

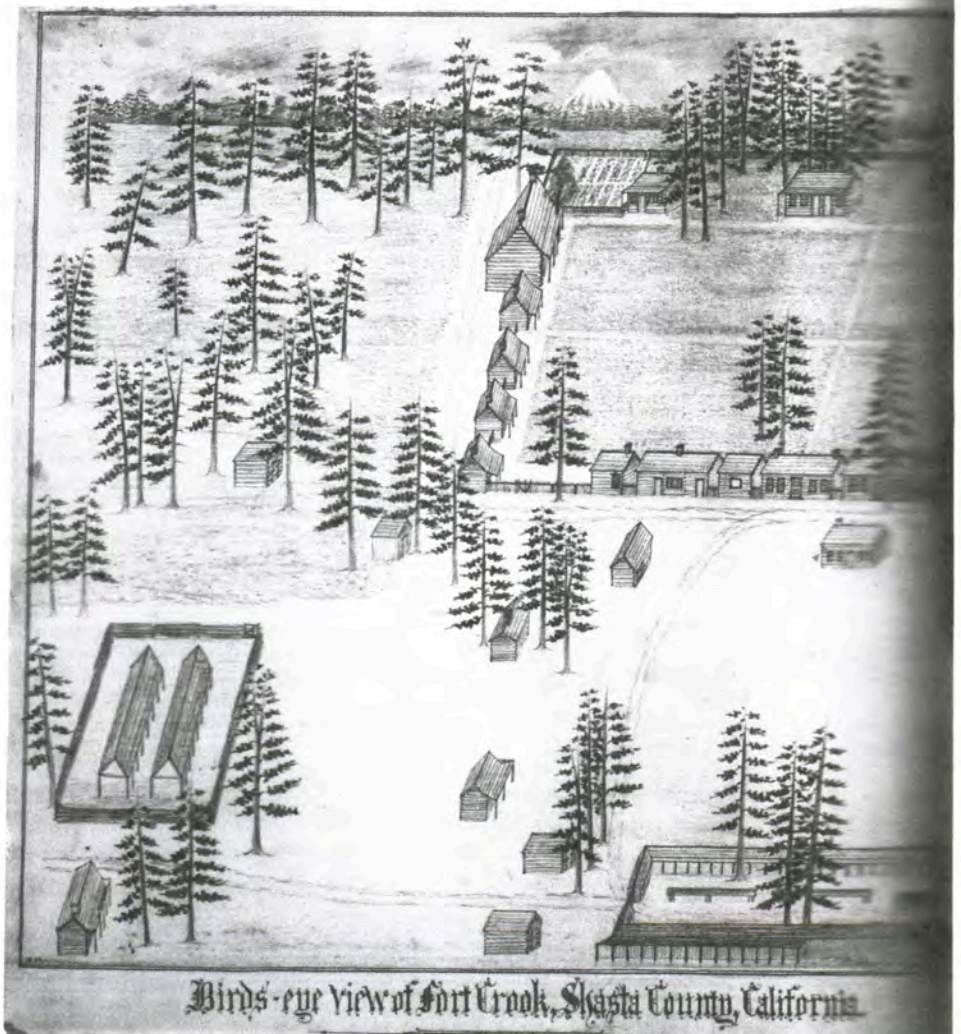
Soldier and Humanitarian GEORGE CROOK


by John K. Ohl

IN EULOGIZING MAJ. GEN. GEORGE CROOK, former president Rutherford B. Hayes said his Civil War comrade “wears the double wreath — the soldier’s and the humanitarian’s.” Hayes’s portrayal captures the dual nature of Crook’s career. During the nineteenth century, he was one of the United States Army’s most skilled and tenacious Indian fighters. Crook, however, was more than a conqueror of Indians. Even as he fought them, he operated from the assumption that Indians were human and could be taught the virtues of citizenship.

While still a young infantry lieutenant in northern California, George Crook gained a reputation for aggressively eliminating Indian raids. Recognizing this success, in 1857 a dragoon captain named a new post, on the Pit River Valley in Shasta County, Fort Crook. A California soldier prepared a bird’s-eye view of the complex during the Civil War. Like many forts in the Far West, its outer wall consisted of nothing more than a split-rail fence.

The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1963.002:0227-C



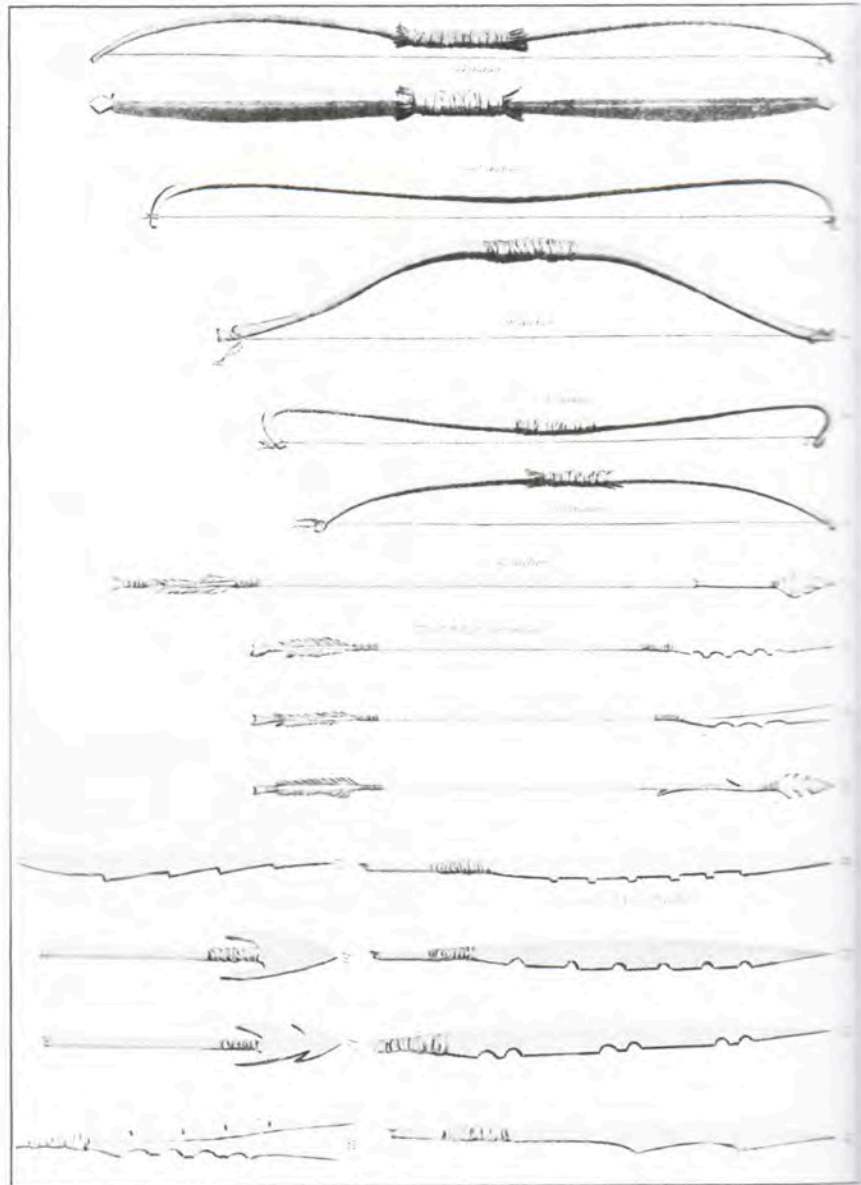


George Crook's Civil War experiences were wide and varied. Appointed colonel of an Ohio infantry regiment in 1861, by the end of the war, he had risen to the rank of major general of volunteers and commanded the cavalry of the Army of the Potomac. He served with distinction in both western and eastern theaters of the war, was awarded brevet promotions on five separate occasions, and even spent a few weeks in the Confederacy's Libby Prison. *U.S. Army Military History Institute*

Crook received the shoulder straps of a brigadier general in 1862, just prior to the Antietam campaign.

Ohio Historical Society, Hayes Presidential Center
David R. Barker, Photographer

Former Indian agent Henry R. Schoolcraft became the superintendent of Indian Affairs in 1839. He is best known for his extensive ethnological work, especially his monumental *Historical and Statistical Information . . . on the Indian tribes of the United States* published in the 1850s. Illustrated by West Point graduate Seth Eastman, it included a rendition of the bows and arrows used by the tribes Crook and his troops encountered along the border between Oregon and California. *Ohio Historical Society*



Born in 1828 on the family farm near Dayton, Ohio, Crook was educated in local schools before being appointed to the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York, in 1848. As a cadet, he gave little indication of his future success, graduating thirty-eighth in the forty-three-man class of 1852.

Like many young officers, Crook initially served on the frontier, where the army's principal responsibility was the pacification of belligerent Indians. In confronting Indians, the army faced a foe who did not wage a "conventional" war. Fighting in loosely organized bands, their practice was to flee from strength, live off the land, and strike at enemy weak points in hit-and-run attacks. To combat them, detachments of soldiers would track down their bands and coerce them to submit to reservation life.

Crook, with the rank of second lieutenant, was assigned to the Fourth Infantry Regiment. Stationed along the California-Oregon border, he participated in expeditions against the Rogue River and Pitt River tribes, who for years had been resisting the incursions of whites into their lands. Except for escorting two bands of friendly Indians to a reservation, Crook's role in the Rogue River War was uneventful. He saw considerable action, however, against the Pitt River warriors, and during one skirmish he was wounded in the thigh by an arrow whose head was never removed. Later, Crook took part in operations against Indians in the Washington Territory.

In the Northwest, Crook formed an ambivalent view of his Indian adversaries. On the one hand, he saw them as filthy, treacherous, cruel, lazy, and



WATKINS' PACIFIC RAILROAD,
27 and 28 Montgomery Street, opposite Lick House entrance, San Francisco

Photograph View in California, Oregon, and the Pacific Coast, courtesy—Amateur
Yo Banister, Big Trees, Guyaners, Mount Shasta, Mining, City, etc., etc.
Views made in order in any part of the State or Coast.

Alfred A. Hart, Photographer

Whites derisively labeled the Northern Paiute Indians, whom Crook opposed in Oregon in the late 1860s, "diggers," after seeing their women grubbing out bulbs and roots for food. Few appreciated the tribes' efficient use of all their desert home's food resources, including various insects and ground rodents. *Special Collections, University of Nevada, Reno Library*

inferior to whites. On the other hand, he saw them as victims as much as villains. The basic cause of white/Indian tensions, in his opinion, lay with white provocations, which drove the Indians to retaliate. Rather than exterminating the Indians, as many whites desired, Crook's humanitarian instincts prompted him to envision a day when they would be transformed into productive citizens.

Although sympathetic toward Indians, Crook did not ignore their "crimes." Individuals who were guilty of depredations should be punished. In addition, he believed military action was required to end the Indian troubles. Only when they were convinced they could not win would Indians settle on reservations. Thus, in Crook's eyes, the best approach to Indian warfare was to hunt them down and break their will to resist.

Following the outbreak of the Civil War, Crook was appointed colonel of the Thirty-sixth Ohio Volunteer Infantry. During the winter of 1861–62, he campaigned in western Virginia against Confederate raiders, or bushwhackers, who had been terrorizing Unionist citizens and threatening roads and railroads. Utilizing tactics he had learned fighting Indians, Crook ordered his best officers to scatter through the countryside to learn about the people and the bushwhackers' haunts and ways, recruited Unionist locals to serve as guides, and

dispatched mobile companies to pursue the raiders. Crook's methods proved so effective that within weeks he curtailed bushwhacker activity in his area.

As the months passed, Crook looked to fight in the larger war. His opportunity came in April 1862 when he was given command of a provisional brigade. Over the next three years Crook participated in battles in Maryland, Virginia, Tennessee, and Georgia while rising to the command of a corps and the ranks of major general of volunteers and brevet major general in the regular army. Overall, Crook's wartime service, as judged by recent biographer Charles Robinson III, was "no better or worse than that of many other Union generals." He had excelled in the war against bushwhackers, however, demonstrating an aptitude for suppressing raiders that would serve him well in the future.

Several of Crook's wartime associations significantly influenced his postwar service. Lt. Gen. Ulysses Grant, commander of the Union Army, was impressed with Crook's abilities and later helped advance his career. Crook also benefited from the close bond he developed with Rutherford B. Hayes. A lawyer and budding politician, Hayes quickly showed he was a capable soldier and rose to the command of a division while serving under Crook. In the process, he developed a deep respect for Crook that ultimately approached idolization. Meanwhile, Crook, whose marriage to Mary Dailey in 1865 was childless, doted over the Hayes children and practically became a member of the Hayes family. As Hayes's political stature grew after the

war, Crook's bond with him proved valuable. On a number of occasions Hayes urged his promotion, and during Hayes's term as president their friendship enabled Crook to pursue his own ends in Indian matters.

In contrast to his strong ties with Hayes, Crook emerged from the war with "a soured relationship" with Philip Sheridan, a fellow Ohioan and friend from their days as roommates at West Point. As commander of the Army of the Shenandoah, Sheridan was Crook's superior in 1864. One to take offense when he thought he was denied recognition for his accomplishments, Crook was galled when Sheridan took credit for what Crook saw as his "own planning and execution" in the Union victories at Winchester and Fisher's Hill in Virginia in September 1864. Moreover, Crook was envious that Sheridan, who graduated from West Point a year behind him, advanced faster in rank, winning promotion to the rank of major general in the regular army while Crook remained a captain, the rank he held at the beginning of the war. By the war's end a breach had opened between the two that, when fueled by postwar differences over Indian policy, degenerated into mutual loathing.

Crook returned to Indian fighting in December 1866 when he was appointed commander of the District of Boise, Idaho Territory, with the rank of lieutenant colonel in the regular army. In recent years, whites had flowed into southwestern Idaho, southeastern Oregon, and northern California and Nevada. The displaced Paiutes and related tribes retaliated by striking at stagecoaches, freight trains, ranches, and mining camps. Within days of assuming his new post, Crook was leading troops in pursuit of raiders, and during the ensuing months he employed a style of warfare made up of standard military practices and the innovations that became his hallmark.

In Crook's view the best way to defeat Indians was to get on their trail and relentlessly chase them. To locate them, he used Indians against Indians. It was not a new approach. Since colonial times, whites had employed Indians as scouts and auxiliaries. The normal practice was to recruit Indians from tribes that historically had been enemies of the hostile tribes. While utilizing Indians who were enemies of the Paiutes, Crook went a step beyond and enlisted friendly Paiutes to track their disaffected fellow tribesmen in the belief

Crook reorganized the army's pack-train system, being careful to hire packmasters who did not abuse their animals and who could stay sober and selecting healthy, strong mules with sound hooves. Packsaddles, redesigned to evenly distribute loads across the animals' backs, were made only of the "best materials." As one of Crook's staff officers pointed out, "It was impossible to replace anything broken" while in the field. Tom Moore, Crook's chief packer, who followed the general on his various western assignments, is on the left.

*Denver Public Library,
Western History Collections*





During the early 1870s, Crook (right) briefly served in San Francisco as a member of a "Benzine Board," named for a popular cleaning fluid of the day, which was charged with drastically reducing the number of military personnel. Joining Crook's military family as aides at this time were two Civil War veterans: John G. Bourke (left), a native of Philadelphia who would become one of the general's most important chroniclers, and Azor H. Nickerson (center), who hailed from Elyria, Ohio. *Ohio Historical Society, Hayes Presidential Center*

it would have a demoralizing psychological effect on the hostiles. "Nothing breaks them up like turning their own people against them," he later told a reporter. "They don't fear white soldiers, whom they easily surpass in the peculiar style of warfare which they force upon us, but put upon their trail an enemy of their own blood, an enemy as tireless, as foxy, and as stealthy and familiar with the country as they themselves, and it breaks them all up. It is not merely a question of catching them better with Indians, but of a broader and more enduring aim — their disintegration."

Once the hostiles' trail had been located, Crook faced the problem of keeping up with them. Indians traveled more easily across rugged terrain than the wagon trains the army normally relied upon to supply troops in the field. Crook solved the mobility problem by using pack mules. Others had appreciated their value and used them in their campaigns. However, as Robert Utley, a historian of the frontier army, has written, Crook "refined the science of organizing, equipping, and operating mule trains" to an unprecedented state of excellence, giving him the ability to keep the Indians within his reach.

From December 1866 to August 1868, Crook campaigned against the Paiutes. His troops and Indian allies, supplied by pack mules, swarmed across the lava fields of southern Oregon and northern California, utilizing converging columns to increase the chances of encountering the hostiles. Cold weather did not deter Crook, and rapid night



marches and a scorched earth policy of destroying their stores demoralized the Paiutes.

Worn down by Crook's style of warfare, the Paiutes sued for peace. They found him as tough in peacemaking as he was in war. Meeting their leaders in July 1868, Crook sought to impress upon them the futility of continued fighting. He warned that as long as they raided settlements and stole cattle his soldiers were ready to harass them until they were all dead. Unable to keep up the fight, the Indians agreed to settle on reservations.

The traits and habits that marked Crook were now fully apparent. Although aloof and sometimes stern, his courteous manner, modesty, and kindness won him the steadfast loyalty of many of those he commanded. Besides Hayes, the most notable was Capt. John G. Bourke, Crook's aide in the 1870s and 1880s. Highly literate and devoted to Crook, he wrote a number of articles about Crook's campaigns, and his book, *On the Border with Crook*, a semihagiography published in 1891, went far toward shaping Crook's enduring reputation as one of the army's foremost Indian fighters.

Like many of his fellow officers, Crook used army politics to press his own advancement. Also, he

Crook (center) twice declined offers to take command in the Territory of Arizona only to be overruled by President Grant himself. After arriving in the department, Crook immediately began gathering information from junior officers and carrying out field inspections. He had a distaste for military show and, except on ceremonial occasions, rarely wore a full uniform. While in the field, he usually donned a flannel shirt, canvas or corduroy outer clothing, and a sun helmet and carried a shotgun. Although a skilled horseman, Crook preferred to ride a mule. Two trusted scouts, a Chiricahua Apache known as Ba-keetz-ogie (left) and Al-chi-say, chief of the White Mountain Apaches, flank the general.

Denver Public Library, Western History Collections

could be, as described by historian James King "stubborn, sanctimonious, unfairly harsh in his criticism of others," and petty, and he was not above blaming others when operations did not go as planned. As was the custom with ambitious officers, he sought to manage his image. During the Civil War, Crook later wrote in his autobiography, he had concluded that it was favorable publicity more than "what a person did" that led to promotion. Thereafter, he made sure friendly journalists were present on his campaigns. Most wrote highly of Crook, helping to enhance his standing in the public's eye.

Crook's success in the Northwest led to his appointment as commander of the Department of Arizona in 1871. There his assignment was to pacify

the fierce Apaches. Taking advantage of the inhospitable climate and the desolate countryside, they had resisted conquest by the Spanish, Mexicans, and Americans for more than two hundred years. In the early 1870s much of south-central Arizona was awash in blood as Apaches struck at settlers almost at will and then stole away into their mountain retreats. Impressed by Crook's triumph over the Paiutes, Anson P. K. Safford, the territorial governor of Arizona, asked President Grant to transfer Crook to Arizona, in the hope he could eradicate the Apache menace.

General William T. Sherman, commander of the army, and Secretary of War William Belknap objected to Safford's request. Command of the Arizona department rightfully belonged to a brigadier general or, at the least, one of the forty full colonels who outranked Crook. In a seniority-conscious army, they warned, Crook's appointment would adversely affect morale in the officer corps. Grant, however, overruled them and gave Crook command of the department at his brevet rank of major general.

Within a month after arriving in Arizona, Crook undertook an extensive reconnaissance to learn

about the Apaches and the territory. He soon came to believe that the methods he had tested against the Paiutes could succeed against the Apaches. He began by recruiting peaceful Apaches to serve as scouts. Crook also decided to rely on pack trains to make sure his troops were adequately supplied. Taking a personal interest in the organization and care of the pack trains, he hired the most skilled packers in the territory, insisted that every mule be inspected to ensure it could maintain a rapid pace, and procured the best available packing cases and harness.

Crook planned to defeat the Apaches by using columns made up of Apache scouts, companies of regular troops, and mule trains. Numbering approximately two hundred men, each column would be assigned a specific operational area and function independently of the others, although

Once in Arizona, Crook immediately began recruiting Apache scouts. His job was made easier by the contention between groups and individuals in Apache society. The Apaches found scouting for the army attractive because it provided an opportunity to acquire a rifle and ammunition. Furthermore, it was a chance to escape the confinement and boredom of reservation life.

*Palace of the Governors, New Mexico History Museum.
Neg. 14214*



Crook became convinced that the Apaches were just as often victims as perpetrators. In his opinion, Arizona had its own "vampires." "Greed and avarice on the part of whites — in other words the almighty dollar," he asserted, "is at the bottom of nine-tenths of all our Indian problems." A group of Tucson businessmen was accused of being members of the corrupt "Indian Ring" that, like this trader, expressed friendship to the Indians but worked to line their own pockets at the Apaches' expense.

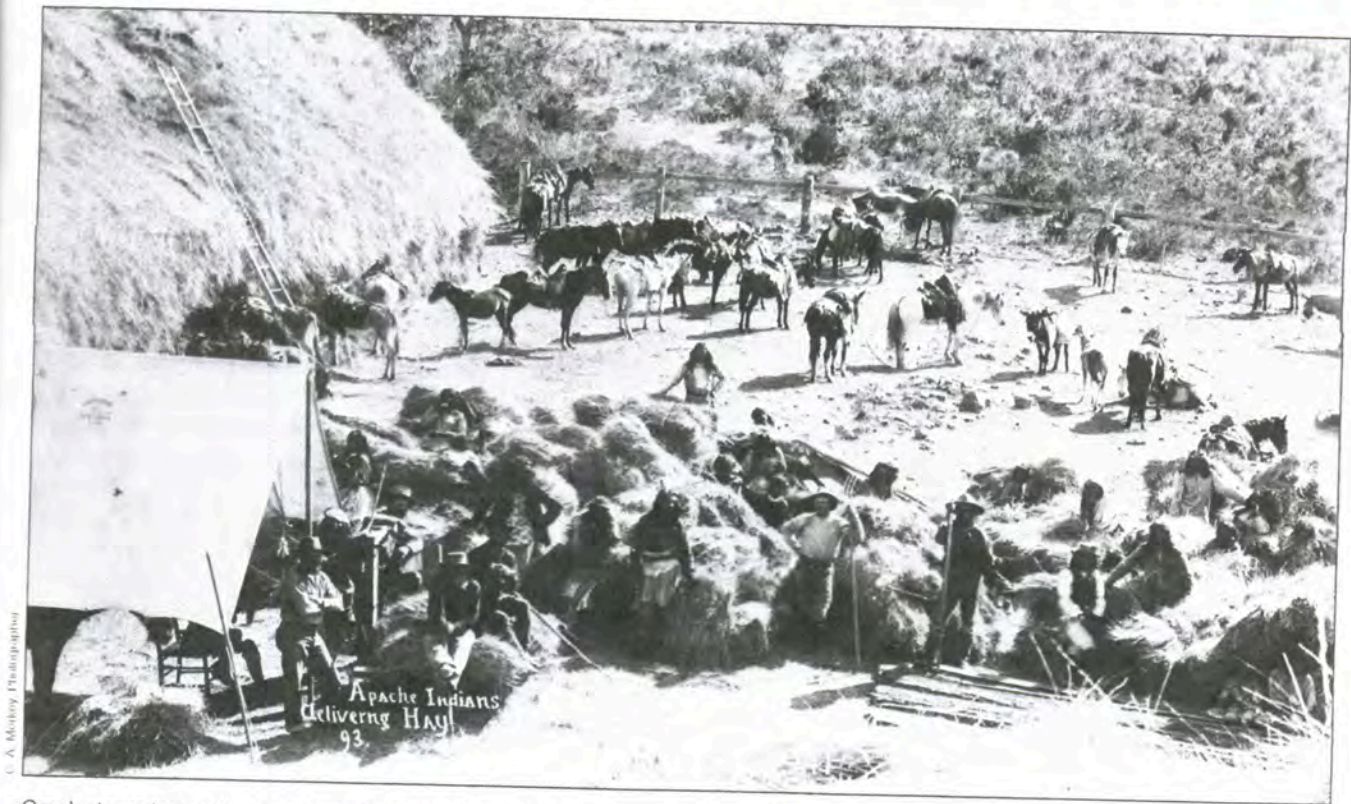
Palace of the Governors, New Mexico History Museum, Neg. 16139



Apaches soon came to understand that as long as they were hostile, Crook was a relentless foe. But he also gained the Indians' respect by treating their women and children as humanely as conditions allowed.

Denver Public Library, Western History Collections





Crook strove to turn the Apaches, like these delivering hay to Fort Apache, into farmers, believing that the ultimate answer to the Indian problem was to assimilate them into white society. Here again, members of the Indian Ring worked behind the scenes to prevent the tribes' success and keep them dependent on goods supplied by white merchants and contractors.
U.S. National Archives & Records Administration

Crook intended to oversee their movements personally to make certain they were mutually supporting. A premium was placed on relentless pursuit and surprise to catch the Indians off guard, bring them to battle, and keep them from dispersing and later reassembling.

By the fall of 1871, Crook was prepared to mount an offensive against the Indians. He had to postpone operations for a year, however, while peace emissaries sent by Grant attempted to entice the Apaches and their Yavapai neighbors into locating on reservations. Crook had little confidence in the "peace offensive." *In his mind, only a sound thrashing would persuade all of the Indians to accept reservation life.* Events proved him correct. Even as the peace negotiations progressed, recalcitrant Indians killed more than forty whites and stole hundreds of cattle and horses. Urged on by furious Arizonians, officials in Washington conceded that force would be necessary to complete the pacification of the territory.

Now free to take the field, Crook ordered all Indians to move to reservations or be regarded as hostile. When many did not heed his call, he

commenced his offensive on November 15, 1872. For weeks, nine columns of Crook's men crisscrossed the Tonto Basin and the surrounding mountains. No matter where the Indians sought refuge or how harsh the terrain and weather, Crook's scouts and soldiers tracked them down. In more than twenty encounters, nearly two hundred Indians were killed, and by the spring of 1873 the remaining hostiles were drifting into reservations, effectively ending Indian resistance and bringing relative peace to Arizona for the first time in generations.

Crook's 1872-73 campaign stands out as an exemplary model of unconventional warfare against Indians. Adopting the Indians' own tactics of surprise and ambush, he routed some of the most formidable guerrilla fighters the army ever faced. Civilian and military authorities applauded Crook's success, and in October 1873, still a lieutenant colonel, he was promoted to the permanent rank of brigadier general. Crook's promotion created ill will among many officers who were passed over; but it was well deserved, for no soldier had fought Indians with greater skill.

Crook believed it was not enough to defeat Indians militarily. If they were to remain peaceful, they had to see that their survival depended on their acceptance of white ways. This could best be achieved, he judged, by transforming Indians into prosperous self-reliant farmers. Even before his



military operations had ended, he encouraged the Apaches and Yavapais at the Camp Verde reservation in central Arizona to plant crops and raise livestock so they could feed themselves and earn money through the sale of their surpluses to the army. Using sticks and wicker baskets, the Indians dug a five-mile-long irrigation canal and made a water wheel out of packing cases. Before long they were producing thousands of pounds of corn, beans, and hay. When some Apaches spent their money on

drinking and gambling, Crook convinced them to invest in horses and sheep. As Crook saw it, by becoming agriculturists Indians would have a large stake in peace and “no longer consider war to have any advantages.” They “would,” he said, “be rich like the white man.”

Despite early progress, Crook’s experiment at Indian self-sufficiency was short lived. Civilian contractors who had profited by providing the reservations and the army with supplies vigorously opposed him. Moreover, Washington’s long-term policy was to concentrate Indians on fewer and larger reservations where they could be more

Ordered to the Department of the Platte in 1875, Crook found himself facing an unfamiliar foe and environment, and he met with little success. Some elements of Crook’s characteristic style, nonetheless, remained constant. The appearance of his headquarters staff during the campaign against the Sioux in the Black Hills demonstrates the general’s casual attitude towards prescribed military dress and democratic willingness to accept all types of practical field clothing. Crook himself is seen resting on a tree root.

*Denver Public Library,
Western History Collections*



"Old Reliable," the reputed nickname given by Crook to this .45 caliber Sharps rifle, is an indication of its accuracy and ability to bring down big game at great distances.
Ohio Historical Society, Hayes Presidential Center
David R. Barker, Photographer

effectively controlled. As a result, in early 1875 the Tonto Apache and the Yavapai were moved to a reservation at San Carlos, a barren lowland area in eastern Arizona that was of little value.

In 1875 Crook was assigned command of the Department of the Platte, headquartered in Omaha, Nebraska. At the time, unrest in the northern plains was widespread. Prospectors were swarming onto the Sioux lands in the Dakota Territory, prompting the Sioux and their Cheyenne allies to fight back by attacking settlers, miners, travelers, and peaceful Indians. Responding to the depredations, Lt. Gen. Philip Sheridan, commander of the Division of the Missouri, ordered three columns, one commanded by Crook, to converge on the Indians from different directions and force them to return to their reservations.

The Great Sioux War of 1876-77 was the most frustrating, controversial, and bitterly debated episode in Crook's career. In the northern plains he faced a much different conflict than he had known in the Northwest and the Southwest. Unlike his campaigns in Oregon and Arizona, which were conducted in relatively small areas scattered with white settlements, the war against the Sioux encompassed a vast, uncharted, and unsettled area in the Wyoming, Montana, and Dakota territories. Equally important, Crook confronted an enemy whom he knew little about, whose numbers were much greater than the Paiutes and the Apaches, and who would fight when challenged rather than flee.

For much of the war Crook performed poorly. Often he did not know where the Indians were or anticipate what actions they might take, and, showing his stubborn side, he did not avail himself of the experience many of his officers had gained in fighting the plains Indians. He made numerous tactical errors, and in the opinion of detractors was defeated by Sioux and Cheyenne under Crazy Horse on June 17, 1876, in the Battle of the Rosebud River in Montana. Sherman and Sheridan were critical of his leadership, and one of Crook's officers reportedly wanted to file charges of incompetence against him. For his part, Crook placed the blame for the shortcomings of his operations on a lack of capable



Gen. George Crook
1848

Outside of soldiering, Crook's only passions were hunting and fishing. His zealous pursuit of those avocations, even during an active Indian campaign, gave some accompanying journalists the impression that they were involved in a big-game safari. The general became especially skillful in using this ten-gauge, double-barreled shotgun to down waterfowl and other birds. The count for one day's outing in November 1872 was thirty-eight wild ducks.

Ohio Historical Society, Hayes Presidential Center

Crook gleaned these arrows from a Dakota Territory Sioux village in 1876 during an ill-supplied campaign infamously known as the "horse meat march."
Ohio Historical Society, Hayes Presidential Center
David R. Barker, Photographer



Sioux scouts and the failure of supply officers to provide him with adequate rations. Despite the criticism, Crook emerged from the war with his reputation only slightly blemished. Other generals did not acquit themselves much better, and Crook's successes before the war mitigated the harsh judgment of his leadership.

In the late 1870s, Crook began to speak out for more humane treatment of Indians. Previously he had confined his views to official reports in the belief, as he wrote Hayes in 1871, that it was an "impropriety" for a soldier to take a public stance on government policy. But now, saddened by the worsening plight of the Indians and angered by what he saw as Washington's disregard of his recommendations, he decided to call openly for the redress of Indian grievances and recognition of Indians as human beings. Undoubtedly Crook believed his high rank and seniority in the army would ensure that his voice would be heard, and with Hayes presently in the White House, he had some sense of security that his career would not suffer if he championed the Indians' cause.

When the Bannocks in the Northwest and the Cheyenne from the Northern Plains took up arms in 1878 and 1879, Crook publicly blamed the troubles on the greed and misdeeds of whites. The most famous instance of Crook's emergence as a spokesman for Indian rights involved the Poncas. In 1877 the Poncas, who lived on a reservation along the Nebraska-Dakota border, were moved to Indian Territory (now Oklahoma). There many died from disease and shortages of food. After the death of several family members,

Standing Bear, a major tribal chief, led a group of Poncas back to Nebraska. Following orders, Crook arrested the Poncas and prepared to return them to Indian Territory. Crook, however, was outraged by the treatment of the Poncas and enlisted supportive whites to help him delay their departure. Encouraged by Crook, two sympathetic lawyers obtained a writ of habeas corpus, and in the case of *Standing Bear v. Crook* (even though Crook opposed the removal of the Poncas, as commander of the Department of the Platte he was the defendant in the case), a federal judge ruled that the Poncas could not be sent back to Indian Territory against their will. Afterwards, Crook chaired a special commission that recommended that the Poncas be permitted to stay in Nebraska.

The Ponca affair helped energize the Indian rights movement. For years white reformers had urged that assimilation was the solution to the nation's Indian problems. Before 1880 their efforts, lacking effective organization, were largely unsuccessful. However, the Ponca affair, along with

With his former Civil War compatriot and friend R. B. Hayes in the White House, Crook grew comfortable in speaking out on behalf of the Indians. During an interview with a reporter from an Omaha newspaper in July 1878, he outlined the problem of inconsistent government food deliveries. "I do not wonder and you will not either," Crook insisted, "that when these Indians see their wives and children starving, and their last sources of supplies cut off, they go to war. And then we are sent out to kill them. It is an outrage."

Ohio Historical Society, Hayes Presidential Center



dramatic events involving the Nez Perce and the Cheyenne, brought public awareness to their cause and led to the formation of the Boston Indian Citizenship Committee in 1879. Two years later, Helen Hunt Jackson, its most renowned member, further stirred the public conscience with the publication of *A Century of Dishonor*, a widely read indictment of the government's Indian policy. The Boston Indian Citizenship Committee begot similar groups, most notably the Indian Rights Association in 1882. Under the leadership of Herbert Welsh, a Philadelphia socialite who served as corresponding secretary, it quickly emerged as the dominant organization espousing Indian reform. Its goal was to "Americanize" Indians by getting rid of the reservation system and converting them into yeoman farmers.

Before the Ponca affair, Crook had little time for the reformers. In his opinion, they were meddling do-gooders who lacked any real understanding of Indians. The Ponca affair changed his outlook. White reformers had stood with him in his efforts in behalf of the Poncas, and thereafter he regularly

called upon the Indian Rights Association and others for assistance in his attempts to aid Indians. During the 1880s, Crook increasingly spoke out on Indian affairs in articles and speeches, and often Welsh used the general's views to buttress the Indian Rights Association case for Indian reform.

In the summer of 1882 Crook was again named commander of the Department of Arizona. For several years discontent had been growing among the Apaches, sparked by corrupt Indian agents, factional intrigue, white encroachment on Indian lands, boredom born of idleness, and unrest among the White Mountain Apache that included the mutiny of several army scouts. Moreover, renegade Chiricahua and Warm Springs Apaches broke out of San Carlos and escaped to the Sierra Madre Mountains in northern Mexico, where they raided between Arizona and Mexico. Determined to end the Apache troubles, Sherman ordered Crook to bring the reservation under control and subjugate the hostiles.

Ignoring the doubts of many officers about the loyalty of the Apache scouts, Crook told his

Adding the sometimes strident voice of eastern reformers to Crook's pleas were members of the Indian Rights Association, which included numerous literary types like Helen Hunt Jackson. She was photographed at her writing desk in Colorado Springs about the time her 1881 volume *A Century of Dishonor*, which severely critiqued U.S. Indian policy, was published. She returned in 1884 to a more familiar genre with the romantic novel *Ramona*, which she hoped would do for the Indians what *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had done for black slaves. Special Collections, Tutt Library, Colorado College, Colorado Springs, CO





By the early 1880s, Crook was back in Arizona in an attempt to again quell Apache depredations. This time the search for hostile Apache rancherias took him into northern Mexico.
U.S. National Archives & Records Administration

superiors that the "great difficulty in the solution of the Apache problem is in catching the Indians, which if done at all must be mainly through their own people." For this purpose, he doubled the number of scouts to 250. Crook also overhauled the pack trains, concentrated most of his troops in larger garrisons to facilitate rapid movement against the hostiles, and toured the Apache sub-agencies to reassure the peaceful Indians of his good will. To better control them he required every male able to bear arms to wear a metal tag inscribed with his tribe and a number, instituted regular roll calls, and set up a network of "Confidential Indians" to report on the attitudes and activities of the bands strewn across San Carlos.

During the winter of 1882–83, the rebellious Apaches confined their attacks to northern Mexico. Then in March 1883, a band raided into southern Arizona before slipping back to Mexico. At the end of March, Sherman instructed Crook to pursue the hostiles without regard to department or national

lines. Through April, Crook prepared to hunt them down in Mexico, an incursion that was permitted by a convention between Mexico and the United States. He deployed troops and scouts along the Arizona-Mexico border, stockpiled supplies, traveled to Albuquerque to coordinate his actions with the Department of New Mexico, and visited the capitals of Chihuahua and Sonora to clear his plans with local Mexican officials.

On May 1, 1883, Crook crossed into Mexico. Accompanied by 193 scouts, 45 troopers, and 350 mules carrying food and ammunition, he followed the trail of the Indians wherever it led him through the Sierra Madre. Aided by an Apache who had recently deserted from the renegades, his men surprised two groups of Apaches deep in Chihuahua on May 15 and killed nine warriors. The attack persuaded the Indians to parley, and for several days Crook squabbled with their leaders over surrender terms. Telling them he preferred to fight, Crook said that continued war would "no doubt cost our Government many lives and much money, but it would finally result in wiping off the face of the earth the whole Apache race." Crook's threat and

Once the Apaches were on the reservation, Crook was assigned responsibility for overseeing the enforcement of laws there. He assigned Captain Emmet Crawford, who had commanded a group of Apache scouts, to supervise the reservation police. Crawford, in turn, set about converting his field scouts into policemen. Here Indian officers bring in a pair of suspected cattle thieves. *Autry National Center, Southwest Museum, Los Angeles, P.9263*



their fear of Mexican troops who were converging on the area convinced the hostiles to beg to be taken to San Carlos. Crook recrossed the border on June 12, 1883, bringing with him more than 320 men, women, and children, who were resettled at San Carlos. Over the next ten months more than two hundred additional Apaches dribbled across the border, all but eliminating the renegade presence in the Sierra Madre.

At his request, Washington in July 1883 granted Crook complete responsibility for the renegade Apaches and "entire police control" over San Carlos. Making full use of his power, he quickly implemented his own Indian policy. He dismissed many of the civilian contractors and evicted all unauthorized whites — liquor dealers, prospectors, traders, farmers — from the reservation. In addition, he reinstated his previous efforts to instill the capitalist ethic in the Apaches by buying their cattle and hay. To familiarize them with white-man's jurisprudence, Crook used Indian police to arrest offenders and Indian juries to determine their guilt or innocence. To stamp out the "primitive" practices of the Apaches, he prohibited wife beating, the cutting off of the nose of an adulterous wife, and the making of *tizwin*, a potent brew he believed corrupted the Indians. Ultimately, Crook looked to Congress to complete the Indians' acceptance into full citizenship by granting them the vote.

All did not go smoothly at San Carlos. Feuds developed between Crook's officers and civilian

agents over the extent of the army's police power. More important, Geronimo and other Apaches who were unwilling to adapt to reservation life bolted in May 1885 and absconded to their mountain lairs in Mexico. Crook promptly dispatched units into Mexico to seek out the renegades and stationed scouts and troops along the border to keep them from returning to the United States to engage in depredations. Crook's efforts to capture the Apaches were fruitless, and in November 1885 his men were unable to prevent a small raiding party from crossing the border and killing thirty-eight whites before scurrying back to Mexico.

Infuriated by the ease with which the Apaches had eluded his troops, southwestern political figures and business interests excoriated Crook. Sheridan, commanding general of the army since 1883, publicly defended Crook. Privately, however, he doubted that Crook's approach to Indian warfare would bring peace to the region. Having never approved of Crook's use of Apache scouts, he questioned whether they could be counted upon to fight their own kind. If the Apache menace were to be eliminated, he was certain it would have to be done by regulars. Moreover, Sheridan believed that San Carlos had become a base for the hostiles, and if they were to be denied the reinforcements and ammunition it provided, all Chiricahuas, peaceful and hostile alike, should be sent to a distant location in the East. Crook opposed this drastic action, and reluctant to go against a subordinate whose

operations were under way, Sheridan gave Crook another chance to end the Apache troubles.

During the first months of 1886, Crook's troopers and scouts pushed deep into Mexico. At one point they found the main Apache camp more than two hundred miles south of the border near the head of the Arnos River in Chihuahua. Aided by an inadvertent shootout between U.S. troops and Mexican militiamen who were also chasing them, the Apaches escaped. But with their haven penetrated and Americans and Mexicans constantly harrying them, Geronimo and the other fugitives realized that further flight was futile. In late March they met with Crook at Canyon de los Embudos in northern Sonora to arrange their surrender. Crook, anxious to bring a definitive end to the Apache problem, offered generous terms. Their only punishment would be two years' confinement in the East after which they could return to San Carlos.

Crook's peacemaking efforts soon unraveled. Angered by Crook's leniency, President Grover Cleveland directed him to resume negotiations with the Apaches and accept nothing less than unconditional surrender. At the same time, Geronimo and some of his followers, fearful they might be hanged if they returned to Arizona, fled, causing Crook's standing in Washington to plummet. Upon hearing of Geronimo's escape, Sheridan renewed his criticism of Crook's use of Apache scouts, suggesting they had facilitated the escape. Stung by the lack of support from Cleveland and Sheridan, Crook on April 1, 1886, asked to be relieved of his command. Sheridan promptly

approved the request and replaced him with Brig. Gen. Nelson A. Miles.

In his charge to Miles, Sheridan implicitly condemned Crook's approach to Indian warfare by telling him to make "active and prominent use of the Regular troops of your command." Miles did as he was ordered, but his troops were unable to capture his prey. Nevertheless, he eventually prevailed. Following Sheridan's instructions, he herded up the Chiricahua at San Carlos, including scouts and their families, and sent them to internment in Florida. Miles also resorted to Crook's use of diplomacy. Assisted by two scouts, Lt. Charles Gatewood located Geronimo in Mexico and delivered an ultimatum from Miles: surrender and go to Florida, where they again could see their families, or be destroyed. Realizing that resistance was hopeless, Geronimo surrendered to Miles on September 4, 1886, at Skeleton Canyon, just north of the Arizona-Sonora border. Shortly afterward the last hostiles were dispatched to Florida, forever ending Apache troubles in the Southwest.

Meanwhile, Crook had been reassigned command of the Department of the Platte. Two years later, aided by Hayes's lobbying efforts, he was promoted to the rank of major general and named commander of the Division of the Missouri, headquartered in Chicago. These years were marked by his deep-seated animosity toward Sheridan and Miles. Crook believed the two generals had sent the Chiricahua to Florida without justification. They had betrayed those Apaches who had placed their trust in him and in the government. In Florida many Apaches



Demoralized by the knowledge that there was no escaping the forces under Crook's command, the Apaches surrendered without a fight. On the afternoon of March 25, 1886, Geronimo (seated, fourth from left) and Crook (seated, second from right) sat down to negotiate beneath the shade of the cottonwood and sycamore trees in a camp established by Lieutenant Marion Maus, who led the Apache scouts after Captain Crawford was mortally wounded in a skirmish with Mexican troops. "The sun, the darkness, the winds," Geronimo offered, "are listening to what we now say."

Ohio Historical Society, Hayes Presidential Center



GENERAL NELSON A. MILES—FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY TAMM SAN FRANCISCO—(SEE PAGE 38)

The ambitious Nelson A. Miles was one of the army's preeminent Indian fighters and deeply resented Crook's promotion to brigadier general over him. He often questioned Crook's competency and berated him as a publicity seeker. Crook, in return, criticized Miles's handling of Indian matters and grew to despise him for his treatment of the Apaches. Miles's dress and proud demeanor, as shown on the cover of *Harper's* a year after Crook's death, helps illustrate the contrast between the two men.
Ohio Historical Society

Once Geronimo and his Apaches had again surrendered, this time to Miles's troops, they were quickly loaded on a train destined for Florida. Crook was obsessed with their treatment in Florida, and later in Alabama, for the remainder of his life.
U.S. National Archives & Records Administration

died in an environment to which they were not acclimated. Unreconciled to their seeming fate, Crook campaigned to have the Apaches moved to Alabama, where presumably the climate was more benign. Conditions were no better there, and Crook then sought to have the Apaches resettled in Indian Territory, whose climate was nearer to that they had known in the Southwest. However, Miles, authorities in Washington, and prominent Arizonans blocked their transfer until after Crook's death.

At the same time, Crook engaged in a rancorous quarrel with Miles over the credit for the final defeat of the Apaches — Crook for initiating the campaign or Miles for prosecuting it to its conclusion. Crook and Miles factions developed in the army, and for years afterwards they argued their cases. In fact, as Robert Utley has concluded, there were elements of truth in both claims, but ultimately Crook was the "real hero." It was his methods that effectively challenged the Apaches in warfare, and, if consistently applied, it was his principles in dealing with them on the reservation that held the key to permanent peace.

In 1887 the scheme of the Indian Rights Association and other reformers that would purportedly



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In 1889 Congress decided to partition the Great Sioux Reservation in present-day South Dakota and Nebraska into six smaller reservations. When the Sioux flatly refused to cooperate, Crook (left) was named to a commission to convince the recalcitrant tribesmen. Former Ohio governor Charles Foster (center) was chairman and Congressman William Warner of Missouri joined them. Crook's health had begun to fail in a steady decline that some attributed to the long-term effects of the "horse meat march." Denver Public Library, Western History Collections

convert Indians into farmers finally triumphed when Congress approved the Dawes Act. It called for the end of tribal ownership of reservation lands and their division into individual plots. Each family head would receive 160 acres of farmland, with smaller amounts for single adult males and minor children. What was left over would be bought by the federal government and opened up to white settlement.

The Dawes Act fit with Crook's vision of Indians as individual, self-supporting farmers; however, he and the reformers sorely misjudged what it would mean in practice. As a result of government purchases of reservation land and white acquisition of allotments, Indian land holdings were reduced by 60 percent over the next decades. Often, Indians were left with the poorest land, and when combined with their cultural conservatism, the act impoverished many, increasing their dependency upon federal assistance rather than fostering their economic and social independence.

Crook did not live to see the full effect of the Dawes Act, although before he died he had an introduction to its dismal consequences. In 1889 the act's principles were applied to the Great Sioux Reservation when Congress passed a bill under which the Sioux would give up nine million acres of their reservation to the federal government in return for the money it expected to earn from the sale of the land. Most of the remaining land would be split

into allotments for individual Indians. Crook favored the bill as a way to turn Indians into property owners, and as a member of a special commission to the Sioux in 1889, he urged their leaders to approve it or face the prospect that the government would just seize the land.

Many tribesmen opposed the government's terms, but persuaded by Crook's argument, a majority of the Sioux reluctantly agreed to them, leaving the tribe badly fractured and demoralized. To make matters worse, economic conditions for the Sioux soon deteriorated when Congress, to Crook's chagrin, cut their appropriations. The difficult times contributed to growing unrest on the reservation, which culminated in the massacre of Sioux by soldiers at Wounded Knee, South Dakota, in December 1890. By this time Crook was dead, having died in Chicago earlier that year from heart failure.

Crook's stature mainly rests on his accomplishments as a soldier. During his years on the frontier, he conducted several highly successful counter-guerrilla campaigns against Indians. But as a humanitarian, he also battled for the rights of peaceful Indians, inspiring hope among many for a better future. Feeling a great loss upon hearing of Crook's death, a group of Apaches, as reported by John Bourke, "sat down in a great circle, let down their hair, bent their heads forward on their bosoms, and wept and wailed like children." **TL**