

The History and Legacy of the Native Scouts Used D

author: Charles River Editors

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Synopsis

author	Charles	River
readBy	Jim	D
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Even if we should be able to dislodge them from the rough mountain ridges and impenetrable woods which cover the immense territories of these frontiers, they would seek better asylum in the vastness of the Sierra Madre... [They] know how to surprise and destroy our troops in the mountains and on the plains. They are not ignorant of the use and power of our arms; they manage their own with dexterity; and they are as good or better horsemen than the Spaniards, and having no towns, castles, or temples to defend they may only be attacked in their dispersed and movable rancherias. - Bernardo de Galvez, instructions for governing the interior provinces of New Spain, 1787 (The Quivera Society, Berkeley)

The Apache of the American Southwest have achieved almost legendary status for their fierceness and their tenacity in fighting the US Army. Names like Nana, Cochise, and Geronimo are synonymous with bravery and daring, and the tribe had that reputation long before the Americans arrived. Indeed, among all the Native American tribes, the Spanish, Mexicans, and Americans learned the hard way that the warriors of the Apache were perhaps the fiercest in North America. Based in the Southwest, the Apache fought all three in Mexico and the American Southwest, engaging in seasonal raids for so many centuries that the Apache struck fear into the hearts of all their neighbors.

First migrating to the Southwest from Western Canada sometime around 1,000-1,500, the Apache lived a hunting and gathering lifestyle in the rough mountains and vast stretches of desert left unused by the agricultural peoples who had preceded them, or fought for the scarce temperate highlands of the region's many mountain ranges. The Apache kept herds of animals and would trade and raid with the settled tribes.

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