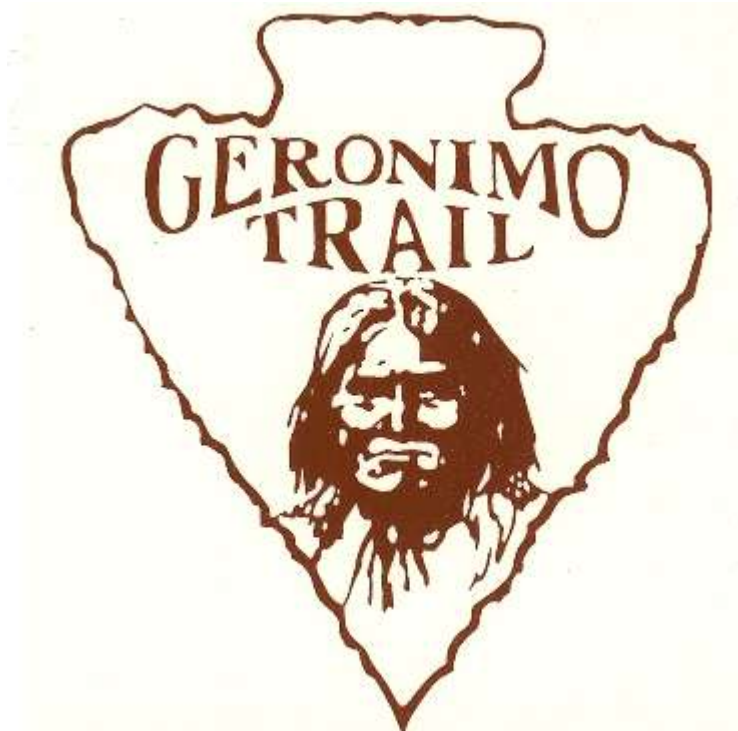
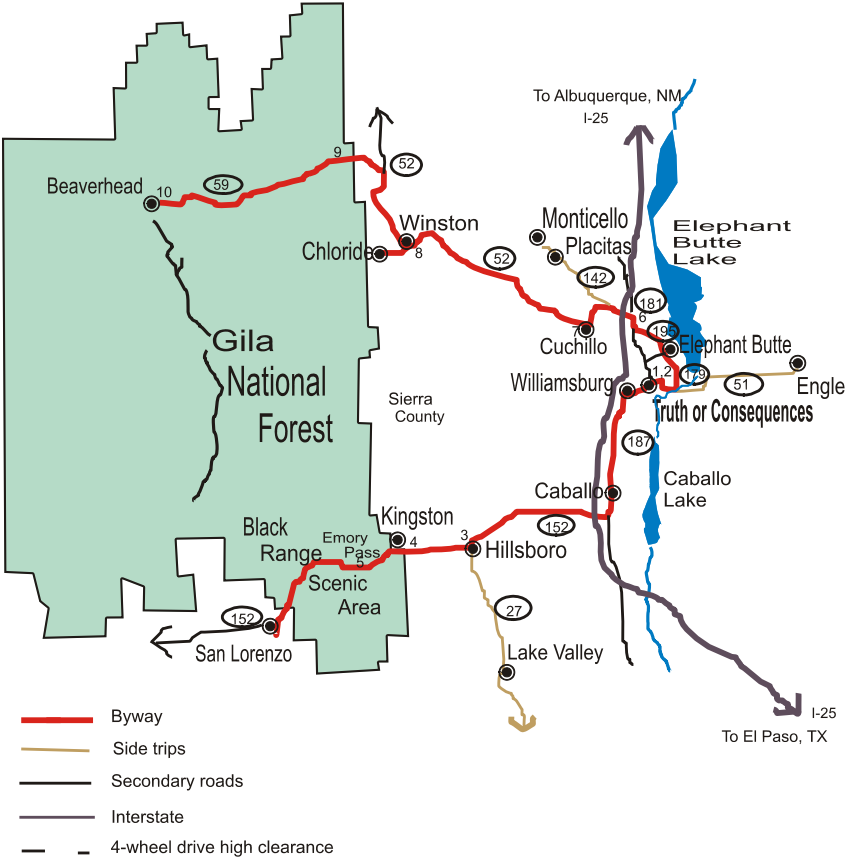


**APACHE HISTORY
ALONG THE**



**NATIONAL
SCENIC
BYWAY**

Geronimo Trail Scenic Byway



1. Pfeiffer Attack & location map
2. Indian Rocks, Turtleback and Caballo Mountains
3. Attacks at Gold Dust and Lake Valley, Hillsboro
4. Battle at Victorio Park & location map
5. Emory Pass
6. Fort McRae
7. Farming by Apaches and Cuchillo Negro
8. Conflict and Friendship, Chief Victorio
9. Warm Springs Reservation, Buffalo Soldiers
10. Geronimo and the Gila Wilderness and location map

Special recognition and thanks goes to Kelley Ridings and his students in the New Mexico history class at Gardner Learning Center of Western New Mexico University for their assistance in research on the subject matter included in this project. The following students are to be commended for their diligent work:

| | |
|---------------------|------------------|
| Lourdes Gutierrez | Victoria Johnson |
| Melissa Mullins | Linda Padilla |
| Gale Perry-Crawford | |

Special thanks also goes to Chris Adams of the U.S. Forest Service, and Apache historians Dan Aranda, Emilio Tapia, and Dr. Robert Watt for their knowledge and expertise in editing the material for final publication.

Thanks also to Harriette Bolling and Gina Kelley for their assistance in editing.

LaRena Miller, Executive Director
Geronimo Trail National Scenic Byway

You play an essential role in ensuring the ethical treatment and protection of irreplaceable archaeological resources. Archaeological sites throughout New Mexico offer us a unique opportunity to study the history of the Southwest as experienced and depicted by the people who lived it. Archaeological resources, both sites and collections on Federal and State Lands, are protected by the 1906 American Antiquities Act, the 1979 Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) and the 1990 Native American Graves Repatriation Act (NAGRA).

Sierra County has been home to native peoples for over 2000 years. Mogollon-Mimbres dwellers built pueblos that existed in the area until the late 1400s, at which time they were abandoned. The Apaches appeared in the Southwest around 1500. The name “Apache” comes from the word for “enemy” from Pueblo tribes as they were a fierce warrior people who raided wherever they went.

The Apache people derived from the Athapascans, a nomadic group of Native Americans. Today there are several different groups under the name “Apache”. The Mescalero and Kiowa Apaches lived east of the Rio Grande, the Jicarilla Apaches in the northern mountains, and the White Mountain and Chokonen, or Chiricahua, west in Arizona. The central Chiricahua Apaches roamed the territory mostly from the Rio Grande west through the Black Range and Mogollon Mountains into Southern Arizona and Mexico.

There were several groups of Apaches that the Army labeled as Chiricahua. The Nedni lived in the mountains of Mexico, the Bedonkohe in what is now western New Mexico and eastern Arizona, and the Chihenne or Red Paint People along the Mimbres valley and east across the Black Range to the Rio Grande. The Chihenne were also known as the Warm Springs (Ojo Caliente) Apaches, Mimbreno or Gila Apaches. The Warm Springs Apaches are most closely associated with the Geronimo Trail National Scenic Byway.

The following accounts of the Warm Springs Apaches in the area along the Geronimo Trail are acknowledged with informational kiosks.

1. Pfeiffer Attack

Located in Truth or Consequences next to the Las Palomas Plaza and Geronimo Springs, adjacent to Geronimo Springs Museum, this information is on a kiosk telling of an attack by the Apaches that is documented in military records.

Geronimo Springs is the site of one of Sierra County's most famous Apache attacks. On June 20, 1863, Captain Albert Pfeiffer, then commander of Fort McRae, along with his wife, two servant girls and a small escort of volunteer soldiers came to the hot springs to bathe. Captain Pfeiffer was recovering from wounds received during a recent encounter with the Apaches.

While the party was bathing, a band of Apaches attacked and drove the escort off, killed two soldiers, and wounded two others. The Apaches captured Mrs. Pfeiffer and one of the maid servants.

One report suggests that Captain Pfeiffer, still naked, scrambled from the water, leapt on his horse and gave chase. Pfeiffer was shot in the thigh with an arrow and the Apaches escaped. Another report claims that the Apaches presumed Pfeiffer dead, and when he regained consciousness, he swam away with arrows still bristling his body. In either event, he made his way ten miles to Fort McRae.

An army patrol went after the marauding Apaches and overtook them in the vicinity of the Caballo Mountains. Hard-pressed by the soldiers, the Apaches killed the two women and made their escape.

Captain Pfeiffer made a full recovery. The Apaches involved in the raid were never caught. The following year, Captain Pfeiffer joined Colonel Kit Carson in the campaign against the Navajos. Captain Pfeiffer gained a reputation as a famous Indian fighter and remained a good friend of Kit Carson for the rest of his life, corresponding with him on a regular basis.



Photo courtesy Geronimo Springs Museum
Early mud bathers at the location of Geronimo Springs

2A. Native American Rocks

At this location you will observe an early Native American campsite. There are several deep grinding holes and blackened rocks that document prehistoric activity at this location as a sheltered campsite over a long period of time.

The Apaches camped here and bathed in the nearby healing mineral waters to soothe their battle wounds. At that time, the mineral water area was a large swampy land with several hot springs seeping out of the ground. It was filled with reeds, cattails and tall grasses. There were sheltered bathing areas where those using the mineral waters could not be seen by other bathers.

Local oral history tells of the Apaches from Mescalero making pilgrimages here to bathe in the waters through the early 1950s. They would camp near the rocks on the outskirts of town, where Ralph Edwards Park is located. As they had done for generations, groups of Apache would set up camp, bathe in the waters, and rejuvenate and revitalize their spirits. By 1952, the town had expanded and had begun to encroach upon them, resulting in the end of these Apache pilgrimages.

A ferry across the river was located east of here and the current of the river was used to propel the ferry across the river along its guide lines by turning a rudder in the right direction.

During the 1940s and 1950s, the city ball park was located where Ralph Edwards Park is now.



Photo courtesy Geronimo Springs Museum

Picture of people at the rocks circa 1959

2B. Turtleback and Caballo Mountains

Named for the unique rock formation on top of the mountain directly across the Rio Grande, Turtleback Mountain is part of the Caballo Mountain Range. Resembling a turtle, this landmark was used for centuries by Native Americans to designate the location of the warm mineral waters located nearby. During the past few years, several legends have been invented about the turtle, but all are recent myths, not long-standing oral tales. The “T” on the mountain stands for “Tigers”, the Hot Springs High School mascot.

Geologically, the Caballo Mountains are desert volcanic formations. Large fossil deposits have been found at or near the top of these mountains. “Caballo” is the Spanish word for “horse.” These mountains were named for the wild horses that roamed throughout the range; descendants of the horses brought in by the Spaniards traveling along the Camino Real to the east. Finding these horses to be very good stock, early cowboys would round up and break in the horses for use in herding cattle. The Apaches knew the mountains as Mescal Mountain because so much of that plant grew in these mountains and was harvested for use. The mescal plant is also known as century plant or agave.

The late 1880s to early 1900s saw extensive mining activity in the Caballo Mountains. The Pittsburg/Shandon mining district was formed, and a town with a population of about 150 sprang up toward the southern end of the mountains near where Caballo Dam is now located. There are many tales of buried treasure in the Caballo Mountains, and several fortunes have been lost by people trying to locate an elusive lost pot of gold.



Photo Geronimo Trail Scenic Byway

Turtleback overlooking Rio Grande

3A. Attacks on Gold Dust and Lake Valley

Hillsboro was the center of many mining and placer claims in the surrounding mountains. In 1881, Gold Dust developed as a small tent city in the hills approximately five miles northeast of Hillsboro. The mining town of Lake Valley was established in 1881 roughly seventeen miles south of Hillsboro, but moved three times to nearby locations. It became a major silver mining town and railroad center for shipping ore from the mines in Hillsboro, Gold Dust, Kingston and Lake Valley.

Following the death of Victorio, Nana (Apache name Kas-Tziden) led a band of Warm Springs Apache on vengeance raids. He began a spectacular raid in northern Mexico in 1881. Nana recruited reinforcements at the Mescalero reservation, then continued north to near Fort Wingate and back through the Black Range and back into Mexico.

On August 18, 1881, while the men were off working their claims, the Apaches arrived at Gold Dust. The women and children ran into their tents, tied the flaps shut and lay flat on the ground. In a matter of minutes, the Apaches rode through the community shooting and yelling their war cries. The miners heard the commotion and hurried to rescue their families, but by then the Apaches had vanished.

The Apaches next ransacked outlying ranches, burning homes and killing settlers. One home was the homestead of the Irwin family near Lake Valley. Some quick thinking by Sally Irwin distracted the Apaches long enough for her to escape with her baby. The Apaches set the house on fire and rode off to the west.

When Mr. Irwin returned he found his family gone and the house in flames. Fearing the worst, he rode to Lake Valley where a detachment of the 9th Cavalry was in the process of pursuing the Apaches. His news put the town into an uproar, and a local contingent of miners and residents joined the army in pursuit of the Apaches. This unsuccessful chase resulted in many more deaths of soldiers and civilians.



Photo courtesy Geronimo Springs Museum
Early mining town of Lake Valley in late 1890s

3B. Hillsboro

Hillsboro was established when gold was discovered in 1877. It was the first of several mining communities to spring up in the Black Range as word of gold and silver strikes spread. Since it was located in the heart of Apache country, conflict was inevitable. The Apaches struck back with a vengeance, and much blood on both sides was shed. Skirmishes and attacks on miners on outlying claims intensified in 1879 during what has been called the Victorio War. Ten Hillsboro residents were with the party pursuing the Apaches after the attack on Lake Valley and were killed.

As a result of the frequent attacks and constant harassment by Apaches, detachments of soldiers were periodically stationed in Hillsboro to protect the settlers. There was never a permanent military camp, only a wagon and tent camp at the edge of town.

Despite its location in the middle of hostile territory, Hillsboro became the county seat of Sierra County, formed in 1884 from parts of Grant, Dona Ana and Socorro counties. A beautiful red brick courthouse was built, and the increase in population, combined with the frequent presence of Army troopers, soon discouraged Apache attacks.

After the county seat was moved from Hillsboro to Hot Springs in 1934, the residents of Hillsboro sued the county commissioners for election fraud. After the lawsuit was thrown out of court, the county records were stolen several times from the new courthouse in Hot Springs to “mysteriously” reappear in the Hillsboro’s former courthouse building. This led to the county commission selling the Victorian-style brick courthouse for salvage. Only a portion of wall and one arch remain. The residents of Hillsboro have formed a historical preservation society and are attempting to purchase the property.



Photo courtesy Geronimo Springs Museum

Army encampment at Hillsboro
County Courthouse on hill in background

4. Battle at Victorio Park (Las Animas Canyon)

Victorio Park is located north of Kingston in one of the most rugged areas of the Black Range. It is accessible only on foot or on horseback.

After having been promised a reservation in their homeland at Ojo Caliente, the Warm Springs Apache were relocated to Bosque Redondo, then to the Mescalero Reservation, and finally to San Carlos in Arizona. The Apache chief Victorio requested that they be returned to the Warm Springs Reservation, where they would be willing to live peacefully. The string of broken promises and constant relocations finally took its toll.

On September 4, 1879, Victorio and his band returned to Ojo Caliente where they attacked the Army camp and captured eighteen mules, fifty cavalry horses, and killed five Buffalo Soldiers Black troopers who were guarding the animals. This event began the Victorio War.

Two weeks later, on September 18, 1879, Companies A and B of the Ninth Cavalry followed their Navajo scouts into the Black Range. The Cavalry units were assigned to Fort Bayard and were charged with finding and subduing Victorio and his band. What they did not know was that they were riding into a trap and were approaching one of the Warm Springs Apache's main mountain top campsites. This site is now called Victorio Park.

The troopers fell under a heavy concentration of rifle and arrow fire at the junction of Las Animas Creek and the canyon now know as Massacre Canyon. The troopers were caught in a three-way trap with Victorio's men firing from the heights of the canyons. All the men in both companies were pinned down behind boulders, rocks and trees. The gunfire was heard echoing and re-echoing down the canyon by men of Companies C and G, and civilian volunteers from Hillsboro who rushed to the battle scene only to be pinned down themselves.

The military and civilian contingent withdrew at nightfall. There are conflicting reports about just how many troopers were killed and wounded in this battle. Medals of Honor were awarded to two men who saved wounded troopers. And a third awarded for a gallant but failed attempt to outflank the Apaches. Victorio and the Apaches had disappeared from the immediate area by the next morning.



The rough terrain of the Black Range was familiar to the Apaches, but very difficult to traverse by the Army

Photo Geronimo Trail Scenic Byway

5. Emory Pass

In 1846 Lt. W. H. Emory, guided by Kit Carson, led the Army of the West through the Black Range Mountains. Emory Pass was named for him, even though he probably crossed at another pass south of here. The U. S. Boundary Commission conducted an exploration of the area in 1850.

The Black Range, the Mogollon, and the San Mateo Mountains of New Mexico were homelands of the eastern band of Chiricahua Apaches known as the Warm Springs, Chihenne or Red Paint People. The Apaches had no tribal government such as we know, but were divided into bands. Each band consisted of several extended families or a family cluster. They were hunters, gatherers, and occasional farmers. The Warm Springs Apaches were a far-ranging people who roamed over more than one thousand miles of terrain in the American southwest. They could be found in areas of present day western New Mexico, eastern Arizona, and northern Mexico.

Survival included raiding the small farming and ranching communities, mining towns and villages in the territory they considered their homelands. Both newcomers and the Apache believed that anything they found on the land was theirs to use, and this led to continuous conflicts between the two groups. In the end, a combination of incoming settlers and miners, Indian agents on the take, and the US Army led to the Apache being forcibly removed from their homelands.

The Chiricahua Apaches were rounded up and shipped by train to Florida in 1886, as prisoners of war. Later they were relocated to Alabama. The damp southeastern climate aggravated the already unhygienic conditions in these POW camps, and diseases such as tuberculosis took many lives. In 1894 they were moved to Fort Sill, Oklahoma, a healthier climate for them. In 1911 they were finally released as Prisoners of War. Some of them remained in the Fort Sill area and homesteaded lands there. Others preferred to return to their native New Mexico where the Mescalero Apaches invited them to come live on their reservation. Those tribal members who visited Monticello and the old Ojo Caliente reservations lands felt them to have been destroyed by the homesteaders and no longer suitable for their people.

The Warm Springs Apaches who roamed this territory for hundreds of years never returned to this homeland to live. As you look out over the vast terrain of mountains, hills and valleys, you still feel their spirit in the land.



View from Emory Pass
Lookout

Photo Geronimo Trail Scenic Byway-

6. Fort McRae

The large canyon you can see directly across Elephant Butte Lake is known as McRae Canyon, named for a frontier fort that was established in April 1863. The fort was named for Alexander McRae of the 3rd Cavalry who was killed north of here, near Fort Craig, during the Civil War battle of Valverde. The site of Fort McRae was chosen because it protected a nearby spring and water supply that was used by the military, by settlers, and by the caravans traveling north and south on the Camino Real to the east. It also protected a natural ford across the Rio Grande near the mouth of the canyon. This canyon, formerly known as Canyon del Muerto, (now McRae Canyon) was believed to be the major east-west thoroughfare for the raiding Apaches. By controlling the water, the Army could control the Apaches. The waters of Elephant Butte Reservoir inundate the old fort during periods of normal to high water.

Ft. McRae was always a small garrison. It generally housed one or two companies. Volunteer troops manned the post from 1863 until 1866, when Regular Army infantry units replaced them. In the spring of 1872, the Cavalry branch took over and remained until the fort was decommissioned in 1876. Much of the soldiers' time was spent scouting and pursuing hostile Indians.

For about 10 months in 1869–1870, 1st Lieutenant Charles Drew was the Indian Agent for the Southern Apaches, also known as Warm Springs or Mimbres Apaches. He used Ft. McRae as his headquarters.

When the Warm Springs Apaches were moved back to the Ojo Caliente Reservation in midsummer of 1874, Fort McRae got its final important mission. For two years, detachments from the 8th and 9th Cavalry out of Ft. McRae were detached for duty at Ojo Caliente to assist the Indian agent in keeping order at that reservation.

Fort McRae was abandoned in October 1876. As the fort had been built of adobe, time and the waters of Elephant Butte Lake have dissolved most of it.

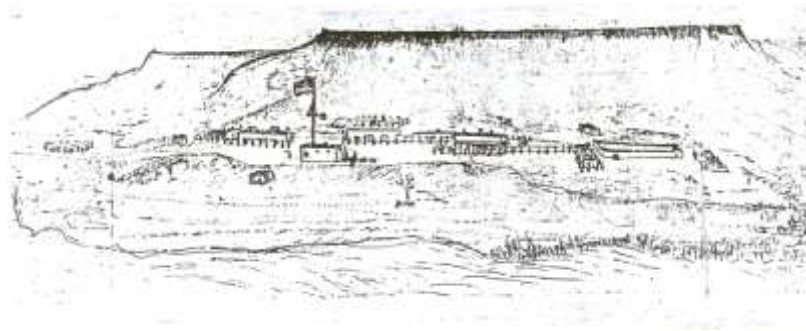


Photo courtesy Geronimo Springs Museum

Sketch of Fort McRae
done by a soldier who was stationed there

7. Farming by Apaches and Cuchillo Negro

Apaches did not live in settlements or permanent homes, but rather in brush-covered shelters called wickiups. They moved seasonally from north to south; summers were spent in the mountains, winters were spent in the lower elevations. Each band had its own recognized territory where they hunted game, planted maize and other grains, and harvested berries. They only needed to be in their agricultural areas during the planting and harvesting season, leaving the fields unattended most of the year. They stored their crops in “caches”, storage pits containing baskets or pots, or wrapped in bear grass. Caves were also commonly used as caches. Corn was the most common crop, however squash and chiles were also planted. References from as early as 1692 describes planting by Warm Springs Apaches along the rivers and canyons of the Black Range. From the 1700s on there are frequent references to Apache fields and agriculture, noting their locations along the headwaters of Animas, Palomas, Cañada Alamosa and Cuchillo Negro creeks.

The coming of the United States Army, followed by the Civil War, disrupted the lives of the Chihenne, by driving them from their accustomed farmlands. A further influx of white settlers, seeking gold and other precious ores, in the Black Range added to the Apaches being driven from their lands. In order to discourage raiding in the 1850s, Indian Agent Michael Steck encouraged more agricultural activities by the Apaches to supplement their food supply. He repeatedly noted Chihenne farming in his reports. Later reports include planting on the Cuchillo, Palomas and Alamosa in 1869. This practice continued at Ojo Caliente until the Apache removal in 1877.

Cuchillo Negro (Black Knife) was the Spanish name for Baishan, a leader of the Warm Springs Apache during the 1830s to 1850s. He was a respected leader and forceful presence among the southern Chiricahua tribes. He was a chief lieutenant under one of the greatest Apache leaders, Mangas Coloradas, who persuaded many of the bands to work together. Cuchillo Negro’s name is mentioned many times in both military and civilian records of dealings with Apaches and treaties during the early years of United States territorial rule.

Cuchillo Negro was a leader in the Apache raid on Ramos in Mexico, an important event in Apache history. He was killed in the Black Range by Pueblo scouts, under Col. William Wing Loring, during the Bonneville campaign in 1857. Several geological features in Sierra County bear his name, including the Cuchillo Negro Mountains, Cuchillo Negro Creek, and the town of Cuchillo.



Painting of Cuchillo Negro done by John Mix Stanley in 1846. It hangs in the Smithsonian American Art Museum. Since Apaches traditionally did not wear feathers there is some doubt if the artist ever saw his subject.

8A. Conflict and Friendship

There are many documented reports of the Apache attacks and raids on the early communities near the Warm Springs Reservation. There are also many family traditions and oral histories recounting friendship between the Indians and the early settlers, and their attempts to live in peace with each other. The Warm Springs or Chihenne Apaches attacked the surrounding area many times. A few examples are listed below:

In the spring of 1879, Apaches attacked a small party of miners including Harry Pye, the founder of Chloride, 3 miles west of Winston.

May 29, 1879 - The 9th Cavalry and the Apaches clashed in the mountains west of here at what has become known as Beyer's Run. One soldier was killed and two others were injured.

On January 18, 1881- Apaches attacked Chloride. Two people were killed and another was injured. Marauding Apaches also killed other settlers in the vicinity in the months that followed.

On August 2, 1881- In Red Canyon in the San Mateo Mountains, Nana's raiders killed one and wounded seven pursuing local civilian posse members. Two weeks later the Apaches attacked the Chavez farm near Canada Alamosa, killing the farmer, his wife and their children.

Tradition has it that the community west of Cuchillo, today known as Chiz, was named in honor of the great Apache Chief Cochise. Because Cochise camped there on occasion and because Hispanics referred to the chief as Cheis or Chiz much credence must be given to the naming of this community. The original settlers, including Bentura Trujillo and his extended family, were said to have had a good relationship with the Apaches.



Photo courtesy Geronimo Springs Museum

Buffalo Soldiers as depicted by artist Frederic Remington



Photo courtesy Geronimo Springs Museum

Mission Church at Chiz

8B. Chief Victorio

Although there are stories to the contrary, it is believed that Victorio was born in the Black Range of New Mexico around 1825. He was reared as a member of the Warm Springs Apache. By the 1850's he was riding with Nana and Loco and in 1862 he is believed to have joined forces with Cochise and Mangas Coloradas at the battle of Apache Pass. He was a leading chief of the Warm Springs Apaches.

After his people were settled on the new reservation near Ojo Caliente, they remained reasonably content and did little raiding. They had a long-term trading relationship with the settlers in the nearby farming communities of Cañada Alamosa (now Monticello) and Palomas, and many of his people befriended the Hispanic farmers.

In 1877 the Reservation was returned to public land, and the people were moved to the San Carlos Reservation in Arizona where conditions were intolerable. Victorio made several breakouts between 1877 and 1879. By June 1879 he had settled on the Mescalero Reservation, however Victorio and his followers fled on August 21. The subsequent conflict became known as the "Victorio War." For over a year, the Apaches eluded the army and conducted raids in New Mexico, Arizona, Texas and Mexico. In the fall of 1880, an unofficial combined effort by U.S. forces and troops from the State of Chihuahua, under the command of Col. Joaquin Terrazas, trapped and killed Victorio at Tres Castillos.



Photo courtesy Geronimo Springs Museum

This photograph has long been identified as Victorio, but is now believed to have been someone else. Research is being done to confirm the identity, and to identify a possible picture of Victorio.

9A. Warm Springs Reservation

The Warm Springs Apaches lived in this area during the summer, hunting through the hills and gathering fruits, nuts and berries. They did a limited amount of farming in the valleys, but were not a people to remain in one place for very long. The natural spring of warm water a few miles north of here, known locally as “Ojo Caliente” was their summer headquarters and holy place. The U. S. Army moved the Warm Springs Apaches from this traditional homeland to Tularosa in May of 1871. In April 1874, the Warm Springs were allowed to return to Ojo Caliente, and the surrounding area was declared a reservation for them under Chief Victorio.

In early 1877, Geronimo and some renegades from Arizona hid out at the Warm Springs Reservation. When John Clum, the San Carlos Indian Agent, was ordered to arrest and return him to San Carlos, he and his Apache scouts set a trap for the troublesome leader. Geronimo was lured and captured at the Post at Ojo Caliente on April 21. Clum decided to also remove the Warm Springs Apaches under Victorio.

After his breakout from San Carlos in September 1877 Victorio and his people were allowed to return to Ojo Caliente until the US authorities reached a decision on where they were to stay. The eventual refusal of a reservation at this site can be blamed for the subsequent “Victorio War” in which many soldiers and the settlers in the region were killed.

By late 1886, most of the Apaches who had fought for their lands surrendered and were taken east as prisoners of war. According to the oral tradition of many families living in the area today, some of the Apache infants were left with local families and raised by the Hispanic farmers as their own children. Tradition states that a few of the Apaches had left their people and inter-married with Hispanic farming families in the area.

In 1912, after over twenty years of captivity, the Apaches were released. When they visited their homeland they felt that the homesteaders in the area had ruined the lands and they declined to relocate there. Instead, they elected to move to the Mescalero

Reservation, near Ruidoso, where they would be with other Apaches. Not all of the Warm Springs Apache made this move. Many preferred to remain at the reservation near Ft. Sill, Oklahoma, where many still reside today.



Photo courtesy Geronimo Springs Museum

Typical Apache camp

9B. Buffalo Soldiers

The 9th and 10th U. S. Cavalry and the 24th and 25th U.S. Infantry were created after the Civil War. The new units were recruited for duty on the Western frontier, and were composed primarily of African-Americans, many of whom were former slaves. It was the start of a new life for these men.

Accounts vary on the origination of the term “Buffalo Soldier”. Some sources assert that the nickname was given out of respect for the fierce fighting ability of the 10th cavalry. Other sources assert that Native Americans called the black cavalry troops "buffalo soldiers" because of their dark curly hair, which resembled the coat of a buffalo. Eventually, the term “Buffalo Soldiers” became a generic term for all African-American soldiers. It is now used for U.S. Army units that trace their direct lineage back to the 9th and 10th Cavalry, units whose bravery earned them an honored place in U.S. history.

The Buffalo Soldiers’ contribution to the American West was significant. One in five soldiers in the West were African American. They escorted settlers, cattle herds, and railroad crews and fought Indians. The Buffalo Soldiers were also responsible for mapping vast areas of the Southwest and for stringing hundreds of miles of telegraph wire. The Buffalo Soldiers fought throughout the west and among their adversaries in this area were Geronimo, Victorio and Nana.

Members of one or more of these units garrisoned most of the forts in Southwestern New Mexico. Among these were Ft. Craig on the west side of the Rio Grande, Fort McRae on the east side of the Rio Grande, the Post at Ojo Caliente on the Warm Springs Reservation and Fort Selden in Dona Ana County.

The Buffalo Soldiers are credited with fighting in more than 187 engagements throughout the West and many of them were awarded the Congressional Medals of Honor.



Photo courtesy Geronimo Springs Museum

Post at Ojo Caliente

10. Geronimo and the Gila Wilderness

Geronimo claimed to have been near or at the headwaters of the Gila in the late 1820's. That would put the location about seventy miles west of here. The exact location is unknown, as Apache tradition required that a person keep his birthplace as his secret place to meditate and receive strength. Geronimo remembered that wickiups (housing shelters made of brush) were hidden in the area, while nearby valleys contained the Apache's summer fields. The prairies and open spaces were their animals pastures, and the rocky caverns were burying places for the dead. Geronimo's birth name was Goyakla, meaning "one who yawns". He was born into the Bedonkohe band of Chiricahua Apaches, who made their homes along the Gila and in the Mogollon Mountains. Like the other Apache bands, the Bedonkohe ranged throughout southeastern Arizona, southwestern New Mexico and northern Mexico.

Geronimo's wife, mother and three children were killed by Mexican troops near Casas Grandes in Mexico in 1858. Geronimo later recalled this to be the turning point in his life, "I was never again content in our quiet home.... I had vowed vengeance upon the Mexican troopers who had wronged me, ...and my heart would ache for revenge upon Mexico."

Geronimo spent the following years seeking revenge against first the Mexicans, and later Americans who wanted to place his people on reservations. In September 1886, after many years of bloody warfare, Geronimo and his followers surrendered at Skeleton Canyon in Arizona.

This area of Beaverhead was a site of a Civilian Conservation Corp camp during the 1930s. The CCC performed much reclamation work during this era. More about the CCC can be obtained at Geronimo Springs Museum in Truth or Consequences.

There is a rest room in the parking area of the Beaverhead Work Station, which is usually manned during the spring and summer fire season. There is ample parking and space to turn around at this end of the northern segment of the Geronimo Trail Scenic Byway.



Overlooking the Beaverhead valley from NM 152.

This is near the headwaters of the Gila River in Southwestern New Mexico.

Photo Geronimo Trail Scenic Byway

We hope you have enjoyed your tour of the Geronimo Trail National Scenic Byway, and this small insight into the history of a proud and often misunderstood people. Additional information on the history of this land and its people is available at Geronimo Springs Museum in Truth or Consequences, both in displays and in books that are for sale in the Museum gift shop book section.

As with any history, it is impossible to fully cover all events and details, and present all sides and viewpoints on events. We have tried to be historically accurate and unbiased in our representation of documentable facts.

Thank you for your interest in the vibrant history of our part of New Mexico.

Geronimo Trail Scenic Byway Board of Directors and Advisory
Committee.