

**THE APACHE PRISONERS
IN FORT
MARION, ST. AUGUSTINE,
FLORIDA, PP. 1-59**

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The Apache Prisoners in Fort Marion, St. Augustine, Florida, pp. 1-59 by Herbert Welsh

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HERBERT WELSH

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OFFICE OF THE INDIAN RIGHTS ASSOCIATION,
NO. 1316 FILBERT STREET,
Philadelphia, March 15, 1887.

Report of a visit to the Chiricahua Apache Indians at present confined in Fort Marion, St. Augustine, Florida. By Herbert Welsh, Corresponding Secretary, I. R. A.

REASONS FOR VISITING FORT MARION.

My journey to St. Augustine was undertaken at the instance and by the authority of the Executive Committee of the Indian Rights Association. Its object was to gain reliable and exact information concerning the Apache Indians, men, women and children, some of whom, for nearly a year past, and others for about half that period, have been imprisoned by order of the President, in the old Spanish fort at St. Augustine. As much doubt existed in the public mind regarding the causes which led to the imprisonment of these people, their physical and moral condition while in captivity, and the measures in operation looking toward their civilization, this visit of investigation was deemed by the Association to be advisable.

FACILITIES GRANTED BY THE SECRETARY OF WAR.

Letters of introduction to the Secretary of War, Hon. William C. Endicott, were kindly granted me by Francis Parkman, Esq., and Hon. Leverett Saltonstall, of Boston. With these I made application to the Secretary for permission to visit Fort Marion, in pursuit of the object stated, and also asked that a military officer thoroughly acquainted with the Apaches, and for many years a student of their history and customs, might be permitted to accompany me. In answer to this request the Secretary kindly authorized him to go with me, and gave me a letter of introduction to Brigadier General R. B. Ayres, the Commandant of St. Francis Barracks, St. Augustine.

CHIRICAHUA APACHE CHILDREN AT CARLISLE.

Leaving Philadelphia Wednesday, March 2d, I went immediately to Carlisle, Pa., where I was the guest of Captain R. H. Pratt, Superintendent of the Government Indian Training School at that place. I arrived at the school at three o'clock, Wednesday afternoon, and left there at one the day following. My especial purpose

in going to Carlisle was to see the Chiricahua Apache boys and girls, who were taken last November from among the other Indians in confinement in Fort Marion, and were, by order of the authorities, placed under Captain Pratt's care. When these children were first put at Carlisle they were wild, untrained, filthy savages. The few months during which they have been under Captain Pratt's guidance and in which they have breathed the civilizing atmosphere of the school, have wrought great changes in them. Of course, the miserable rags in which they were clad upon their arrival have disappeared and the children are now clean, neat and decently dressed. But the change effected in them is not of an outward nature only. They have learned, with surprising quickness, the ways of civilized living, and have made remarkable progress in simple studies; arithmetic, spelling and writing (with pen and ink, and on the blackboard). Physically, they are as strong as, if not stronger than, any other Indian children in the school, and every one who is brought in contact with them is impressed with their mental alertness and vigor. When they first came they quarrelled at times among themselves, and with other pupils. This combative disposition seems now to be rapidly subsiding, as they are coming more and more under the influence of habits of order and self-control. They have a respect for authority, and Captain Pratt told me they were as easily managed as any of the other children.

The Chiricahua Apache children taken from Fort Marion number in all forty-four; of these, thirty-two are boys and twelve girls. They are between the ages of twelve and twenty-two years. Before leaving Carlisle, Captain Pratt assembled these children in one of the large rooms and gave me an opportunity to tell them the reason for my visit to Carlisle, and of my proposed journey to their relatives in Florida. Upon my asking them whether they had any message to send by me to their friends, one boy replied: "Tell them to do what is right and to go to farming." I could not but think afterward when I saw the prisoners, that this advice, while excellent, was, under the circumstances, very difficult of application.

IMPORTANCE OF CAPTAIN PRATT'S WORK.

Captain Pratt's work at Carlisle in behalf, not alone of these Apache children, but of the five hundred representatives of other tribes under tuition at that place, is worthy of the highest commendation. In my opinion, a man of his experience, skill, energy, and

success in the work of Indian education should be entrusted by the government with ten-fold the powers that have been placed in the hands of Captain Pratt. Such action would be in the interest of the Indians as well as of economy.

I left Carlisle Thursday, March 3d, for Washington, where I remained to transact some matters of Indian business, until the following Monday, March 7th, when, in company with the military officer referred to, I started for St. Augustine. We arrived at the town on the afternoon of the following day, Tuesday, the 8th. We immediately repaired to the fort, where we were most courteously received by Lieutenants Conkling and Smith, who are in charge of the Indians confined there. We subsequently paid our respects to General R. B. Ayres, the commanding officer at St. Francis Barracks, which is at the lower end of the town. To all of these gentlemen we are indebted for much kindness, and by them every opportunity was afforded us to make a thorough and satisfactory examination of the Indians placed under their care.

FORT MARION.

Fort Marion, formerly named Fort San Marco, is a fine example of the old-time stone fortress of the Vauban pattern; with bastions, moat and watch towers. It is not built of ordinary stone, but of the coquina, a natural composition of tiny shells and sand. This fact suggests a point touching the sanitary condition of the prisoners, to which I shall refer later. Its walls enclose an open square, the sides of which measure about 150 feet. The exterior side of the fort is about 90 yards long. From the centre of this square one looks into the firm-set rectangular windows and doors of the casemates and barracks. The ramparts and watch-towers command a view of the town, the harbor, to which the outer walls of the fort extend, and the sea beyond.

CHIRICAHUA APACHE INDIAN PRISONERS IN FORT MARION.

The total number of Indian prisoners confined in Fort Marion last October, when the last party was brought there, amounted to about 500. There are now within its walls, including men, women and children, 447; of this number 77 were brought to Fort Marion April 13th, 1886. These had been captured on the war-path by General Crook, and belonged to Chihuahua's band of Chiricahua

Apaches. About 15 of them were warriors, and the remainder women and children. Lieutenant-Colonel Loomis L. Langdon, commanding the post at St. Augustine, August 23d, 1886, makes the following statement: "But as for the men, they do absolutely nothing, as a rule, beyond the necessary police of the old fort. They have no work. * * *

"But in justice to the men it must be said it is the unanimous verdict of all those who have anything to do with them that every man of them would willingly work if he had any work given him to do and was shown how to do it.

"It really seems, then, that the time has come to consider the question, what is to be done with these prisoners? In the nature of things they cannot remain prisoners here until they all die. * *

"Therefore I respectfully recommend that the whole party of prisoners be sent as soon as possible to Carlisle, Pennsylvania."

If a military officer of Colonel Langdon's position could recommend that Chihuahua and his hostiles should be sent away from Fort Marion to Carlisle, how much greater force should be given to my statement that Fort Marion is unsuited to the accommodation of 447 prisoners, and my recommendation that those innocent and friendly people sent with Chatto into confinement there, at a later date, should be immediately removed?

As I previously stated, 44 of the original number were taken to Carlisle. Twenty-two (six women, one man and fifteen children) have died in confinement. There have been ten births. Of the 447 Indians, 82 are men, the remainder women and children. It is an interesting fact, and one to which I desire to call especial attention, and upon which I desire to lay the strongest possible emphasis, that of the 82 men not more than 30 have been guilty of any recent misdoing,* whilst many of the remainder were employed in our Army as regularly commissioned scouts, first by General Crook, and afterwards by General Miles, to assist the soldiers in following up and finally securing the surrender of Geronimo and his hostiles. That these men should have been imprisoned on the same footing with those Indians who were at war with the United States, and that their fidelity, and, in some instances, their invaluable service rendered to our arms should have been re-

*These include the 15 men who, under Chihuahua, surrendered one year ago to General Crook, and those least prominent among Geronimo's hostiles who surrendered to General Miles last Autumn.

warded by incarceration, is a fact well calculated to attract attention and to elicit the condemnation of the public. Such is the case.

CHATTO'S STORY.

One of the most remarkable instances of such injustice is found in the case of Chatto, a Chiricahua Apache Indian, whose history I will briefly narrate. This man was at one time hostile and doubtless committed such acts of violence as Indians on the war-path indulge in. But in 1883 Chatto surrendered to General Crook in the Sierra Madre Mountains, at which time he made a promise of good behavior for the future, which he has never violated. He has since served as a scout in our Army under General Crook, in which capacity he has rendered valuable service. He has been engaged in farming at Fort Apache (San Carlos Reservation, A. T.), where he owns a house, fourteen acres of land, and several horses and mules. His house was built by his own unaided labor. Early last Summer, Mr. L. Q. C. Lamar, Jr., the son of the Secretary of the Interior, visited Fort Apache and held a conference with Chatto, and asked him to visit Washington. No hint was given to Chatto that he was under suspicion of wrong-doing, or that his proposed journey to the Capital was to terminate within prison walls. On the contrary the object of his visit, according to the statement made to him by Mr. Lamar, Jr., (I base my assertion on Chatto's account of the interview, and that of another witness, given me at Fort Marion), was to talk with the authorities concerning the possible removal of himself and his people to a better reservation. Chatto accordingly, about July 15, 1886, went to Washington with thirteen other Indians—men, women and two reliable interpreters, Concipcion, a Mexican who speaks Spanish and Apache, and Samuel Bowman, who speaks some Apache, but principally Spanish and English.

CHATTO'S CREDENTIALS.

Chatto was furnished with a certificate of good character by Mr. Lamar, Jr., which reads as follows:

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,

Washington, July 31, 1886.

This is to certify that I know personally, Chatto, Chief of the Chiricahua Apache Indians, and that since his return to the reserva-

tion in 1883, he has lived peacefully with mankind, exerting at all times a good influence over his people. He has made the reputation of being a reliable and brave man.

L. Q. C. LAMAR, JR.

When Chatto was in Washington he had interviews with the President, Secretary Lamar, and Secretary Endicott. According to Chatto's statement, Secretary Lamar told him if he needed anything in the way of farming implements to ask for it. Chatto told him of his needs in this respect, and Mr. Lamar told him that if he would return he should receive these things. (Chatto had informed the Secretary that he did not wish to leave his old home at Fort Apache). Chatto was told to go home, to work, and to behave himself. Mr. Lamar further told him that he could return by way of Carlisle, because many of the men in his party had children there. Captain Dorst, the army officer who had charge of them, then took the Indians to Carlisle. After remaining there some time, orders came for them to return to the west. They started westward and journeyed three days and three nights, when the car they were in was detached from the train. Chatto states that he felt happy and bright at the prospect of reaching his home, when the first thing he knew he was back at Fort Leavenworth. Here Captain Dorst received orders from General Miles to meet him at Albuquerque. Upon his return, Captain Dorst said that General Miles would give them a reservation of so many square miles (60), and that they would lose none of their property that they had left behind. The new reservation he said, would contain better land than the old. Chatto supposed that he had taken pity on them because of their poverty. On this new reserve the new chief was to receive \$50 per month, and others, according to their station, \$30 and \$20 per month. The Indians were again started on their journey and finally arrived, not upon the new and better land promised them, but within the narrow limits of their prison. In concluding his narration, Chatto naively said, "I do not think this place looks as though it contained sixty square miles." The above is an abbreviated statement of Chatto's account of this affair.

Chatto showed me a heavy and beautiful silver medal given him by Secretary Lamar when he was in Washington. On one side of this medal was stamped the head of President Arthur, on the other