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PHILIP ST. GEORGE COOKE AND THE APACHE, 1854

By HAMILTON GARDNER*

WHEN Lieutenant Colonel Philip St. George Cooke, 2d Dragoons, reported for duty at Fort Union November 4, 1853,[1] he was no stranger to New Mexico. Seven years earlier, as Captain, 1st Dragoons, he had marched along the Santa Fe Trail with Brigadier General Stephen Watts Kearny's Army of the West. On August 1, near Bent's Fort, the General sent him in advance to Santa Fe with a message for Mexican Governor Armijo, where he arrived eleven days later. After several conferences with the Governor he rejoined the Army in time to participate in the occupation of the Capital August 18. He left there September 25 with General Kearny's pitifully small advance party of 300 dragoons, bound westward, but he was not destined to complete the march. "The melancholy information of the death of Capt. Allen, 1st Drags., having been this day received," directed the General in an order dated October 2, "Capt. Cooke, 1st Drags., will return to Santa Fe, and assume command of the Battalion of Mormons on its arrival at that place . . . which forces he will conduct to Upper California following the route now being taken by the Dragoons. . . ."[2] Cooke reached Santa Fe October 7; took over command of the Battalion on its arrival six days later; and departed afoot October 19 towards the Pacific.[3]

Exact data as to the Indian population in the Territory

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1. National Archives and Records Service, War Records Branch, Washington, D. C. This agency was formerly designated as the Old Files Section, Adjutant General's Office, War Department. It will be cited hereinafter as N.A.R.S.W.R.B.

A brief biography of Cooke may be found in *Exploring Southwestern Trails 1846-1854*, VII, 17-30, edited by Ralph P. Bieber (Glendale, Calif., 1938)

2. "Head Qrs Army of the West, Camp on the Rio del Norte near Joya, October 2d, 1846. Orders No. 33." N.A.R.S.W.R.B.

3. Philip St. George Cooke, *The Conquest of New Mexico and California, an Historical and Personal Narrative*, 6-90 (New York, 1878). See also Ralph Emerson Twitchell, *The History of the Military Occupation of New Mexico, from 1846 to 1851*, 41-43 (Denver, 1909)

of New Mexico in the mid-1850's is not available, and the estimates vary considerably. Governor Meriwether in his 1854 report[4] as Superintendent of Indian Affairs guessed that the Utahs in the northern and northwestern parts of the Territory numbered from 5,000 to 6,000 and the Apaches in scattered bands totalled 8,000. Of the latter the Jicarillas, roving generally in the eastern and southern regions, supported at least 150 warriors. Henry R. Schoolcraft[5] showed the Apaches with a total strength of 5,500, occupying 850 lodges and furnishing 1,100 fighting men, of whom the Jicarillas constituted 100. Ralph H. Ogle[6] estimated the Apaches as being 25,000 to 30,000 strong, including the Jicarillas of 5,000 to 7,000. Figures for the Navajos and the Pueblo Indians were not included. Finally Jefferson Davis, Secretary of War, in his annual report,[7] December 4, 1854, spoke of "an Indian population of 50,000, a great proportion of whom are bands who do not acknowledge the authority of the United States."

Of all the New Mexico Indians the Jicarillas were rated the most troublesome.[8] Superintendent Meriwether said in his 1854 report:[9] "It is confidently believed that no other single band of Indians have committed an equal amount of depredations upon, and caused so much trouble and annoyance to the people of this Territory, as the Jicarillas." And E. A. Graves, Indian agent at Albuquerque, had stated the year previously[10] that "they are the most daring, brave and heartless tribe of Indians who inhabit New Mexico."

In 1853 "but few outrages of an aggravated character have been reported as having occurred among the Indians in New Mexico," stated George W. Manypenny, Commis-

4. Santa Fe, September 1, 1854, Appendix to the report of the Secretary of the Interior, *H. Ex. Doc. 1, 33d Cong., 2d Sess.*, 376-8.

5. *Information Respecting the History, Condition and Prospects of the Indian Tribes of the United States*, I, 519 (Philadelphia, 1850)

6. "Federal Control of the Western Apaches," NEW MEXICO HISTORICAL REVIEW, XIV, 319 (Oct., 1939)

7. *H. Ex. Doc. 1, 33d Cong., 2d Sess.*, 6.

8. Ogle, *op. cit.*, 315, explains the relationship of the Jicarillas to the other tribes of the Apache nation. See also: Frederick Webb Hodge, *Handbook of American Indians*, Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of Ethnology, Bulletin 30, *H. Ex. Doc. 926, 59th Cong., 1st Sess.*, I, 66 (Washington, 1905)

9. *Op. cit.* [note 4], p. 378.

10. August 31, 1853, *H. Ex. Doc. 1, 33d Cong., 1st Sess.*, 434.

sioner of Indian Affairs, in his annual report,[11] November 26. But he also called attention to an incident which later proved to be one of the causes of the Jicarilla uprising in 1854. That was the treaty made by his predecessor, Governor William Carr Lane, with the Indians to remove them from their present locations, colonize them west of the Rio Grande, and keep them pacified by feeding them. Manypenny disapproved this arrangement and it ceased. Next year Governor Meriwether lamented that he was embarrassed by his inability to explain to the Indians why he had discontinued supplying them with food.[12]

The 9th Military Department, comprising the then Territory of New Mexico, was activated July 19, 1851, when Colonel E. V. Sumner took command, although it had been previously authorized. Following a short interim under Lieutenant Colonel Dixon S. Miles, 3d Infantry, Brevet Brigadier General John Garland[13] became the Department Commander, July 20, 1853, with headquarters at Albuquerque.[14]

At the close of 1853, out of a total Army authorized strength of 13,821, of which only 10,495 were actually in service,[15] 1,678 officers and men were stationed in New Mexico.[16] These were made up of several companies of the 1st Dragoons, two companies of artillery and the 3d Infantry. They were scattered out in the forts then established in

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11. *33 Cong., 1 sess., Sen. Ex. Doc. 1,* p. 257. See also: Report of the Secretary of War, December 4, 1853, *H. Ex. Doc. 1, Part 2,* Vol. 1, p. 3; and Oliver L. Spaulding, Jr., *The United States Army in War and Peace,* 232 (New York, 1937)

12. *Op. cit.* [note 4], 374-6. See also: Twitchell, *The Leading Facts of New Mexican History,* II, 299, 302 (Cedar Rapids, 1912)

13. John Garland was born in Virginia in 1792 and appointed 1st Lieutenant, 35th Infantry, March 31, 1813, during the War of 1812. He served with distinction in the Seminole Indian campaign in Florida, 1836-1842; and during the Mexican War participated in most of the principal battles of the armies of both General Zachary Taylor and General Winfield Scott, being severely wounded at the taking of the City of Mexico. He received his brevet rank as brigadier general "for gallant and meritorious conduct at the Battles of Contreras and Churubusco." Garland died at New York City on June 5, 1861. (Records in the Library, United States Military Academy, West Point, New York)

14. A. B. Bender, "Frontier Defense in the Territory of New Mexico, 1846-1853," NEW MEXICO HISTORICAL REVIEW, IX, 247-271 (July, 1934)

15. Report of the General in Chief, Major General Winfield Scott, November 16, 1853, *H. Ex. Doc. 1, Part 2, Vol. 1, p. 12, 33d Cong., 1st Sess.*

16. *Ibid.,* 120-1.

the Territory, the usual garrison consisting of equal components of mounted and dismounted men.

The Army's handling of the local Indian problem in this period satisfied no one, least of all the Army itself. President Pierce,[17] Secretary of War Davis[18] and General Garland[19] all urged an increase in the forces required to police the extended frontier. But the Congress, as usual, remained niggardly in its appropriations. The historian, Hubert Howe Bancroft, ascribed the fault to the policy, or lack of policy, of the Federal Government. The Army commanders, he asserted, were generally efficient and competent and the soldiers fought bravely; but they found it difficult to follow directives which alternated between exterminating the Indians on the one hand and feeding them on the other. What they most generally sensed was a Government policy of letting matters drift. They realized their mission was to provide the people of New Mexico with protection against the Indians, as promised by General Kearny in 1846, but they simply did not possess the forces to do so.[20]

As stated, Cooke arrived at Fort Union on November 3, 1853. For more than a year he had been stationed at Fort Mason, Texas. Even though he did not receive his promotion to Lieutenant Colonel, 2d Dragoons, until July 15, 1853,[21] he had been in actual command of the regiment as a major, its nominal Commanding Officer being Colonel William S. Harney. He began to sign the regimental returns in May, 1854, and continued to do so until 1858.[22]

During his entire tour in New Mexico, Cooke was in

17. Second Annual Message, December 4, 1854.

18. 1853 Report, *33 Cong., 1 Sess., Sen. Ex. Doc.* 1, 4-6; 1854 Report, *op. cit.* [note 7], 6.

19. Letter to War Department, April 1, 1854, Albuquerque, Appendix to Report of the Secretary of War, *op. cit.* [note 7], 34:

"If hostilities are continued—and I have little doubt such will be the case—I will be forced to call upon the governor of this Territory for two or three companies of volunteers.

"It is very desirable that a strong mounted force, with a good supply of horses, be sent out early in the spring."

20. H. H. Bancroft, *Arizona and New Mexico*, 656-8 (San Francisco, 1889)

21. Albert G. Brackett, *History of the United States Cavalry*, 130 (New York, 1875)

22. N.A.R.S.W.R.B.

command at Fort Union, except for two details to Santa Fe on courtmartial duty, March 16 and July 1, 1854.[23]

Four major engagements against the Indians occurred in New Mexico in 1854. Cooke regarded them as an extremely interesting part of his experiences as Commanding Officer, 2d Dragoons. Hence about 1875, two years after his retirement, he wrote at length concerning them in his "Personal Recollections," which constitutes a chapter in Colonel Theophilus F. Rodenbough's, *From Everglade to Cañon With the Second Dragoons.*[24]

The first encounter with the Jicarillas took place March 5 when Company H, 2d Dragoons, under command of 2d Lieutenant David Bell, won a decided victory. General Garland reported it to the War Department March 29:[25]

> I have the honor to report, for the information of the major general commanding the army, that a very spirited affair came off on the 5th instant, some sixty miles from Fort Union, between the Jicarilla Apaches and a detachment of the second dragoons, commanded by Second Lieutenant Bell. The parties were about equally matched as to numbers—say twenty-four warriors each—and both ready to measure their strength. The result of the conflict is, that the Indians lost five killed and many wounded, the detachment of dragoons lost two killed and four wounded. The Indians fled in great disorder to the canons and gorges of the Canadian. This is a part of the band which captured and killed Mrs. White, and subsequently killed off the mail party near Wagon Mound. The chief most prominent in these operations—"Lobo"—was killed by Lieutenant Bell, who has certainly managed this affair with discretion and gallantry. . . .

On April 1, 1854, General Garland reported a second encounter with the Indians which had taken place a few days before:[26]

> The Indians, Jicarilla, Apaches, and Utahs have managed to combine a force of two-hundred and fifty (250) warriors and unexpectedly attacked a Company of Dragoons sixty (60) strong, about

23. *Ibid.*

24. New York, 1875.

25. Appendix to Report of the Secretary of War, 1854, *op. cit.* [note 7], 33-4. Cooke gave a detailed and especially well-written account of this affray in his "Personal Recollections," Rodenbough, *op. cit.* [note 24], 135.

26. N.A.R.S.W.R.B. See also: A. B. Bender, "Frontier Defense . . .," NEW MEXICO HISTORICAL REVIEW, IX, 348-9 (Oct., 1934)

twenty-five (25) miles from Fernandez de Taos, under the command of Lieutenant J. M. Davidson, First Dragoons, and succeeded after a desperate conflict in overwhelming it. Lieutenant Davidson and Assistant Surgeon Magruder, both wounded, returned from the battle field with about seventeen (17) men, most of them wounded.

The troops displayed a gallantry seldom equalled in this or any other country, and the officer in command, Lieutenant Davidson, has given evidence of soldiership in the highest degree creditable to him. To have sustained a deadly control three hours when he was so greatly outnumbered, and then to have returned with the fragment of a Company crippled up, is amazing and calls for the admiration of every true soldier.

To prevent further disaster, I have ordered Lieutenant Colonel Cooke, Second Dragoons, to take the field with about two hundred (200) Dragoons and a Company of Artillery armed with rifles.

In a report to General Garland, dated at Fort Union, May 24, 1854, almost two months after the event, Cooke detailed his pursuit of the marauders:[27]

On the 31st of March at this post, I received at 8½ A. M. from Major Blake at Fort Burgwin a hasty report of an action of Dragoons under First Lieutenant Davidson, with the Apaches, which resulted in his leaving from thirty-five to forty dead and bringing in seventeen wounded.

My aid was asked for. I did not hesitate a moment to order preparations for the march of all troops that could be prudently drawn from this post. At noon I set out at the head of the detachment of First Dragoons, under Lieutenant Sturges and of Company H, of the Second, under Lieutenant Bell; about ninety-two (92) sabres, and was followed immediately by Company D, Second Artillery, serving as riflemen under Brevet Captain Sykes. . . . All of the Dragoons had returned within thirty-six (36) hours from marches of two-hundred miles in search of the Apaches in which a heavy snow storm had been encountered.

I arrived with the cavalry at Fort Burgwin at sunset the next day, finding it threatened by a strong party of the enemy in the low mountains which overlook it. I spent the next day, April 2nd, gaining information and determining upon and organizing a plan and a force to pursue the enemy, who I learned had crossed the Del Norte at Embuda to seek shelter or a position in the San Juan Mountains. I resolved to employ about thirty (30) New Mexicans and Pueblo Indians, as essential for guides and trackers, and, with a life experience in all the cunning and tactics of Indians, they would be important as irregular light troops in a very broken and little known

27. N.A.R.S.W.R.B.

wilderness, to which the enemy had retired. I thought this measure advisable in order to break up a very suspicious intercourse with the Apaches, held by the outsettlers, for which their habitual exposure is some excuse; "American" property had been carefully selected for depredation. It was with much gratification that I learned that in all these measures, I was literally executing orders which the General was at the very moment dictating at Department Headquarters.[28]

April 3rd, I marched to San Fernando de Javs [Taos] and completed this organization, having found for the irregulars an efficient leader in Mr. J. H. Quinn. I was able to add twenty-two men of F Company, First Dragoons, to my force. On the 4th, I took to the field with one-hundred and ten (110) sabres. . . . Major Blake, First Dragoons, had joined his regiment and Mr. Carson, Apaches agent, had volunteered for the campaign. . . .

I chose the difficult Canon' Crossing of the Del Norte called Arayo Houde [Arroyo Hondo]. . . . I made without important incident some hard marches, dropping some stragglers, through a very broken and exceedingly precipitous country, finding, following, and once leaving the Indian trail—a hopeful risk, whereby I gained two days upon their intricate and designedly difficult wanderings. On the 8th of April, I still followed it, evidently very fresh in snow showers, over a mountain with two feet of snow, lying in the forest which covered it, deep ravines and its lofty top, and, then, through a chaos of deep slopes, rock, snow and bog. In the afternoon, very soon after a halt to allow the long and broken single file to close to the front, the enemy's camp was discovered and his presence announced by sharp fire between him and the spy company which was a few hundred yards in advance.

I then found myself in a open space, before the enemy in a position of singular strength. The Agua Caliente (or Ojo Caliente)[29] comes to force its way from the right into a vast ravine formed by two parallel mountains and turns to the left, running by one flank at the foot of the precipitous rocks and snows of the other mountain. That on the right, makes a shoulder as if turned back before us by the river, but descends by precipitous crags, rapidly to a point, leaving between that point and the mountains to the left a narrow defile, the passage of which is almost forbidden by the torrents which in several channels amidst trees and thickets, rushes over rolling

28. From Cooke's reports it is clear that no troops of the New Mexico Territorial Militia served with his expeditions in 1854. Incomplete data indicate that some militia units were called out, variously estimated in the correspondence between the Territory and the War Department as 200 or 400. Twitchell states that Acting Governor William S. Messervy mobilized a part of the militia of Rio Arriba and San Miguel Counties, "but for want of ammunition and equipment they were of little service"; *The Leading Facts . . .*, II, 299.

29. Located northwest of Santa Fe in the present Rio Arriba County, on or near the border of Taos County.

rocks. The crags in front of us being scaled, we look down upon a river in a profound chasm; it is impossible to descend, but the opposite side presents a virtual precipice and thus the Agua Caliente is seen from toward the right impassable. A peculiar strength of this position was that it could not be turned but by a march of hours.

In the crags then, the Apaches, having hurried off their women on horses, and leaving their camp standing in the open spaces, were in position and received my skirmishes with a warm fire. Captain Sykes' rifles were leading. I immediately ordered him to deploy as skirmishers and to march forward to support the irregulars; and at the same time ordered the Dragoons to the front. Captain Sykes, notwithstanding his energy and coolness and my personal assistance, for some minutes found delay in getting his men forward into line.

Meanwhile, Lieutenant Bell, whose Company H, Second Dragoons, that day led the cavalry column, passed at the gallop handsomely to the front, through the fire of the enemy, up into the angle of the cliffs and the mountains, dismounted his men and siezed [*sic*] a position below the mountain top but on the flank of the enemy in the crags, although fired upon from above.

In the meantime, Major Blake had marched to the front with Sturges' small squadron, First Dragoons, which I ordered to dismount and led myself to attack the enemy's front in the ledge of rocks. This, which we found formidable in itself, we scaled, only to find the enemy in retreat. Bell's fire on their flank from above had apparently given them a panic and they fled. At the moment some of their horses were seen far down to the left and front over the river, and I ordered Lieutenant Maxwell to take a portion of the reserve with our horses and to endeavor to capture them.

Captain Sykes, in this time, with Lieutenant Moore, First Dragoons, Company A platoon, had passed down to the river bank at the defile to attack or turn back the enemy's right and I now saw that a portion of his rifles had crossed the river and were entering the woods of the low mountains beyond, to the left of the precipice, reserving a few of his men to replace the horse guard I had detached. I now ordered Blake to make his way down the rocks, cross the river, join the right of the rifles and push the enemy on the mountain beyond where he kept up a brisk fire. I mounted then with Bell's Company and we galloped down to the left, plunged through the river and followed rapidly the very rough side of the mountain ravine in front, without trees and through which runs a branch, to join the river at the defile (as we passed, a dragoon who had been some minutes shot down, arose, stood erect a moment and then fell quite dead). After we had passed the flank of the rifles and the irregulars, we were fired upon from the trees of the high slope impracticable for a cavalry charge. I then dismounted the Company and with Lieutenant

Bell led a charge on foot. The enemy did not await it, but dispensed a dropping fire, while we pursued a mile further in the pine forest, until there was no indication of his presence and the trail made in the ravine by the horses and women was run out.

I then turned the skirmishers with a sweep and covered the top of the little mountain back toward the original ground, and soon after having descended, found the other troops, who had all crossed the hill and had assembled in the ravine near the river. Lieutenant Maxwell was later; he had penetrated the forest with much boldness, though forced to dismount and had intercepted the retreat of some of the enemy who abandoned three horses which he captured.

I then ordered all to retire to the horses at the Indian camp, for the enemy having dispersed in every direction to the extent of a semi-circle, as shown by their fire and tracks everywhere in snow and cold; the horse trail was lost, the infantry force being quite exhausted and it being late.

In the afternoon, I reluctantly abandoned the idea of further immediate pursuit as impracticable. There remained in my hands [Indian weapons, horse equipment and mounts] their lodges, great quantities of robes, skins, clothing, implements and provisions. Our horses were fed on their corn and wheat. This property I ordered to be burned.

The enemy force, commanded by Head Chief Chacon, there is every reason to believe, at least equalled the lowest estimate of double the number of lodges. There were seventy-seven (77). They were therefore above one-hundred and fifty (150) and superior to my force engaged which was one-hundred and forty (140). His loss as since ascertained through the principal Utahs and their agent, Carson, as acknowledged, was four or five killed and five or six wounded. They have also reported seventeen (17) women and children missing which they supposed were prisoners. They were no doubt lost and frozen in their long flight in the night through the deep snow of the mountain. . . .

Our loss was but one killed and one severely wounded in front of the enemy's first position. It is scarcely necessary to say that all of the officers exhibited energy and gallantry and I would thus include Captain Quinn of the Spies; and Mr. Carson showed his well known activity and boldness. But it would be injustice to pass over . . . the handsome charge of Lieutenant Bell, in which the superior instruction and discipline of his company served him well. The fortunate position which he took penetrated the enemy lines, had the effect of striking him with force and perhaps decided the victory at the first blow. I commend this, his second distinguished service under my orders, to the most favorable consideration.

That the Apaches intended to offer battle here rather than pene-

trate farther into the snow of the San Juan Mountains, is confirmed by the position of their camp on the bank of the Ojo Caliente; ever before and after they were found on mountains and peaks.

At sundown, Major Carleton, First Dragoons, joined me with his Company. Very early on the 9th, having sent the wounded men with escort to Vallecito, the pursuit was renewed. I found after some miles that the enemy's horse tracks converged in the snow on a mountain side. There had been broken a path two feet deep which led over the great obstacles of a forest of aspen and pines prostrated by storm, through bogs where mules had to be unpacked, up and down steep mountain sides, from whose summit, above the growth of trees, a world of bleak snow spread unlimited to the West, over a stream half bridged with ice and snow, where the horses fell and every mule had to be unpacked. The beef cattle were forced through the snow so slowly, as to add to these delays of hours. A horse losing the path floundered dangerously. American horses, led in file first, broke the path of the retreat. Such was the scene of the enemy's flight by moonlight; the tracks that bore diminuitive feet left a feeble memorial of its sufferings.

The 10th it was the same until afternoon, when we found that the snow had conquered and the trail led southwest into the valley of the Cagelon. On the 11th, the indefatigable Quinn, on the extreme flank of his spies, caught sight of four of the enemy on an upright hill close to our right, and so gave the alarm that none who saw him doubted they were in force. I ordered a deployment and disposition for action, which was performed in an incredibly short time, the Dragoons taking position at the gallop, and all the troops exhibiting the greatest alacrity and eagerness. But the Indians on foot escaped like deer into the cover of their native fastnesses. Through snow, the trail led us steeply up a mountain as we thought, but it proved to be a most lofty tableland and the march was very long for want of water. These trails were lightened or forgotten at times in sudden views of great sublimity. None will forget the magnificence of the scenery when suddenly we stood upon a precipice terminating this tableland and overhanging a fine view, the chasm 2,000 feet.[30] The trail led to a dangerous descent which occupied the head of the column an hour and a quarter.

Many dead horses (and some of them had been butchered) marked their retreat; and signal smoke, now in several directions, and other signs indicated that the hard pressed tribe had divided and sought

30. Attention is called to Cooke's language and literary style. Even in his official reports he was prone to record his impressions of the beauty and magnificence of his surroundings. Such expressions as "diminuitive feet," "flight by moonlight," "views of great sublimity" denote a poetical side to this very orthodox professional soldier. These characteristics appear conspicuously in his first book: *Scenes and Adventures in the Army, or the Romance of Military Life* (Philadelphia, 1857). It conveys his impressions of the Frontier West from the time he graduated from the United States Military Academy in the Class of 1827 until 1845.

temporary retreats in the rocky and lofty mountains, everywhere to be seen.

April 12 I scaled one of the highest, and in one of its small valleys the trail ran out. In an hour thirty Indians and Mexicans, all admirable trailers, discovered some tracks on a steep ridge about five hundred feet above us, but I found on ascending that they were greatly discouraged, commander and all, and had not moved on. I ordered them forward. When covering a quarter mile of forest, they followed only single tracks. Thus was reached another precipice, still more lofty, which seemed to overlook the territory. The few tracks had converged at the only practicable descent and were followed to its foot. Here in a plain the trail was lost.

The spy company was awaiting me again and I was assured by their commander, by the guides, by Carson, all on whom I depended for showing me the way to the enemy, that there could be no further pursuit unless of some family or party of two or three. I was very reluctant and assembled the officers, but found them unanimous in the same opinion and it appeared that the horses were becoming very feeble and a number had been abandoned that day.

It was with much pain I then gave the order to turn toward the settlement on the chama only some twenty miles distant for food and rest for the animals. I sent that night a courier for Headquarters and expressed my resolve to turn no further aside unless ordered.[31]

In spite of the thorough chastisement which Cooke had inflicted on the Jicarillas at Agua Caliente and in the subsequent pursuit, they still remained unregenerate. Late in May Lieutenant Davidson with 60 dragoons from Cantonment Burgwin, while on a scouting trip, discovered a band of Apaches encamped on a ridge near Cieneguilla. They numbered approximately 200 braves. Notwithstanding the disparity in forces, Davidson attacked and suffered some 20 casualties. He then pulled back to Taos, while the savages moved west of the Rio Grande.[32] So began the third major Indian conflict of the year.

Again Lieutenant Colonel Cooke was directed to lead a punitive column against the renegades and this time his route led into the extreme northern part of the present State of New Mexico and over the border into Colorado.

31. A soldier, who participated in Cooke's expedition until he was wounded, kept a journal of his experiences. This was later published in the NEW MEXICO HISTORICAL REVIEW: James A. Bennett, *A Dragoon in New Mexico, 1850-1856*, XXII, 51 and 140 (January and April, 1947); edited by Clinton E. Brooks and Frank D. Reeve.

32. Bender, *op. cit.*, 349.

From his temporary camp in the Raton Mountains he reported to General Garland on June 5, 1854:[33]

In compliance with your orders, this column left Don Fernando de Javs [Taos] on the 25th of May and proceeded without any incident worthy of note in the direction of Fort Massachusetts near which it arrived on the 27th of the same month. Up to this point no trail of the Apaches could be found, nor could any tidings of their whereabouts be ascertained. It was believed by the Indian agent, Mr. Christopher Carson (Kit Carson) of Rocky Mountain celebrity, who accompanied the column, that the Apaches were either lying concealed in the valley along the western side of White Mountain or had gone through the Mosca Pass which divides the White Mountain from the Western Mountain range, and thence had proceeded by the Valley of the Huerfano toward the Wah-a-to-Yohs (the Spanish Peaks) on the morning of the 28th of May.

Captain Quinn with his company of spies was detached from the column, with instructions, with thirty-eight men of his company supplied with rations for three days, around the western base of the Sierra Blanca to the Mosca Pass and through the north of those mountains to the Valley of the Huerfano. The object for which he was sent was to ascertain whether or not the Apaches were on that side of the mountain between Fort Massachusetts and the pass which is forty miles north of the Fort. To accomplish this, Captain Quinn was directed to exercise all foresight and caution that he might discover the Indians without being seen himself, and if he found them in force to avoid bringing on an action and to communicate immediately with Major Carleton. . . .

Agreeably with the purpose indicated in these instructions, the column left the same morning and proceeded around the eastern base of the Sierra Blanca, struck the Sangre de Christo River and followed it upward to what is called the Vallacita of the Sangre de Christo Pass, a fine well sheltered break in the mountains near the summit and just below the snow line. Therein it struck across the pass discovered by Captain Gunnison to the Huerfano River where it arrived on the 29th of May. In marching from the Sangre de Christo Pass to the Huerfano River, Mr. Carson discovered in a small valley an Indian trail which he at once pronounced to be that of Jicarilla Apaches. This trail was so cold the grass and weeds had grown in the footprints of the horses, which were now otherwise nearly obliterated by recent heavy rains. There was a slight prospect that all the Indians who had crossed the Rio Grande had not passed over this trail, but were lying concealed in the western valley of the Sierra Blanca, or in the Mosca Pass.

To provide for this and carry out the plan indicated in the instructions to Captain Quinn, it was decided to proceed to the

33. N.A.R.S.W.R.B.

Huerfano, there to lie in ambush for such of the Apaches as might run through the Mosca Pass in the belief that the company of spies was but the arrant couriers of a large force proceeding against them on that side. The next morning it was found that Captain Quinn had seen no Indians in his whole route from Fort Massachusetts through the Mosca Pass to the Huerfano.

But immediately in the pass he found where they had encamped to the number of thirty-three lodges and here too he found the trail and followed it down into the plains. Lieutenant Moore's Dragoons with sixteen rank and file and Kit Carson went, together with Captain Quinn and his spy company, down to the Huerfano River to the road that leads through the Sangre de Christo Pass to the Arkansas River, whilst Major Carleton with the rest of the column took the back trail to the same point. In this way, every part of the country which the Apaches could have passed over was reconnoitred. Here near where Mr. Carson had discovered the trail the day before, the whole command was united again.

It immediately started southward in the direction of the Spanish Peaks by the way of a rugged and elevated mountain valley known as Maxwell's Pass. Here were found the remains of an Indian camp, and evidence that those who made it had been in Lieutenant Davidson's battle at Cienequilla. This camp offered positive proof that Mr. Carson was right when he pronounced the dim trail of yesterday to be that of the Jicarillas. The command took heart at this. It was now settled beyond a doubt that after so many days of search it had finally got upon the right track.

Captain Quinn's trailers (Indians from the Pueblo of Javs [Taos] and some picked Mexicans) with an instinct that was truly wonderful, then led off, and on the evening of the 31st of May, after winding through deep woods, tangled undergrowth, up and down mountains, through gorges, across deep streams and wide marshes, and through prairies and open woodlands, the column was encamped within a few hundred feet of the eternal snows of the northernmost of the Spanish Peaks.

Here again we found another encampment perched like an eyrie high up the mountain side in an almost inaccessible grove of quaking aspens. This encampment indicated that the Indians had stayed in it at least three days.

From this point around the eartern base of the Spanish Peak to the deep gorge which divides the twin mountains, it is twenty-five miles over the most difficult country imaginable. . . . In this distance the column passed two encampments more and the sign was apparent that the space was rapidly diminishing between it and the Indians. From the watch in the peaks, the trail led off to the southeast and for some fifteen miles down a beautiful well grassed valley, walled in by sandstone bluffs and ornamented by open pine glades.

It has a fine spring of water about midway its length known by hunters as the Carring Springs. This valley is said to be a favorite resort of the Apaches. To identify it as a point on the march it was called the Dragoon Park. From the foot of this valley, the trail led across Purgatory River directly into the Raton Mountains, say twenty-five miles west of the point where the Bent's Fort road crosses the range.[34] This road was reached in the morning of the 4th of June about six miles west of the summit of the mountains. For the last three days, the column had passed three Apache camps a day and was now on what is called a warm trail.

Near where the Bent's Fort road was struck, fresh "signs" were seen to have come back on the trail, indicating that spies had been sent to see if there was any pursuit. When these footprints were discovered, Mr. Carson said the command would be sure to overtake the Apaches by two o'clock that day. From the road, the trail led immediately up the side of the lofty precipice known as Fischer's Peak.[35] The utmost precaution was necessary in passing up the mountain side, to prevent observation from the top. Fortunately a deep channel filled with timber afforded cover for most of the distance; the last five-hundred feet was over blocks of scoriac and nearly as steep, block by block, as any stairs could be. Finally, leading a single file and after much toil and the giving out of many horses, the spy company and the head of the column reached the summit. Here the top of the mountain was found to be level table land and at this point it was not over one-hundred yards in width forming a deep amphitheatre, coming in from the great prairie on the northern side, cutting this towering mesa nearly asunder. This amphitheatre contains many thousands of acres. Its left half, looking toward the north upon the prairie as upon a stage, was covered with grass near the summit; its right was filled by the most impenetrable of woods. A stream of water ran northward through the center. As soon as Mr. Carson, who was ahead, could look over into this amphitheatre, he saw a herd of horses feeding some three or four hundred yards below and in the edge of the thick timber on the right some Indian lodges.

He made sign to those who were behind to keep concealed until he could make further observation. Major Carleton went forward to find if possible a way for the troops to descend to this camp. Fortunately, the only place where horses could be ridden down was immediately in front of him. This place was very steep and very rough, and just wide enough for two horses to move abreast. This tread of the horses passing across the top of the mesa as the troops one by one succeeded in reaching the summit, was heard by the Indians below. The moment it was seen they had taken the alarm, the column was ordered to advance; when with a shout and amidst the fire and whoop of the

34. The older or western branch of the Santa Fe Trail.

35. A conspicuous landmark located southeast of Trinidad, Colorado.

Pueblos and Mexicans, who dashed furiously down over the rocks, it descended at a gallop into the amphitheatre below. The Apaches were panic stricken. Three of them endeavored to save the cavallada of horses, but nearly all the rest fled to the cover of the deep woods in rear. A few rushed down the same way with the horses. These were fired into and it is believed, from pools of blood which were seen at the point and from other evidence, that several of them were killed or wounded.

Captain Quinn with his spy company went rapidly down the creek to capture the horses of the Indians and Lieutenant Davidson, with his company of dragoons, moved at a gallop to the same point to cut off any Apaches who might attempt to escape in that direction. The men of Company G, First Dragoons, were dismounted and moved as skirmishers directly upon the camp where the women and children were believed to be, and where, it was supposed, if the Indians made a stand at all, some little sharp fighting might be expected. Lieutenant Johnston, First Dragoons, was ordered to join these men. The men of Company K,[36] First Dragoons, under Lieutenant Moore, were ordered back up on the mesa again, thence to pass around to the right along the upper edge, to cut off any Indians who might get through the woods and attempt escape by clambering up to the prairies above. The woods were so thick and so filled with large boulders . . . and the precipice side of the mountain afforded so many ledges and holes for concealment, it was finally ordered that Lieutenant Davidson should dismount his men near the mouth of the amphitheatre and deploy them across the woods toward Company K, under Lieutenant Moore, who by this time had arrived on a point of the mesa opposite to Lieutenant Davidson, and which was at least four-hundred feet above him. Lieutenant Moore was ordered to take all these men of Company K, except four to guard the horses, and descend off the precipice, and deploy as skirmishers so as to unite with Lieutenant Davidson, when they two were to sweep the whole woods back to the camp. It may be imagined how difficult it was for Lieutenant Moore and his men to descend the precipice, when it is stated they had to go down a tree to the first shelf where they could get a footing and from that point by a single rope to the next. This rope was formed of two lariats tied together. . . . By this the Lieutenant and his men descended from the shelf by the aid of branches and rocks and succeeded in reaching the woods where Lieutenant Davidson's men were deployed. The skirmishers of these two companies then commenced moving back toward the point where the column had first charged down from the summit. Lieutenant Johnston with a party of men was now posted along the upper edge of the prairie to destroy any Indians that might avoid these skirmishers. The woods were thus swept through, but the Indians had concealed themselves so effectively not one could be found.

36. This had been Cooke's old company just before the Mexican War when he was Captain, 1st Dragoons.

The "Assembly" was then sounded and the troops came together at the Indian camp. Here it was found that the Apaches had abandoned their lodges in such haste they could have taken nothing away. Their food was still cooking on the fire. Their dried meat, dressed skins, horse equipage, and even powder and balls, were left behind. Of the whole cavallada they succeeded in getting away but one horse and one mule. Every other horse, thirty-eight in all, which they had was captured. Perhaps the capture of these horses may not be considered a military act, as it left the Indians nothing by which the column could trail them any farther. It was found by Mr. Carson and Captain Quinn and the very best trailers in the command that it was impossible to pursue the Indians as, over precipice and rocks, on foot as they were, not a sign was left to indicate the direction they might take. Accordingly it was ordered that the column should recross Fisher's Peak to the good grass and water along its southern slope, and there encamp. But before leaving the amphitheatre, everything belonging to the Apaches was destroyed. Lieutenant Johnston, Lieutenant Moore and Captain Quinn with forty men were left concealed in the deep woods of the amphitheatre . . . to destroy any Apaches who might return after the column had departed. . . .

. . . The moral effect of pursuing these Indians on a cold trail over such a country, and finally surprising them in broad day in one of the most inaccessible positions that can be conceived of, must be very great indeed. They lost everything and have been taught the fact that with all their cunning the Americans can pursue and find them.

. . . Kit Carson, who had been in mountains for thirty years and who is justly celebrated as being the best tracker among the white men in the *world*, says that in *all* his experience he never saw such wonderful trailing in his life as was made on this campaign by Captain Quinn and his Mexican and Indian spies; and he willingly admitted that these men had kept on the track when he himself would have given up. . . . Therefore, to Carson and Quinn and the spy company is due *all* the credit, which may be accorded for whatever success this column may have had in finding the Apaches. . . .

You are aware that the regulars of this column are all of the First Dragoons and it may truly be said that for patience and fortitude in this arduous march . . . for promptness when called upon for any and every duty, and for gallantry in sweeping the Apaches out of their camp, they made themselves equal to the men who rode knee to knee in the calmest days of the regiment.[37] Fortunately, not one of them

37. Here speaks old regimental esprit. Cooke had been one of the original officers of the 1st Dragoons when it was activated at Jefferson Barracks, Missouri, March 4, 1833. In fact he was promoted 1st Lieutenant the same day. Stephen W. Kearny was the initial Lieutenant Colonel. Cooke served with this, the first cavalry regiment in the Army, until his promotion to Major, 2d Dragoons, while he was in California, on February 16, 1847. N.A.R.S.W.R.B.

has been injured. The officers of this command, Lieutenant Davidson, Lieutenant Johnston, and Lieutenant Moore, all subalterns in the 1st Regiment of Dragoons, afforded the commander of the column the most cheerful support throughout this campaign by manifesting the utmost zeal and alacrity in the performance of their duties. . . .

Lieutenant Colonel Cooke did not participate in the fourth principal campaign against the Indians in 1854. That was an expedition to punish the Mescalero Apaches for molesting the mail caravans between El Paso and San Antonio.[38]

At the conclusion of his season's operations against the Apaches, Cooke and his subordinates received notable commendations from their superior officers.

Writing to the General in Chief on April 30, General Garland referred to Cooke as then "suffering with chills and fever" as a result of the battle and pursuit at Agua Caliente and added that his "prompt and energetic movement reflects the highest credit on this officer."[39]

Again, following the expedition culminating in the routing of the Jicarillas at Fischer's Peak, Garland reported, June 30:[40]

> In making report of the military operations against the Jicarilla Apaches under the eye and orders of Lieutenant Colonel Cooke, 2d Dragoons, for the information of the general-in-chief, I will confine myself to the simple remark that all has been done which was in the power of troops to do.
>
> I approve most cordially the manner in which Lieutenant Colonel Cooke has conducted his campaign.

Not the least noteworthy tribute to Cooke was paid by Kit Carson: "He is as efficient an officer to make campaigns against Indians as I have ever accompanied, that he is brave and gallant all know."[41]

38. Garland, Santa Fe, June 30, 1854; *op. cit.*, [note 19], 36.

39. *Op. cit.*, [note 19], 34.

40. *Ibid.*, 36.

41. Edwin L. Sabin, *Kit Carson Days*, II, 664 (New York, 1935). This praise appears all the more remarkable when it is considered that Cooke and Carson were on opposite sides in the bitter controversy between General Kearny and Brevet Lieutenant Colonel John C. Fremont in California during 1847. Carson had been Fremont's guide and friend, while Cooke had served with Kearny in the 1st Dragoons since 1833, remained intensely loyal to him, and was one of the principal witnesses against Fremont at the latter's famous courtmartial early in 1848, which rocked Washington for weeks. See: *Sen. Ex. Doc. 33, 30th Cong., 1st Sess.*

Finally the ultimate in commendation came in a Presidential citation from the War Department in General Orders No. 9, dated June 21, 1854:[42]

> The Secretary of War has received from the Departments of Texas and New Mexico, the official accounts of the engagements which have recently taken place between detachments of the Army and hostile bands of warlike tribes of Indians inhabiting those regions of country. In these various encounters, the conduct of Lieut. Col. P. St. George Cooke, 2d Dragoons, 1st Lieut. John W. Davidson, 1st Dragoons, 2nd Lieut. David Bell, 2d Dragoons, 2d Lieut. George B. Cosby, Mounted Riflemen, and Sergeants C. H. McNally, John Green, and John Williams, of the same regiment, severally in command on the different occasions, merit special praise. The gallantry, fortitude, and devotion exhibited by the troops in every instance of combat and in the most arduous pursuit of the enemy, are creditable to the Army, and receive the marked approbation of the President and of the Department. The measures adopted by Brevet Major General Smith and Brevet Brigadier General Garland, respectively in command of the Military Departments of Texas and New Mexico, are approved.

Cooke departed from Fort Union September 13, 1854, five days before Colonel Thomas T. Fauntleroy officially took over command.[43] With a miscellaneous detachment of soldiers and civilians he proceeded to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, where most of the companies of the 2d Dragoons were then stationed. From that post, in 1855, he was destined to add still further to his Indian fighting experience. This time it was to be against the Brulé Sioux in Nebraska, culminating in the Battle of Blue Water on September 3.

42. N.A.R.S.W.R.B.

43. N.A.R.S.W.R.B. See also: Percival G. Lowe, *Five Years a Dragoon*, 181 (Kansas City, Mo., 1906)