

THOMAS, ROBERT B.

MY EXPERIENCE WITH GERONIMO #8718

127

JUANAH PARKER #8768

KIOWA-COMANCHE EXPERIENCES #8966

QUAHADA INDIANS #12183

QUAHADA INDIANS #9133

Robert B. Thomas  
Interviewer.  
September 29, 1937.

My Experience with Geronimo  
Apache Warrior

Geronimo was captured or surrendered to General Miles on September 4th, 1886, when he was fifty-seven years of age and he was sent to prison at Pensacola, Florida, thence to Alabama prison and later moved to the Fort Sill prison where he remained until his death in 1909.

The writer first met him in 1902 when he came to the Indian Trading Store of the Paschall Brothers to trade. He visited the store several times a week to buy trinkets and goods and the Government finally let him go to Lawton four miles away without a guard. He would sell the bows and arrows which he had made and his autograph and in 1905 went to the Worlds Fair at St. Louis and made lots of money selling his autographs for fifty cents each.

Geronimo was born in 1829 near where the city of Globe, Arizona, now stands; when a baby he was a great sleeper and a great yawner and they named him Go-Khia-Yeh which means "Yawner" in English.

Geronimo was a strong boy but very quiet; at the age of nine he attracted the attention of the people because of

his strength, and therefore was admitted to the Council of warriors at nine years of age and was not allowed to play with the children. His grandfather Naco was a strong leader and it was hoped to make Geronimo a great leader and warrior. He married his playmate Alope, he gave ten ponies to her father for her; this was an Indian custom and he took her to the home of his mother and kept her. Geronimo had a hidden gold mine and he made trips to Old Mexico and took gold nuggets to trade for goods.

The Government spent hundreds of thousands of dollars trying to capture Geronimo and he was captured but escaped again and went to Old Mexico with about two hundred and fifty of his band but after a year's absence returned to the United States with a lot of cattle and when General Miles took the cattle away from him at San Carlo he again fled to Old Mexico with four hundred of his tribe and the United States Army followed him and secured a conference with him agreeing that if he would surrender, he would not be sent to prison.

He did return and surrender but he became suspicious and returned to Mexico escaping from the Army officer and

and the commander of the United States Army was demoted for allowing him to escape. When Geronimo was captured they agreed to let him live with his people but broke their agreement and sent him to prison.

The writer came to the Comanche Country in 1902 and began clerking in an Indian store at Cache and later clerked at Fort Sill for Paschall Brothers.

Gernimo was a frequent visitor at the Fort Sill Store. He was a low, squatty Indian with a large chest, light blue small eyes. He walked very slow and could not talk English but grunted a great deal. He could say, "Me, Geronimo, great chief" and a few other English words.

This store traded with the Apaches on credit but they were required to have a purchase order from Lieutenant Purington of Fort Sill before they were allowed to purchase goods and one day Geronimo and his sixteen year old son came into the store where I was alone as the two other men had gone to Lawton. Geronimo's son, who could talk English, wanted to buy a saddle blanket and a bridle so they picked one out and the bill was \$55.00.

I put the saddle blanket on his little \$15.00 pony and his legs being short I took up the stirrups and when

I was through he started to untie the pony and ride away. I said to the boy "Where is the order from Lieutenant Purington? Geronimo's son said he had no order and then told his father that I wanted the order. Geronimo became angry and said, "Me Geronimo! Great Apache Chief! Me pay for saddle later." I said, "No, Boss won't allow it" and I started to take the saddle off. Geronimo ran up behind me and jerked me back and threw me down and choked me but I worked my way loose and ran into my room at the store and brought out a revolver and held it in one hand and took the saddle off with the other while Geronimo was murmuring.

I then went back of the store to the desk and sat down and he came in the front and wrote his autograph and tried to sell it to me for .50 cents. I told him I did not want it.

That made him mad because he wanted to buy some candy and fruit. He went back to the front of the store and rolled the autograph up with a lot of tin foil and came back and hit me in the forehead with it. This made me angry and I placed a gun in his back and held it on him for 120 feet and made him leave the store. He stopped

once and I cocked the gun and started to pull the trigger but his son told him to move quick and he did, because I really meant to shoot him for I was afraid that he might kill me. He went out and left.

Geronimo died in 1909 and was buried within six hundred yards of the store at the Mission two or three miles from Lawton.

It was reported his body was stolen but Sam Joiner of Lawton told me that the soldiers took Geronimo's body and reburied it. There were several valuable blankets buried with him and the Government was afraid that the people might rob his grave.

Thus ended the life of the great Indian scout,  
Geronimo.