St. Augustine, Florida where many died from malaria or tuberculosis. Geronimo never again saw his beloved Arizona and died a prisoner many years later on a reservation in Oklahoma.

Quotes from Geronimo:

“I was warmed by the sun, rocked by the winds and sheltered by the trees as other Indian babes.”

“I was living peaceably when people began to speak bad of me.”

“Now I can eat well, sleep well and be glad. I can go everywhere with a good feeling.”

“The soldiers never explained to the government when an Indian was wronged, but reported the misdeeds of the Indians.”

“We took an oath not to do any wrong to each other or to scheme against each other.”

“I cannot think that we are useless or God would not have created us.”

“There is one God looking down on us all. We are all the children of one

God. The sun, the darkness, the winds are all listening to what we have to say.”

“When a child, my mother taught me to kneel and pray to Usen for strength, health, wisdom and protection.”

“Sometimes we prayed in silence, sometimes each one prayed aloud; sometimes an aged person prayed for all of us... and to Usen.”

“I was born on the prairies where the wind blew free and there was nothing to break the light of the sun. I was born where there were no enclosures.”