



# Shame and Endurance: The Untold Story of the Chiricahua Apache Prisoners of War

*H. Henrietta Stockel*

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**Many readers may be familiar** with the wartime exploits of the Apaches; this book relates the untold story of their postwar fate. It tells of the Chiricahua Apaches' 27 years of imprisonment as recorded in American dispatches, reports, and news items: documents that disclose the confusion, contradictions, and raw emotions expressed by government and military officials regarding the Apaches while revealing the shameful circumstances in which they were held. First removed from Arizona to Florida, the prisoners were eventually relocated to Mount Vernon Barracks in Alabama, where, in the words of one Apache, "We didn't know what misery was until they dumped us in those swamps." Pulmonary disease took its toll—by 1894, disease had killed nearly half of the Apaches—and after years of pressure from Indian rights activists and bureaucratic haggling, Fort Sill in Oklahoma was chosen as a more healthful location. Here they were given the opportunity to farm, and here Geronimo, who eventually converted to Christianity, died of pneumonia in 1909 at the age of 89, still a prisoner of war. In the meantime, many Apache children had been removed to Carlisle, Pennsylvania, for education—despite earlier promises that families would not be split up—and most eventually lost their cultural identity. Henrietta Stockel has combed public records to reconstruct this story of American shame and Native endurance. Unabashedly speaking on behalf of the Apaches, she has framed these documents within a readable narrative to show how exasperated public officials, eager to openly demonstrate their superiority over "savages" who had successfully challenged the American military for years, had little sympathy for the consequences of their confinement. Although the Chiricahua Apaches were not alone in losing their ancestral homelands, they were the only American Indians imprisoned for so long a time in an environment that continually exposed them to illnesses against which they had no immunity, devastating families even more than warfare. *Shame and Endurance* records events that ought never to be repeated—and tells a story that should never be forgotten.

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