

## DRAGOON MOUNTAINS INFORMATION

**BACKGROUND:** The Dragoon Mountains were an important location in the lives of Native Americans for well over a thousand years as evidenced by the pictographs and matates left by the Mogollon people (prior to AD 1200) and by the arrival of the Apaches in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Historically there were several tribes that made up the Southern Apaches. The principal tribes were the Mimbrenos whose homeland was in the Mimbres Mountains and what is now the Silver City area of New Mexico; the Chichenne or Warm Springs tribe who occupied the area east of the Mimbrenos to the Rio Grand and south to around the Mexican town of Canada Alamosa; the Chikonens or Chiricahua tribe whose homeland included the Dos Cabezas, Chiricahua and Dragoon mountains; the Nednais who lived in the Sierra Madre Mountains of Mexico; and the Bedonkohe whose territory was west of the Mimbrenos and north of the Chikonens. These tribes were on friendly terms with each other, frequently intermarried and periodically joined together for trading and raiding expeditions. Their relations with the northern and western Apache tribes were sometimes hostile. Eventually, all of the Southern Apache tribes were referred to as Chiricahua Apaches.

**COCHISE STRONGHOLD:** The Dragoon Mountains were a part of the historic homeland of the Chikonen Apache Tribe and a particularly rugged portion of the Dragoons held special significance to the Chikonens. This area eventually became known as the Cochise Stronghold because when the Apaches were attacked, they could retreat into the “Stronghold” and withstand almost any invading force.



Typical Terrain of Stronghold

Cochise was the leader of the Chikonen Apache when the United States acquired the area as part of the Gadsen Treaty of 1853. There was little conflict between the Chikonens and the Americans until after the “Bascom Affair” of January 1861 which resulted in Cochise going on a vendetta against the Americans. For the next eleven years, this natural fortress served as the home and base of operations for Cochise while he was at war with both the Mexicans and the Americans. There are two entrances to the stronghold. The east entrance to the Stronghold is just to the west of the present town of Sunsites and is where Cochise established his residence after the formation of the Chiricahua Reservation. The west entrance to the Stronghold is located adjacent to the Dragoon Ranch and the Council Rocks area. Council Rocks is where the initial meetings between Cochise and General Howard took place that resulted in the peace treaty that ended the war between the Chiricahua Apaches and the Americans.

Cochise, the leader of the Chiricahua Apaches died 8 June 1874 and was buried in the Dragoon Mountains. Thomas Jonathan Jeffords, a tall, lanky red-bearded army scout from New York state was a close friend of Cochise (some say a blood brother) and was

the only white man present at Cochise's funeral in the Stronghold. The exact location of Cochise's grave is unknown to this day. Of Cochise, Jeffords said: "I found him to be a man of great natural ability, a splendid specimen of physical manhood, standing about six feet tall with the eye of an eagle. He respected me, and I respected him. He was a man who scorned a liar, was always truthful in all things. His religion was truth and loyalty."

**CHIRICAHUA INDIAN RESERVATION:** In 1872, President Ulysses S. Grant sent the one-armed Civil War hero General Oliver Otis Howard to make peace with the Chiricahua. Jeffords agreed to take Howard to Cochise if he would go without escort and unarmed. The initial meetings took place on the western slope of the Dragoon Mountains at the Council Rocks area near the western approach to the Stronghold. The final meeting took place at Dragoon Springs in Jordan Canyon in the northern part of the Dragoon Mountains. Cochise agreed to settle with his followers on a reservation but stipulated that Jeffords had to be appointed agent. The reservation included portions of the Dragoon and Chiricahua Mountains, the intervening Sulphur Springs Valley and the San Simon Valley on the East side of the Chiricahua Mountains (over 3000 square miles). Jeffords oversaw the reservation with an iron hand. "He was to be absolute boss upon the reservation, admitting no one on [it] unless with his consent, and taking absolute control over the Indians. Thereafter no soldier or civilian, or official of any kind, came upon the reservation without Jeffords' consent, and for the four years that he was Indian agent, there was never any trouble with the Chiricahua Apaches". The Apaches confined their raiding to South of the Mexican border. In April 1876, some renegade Apaches killed a stagecoach attendant over a disagreement. At the direction of Washington, John Clum replaced Jeffords as Indian Agent with instructions to close the reservation and move the Chiricahua to the San Carlos Reservation. He was able to relocate about 325 Apache. The rest escaped either to New Mexico or to Sonora Mexico. The Chiricahua Reservation was closed.

**COUNCIL ROCKS:** The site served as a shelter for the Mogollon People a thousand years ago and more recently by the Apache. The pictographs, which are located on a wall in the main shelter area, are reminiscent of designs by the prehistoric Mogollon peoples and some may have been added more recently by Apache visitors. The site consists of several areas ("rooms") which served as shelter areas. There are also several matates (grinding mortars) located within the large shelter and also on the large rock to the left of the main shelter. A Forest Service Information Board is located at the site. (Data extracted from US Forest Service Information Board. (A pictograph is a picture or painting on a surface whereas a petroglyph is a carving or etching on a surface).



Mogollon Era Pictograph

In October 1872, Council Rocks served as the site of the initial meetings between General Howard and Cochise which resulted in the establishment of the Chiricahua Indian Reservation.

To get to the site, turn onto spur road FR-687K and follow it to the end of the road. Parking is sufficient for several vehicles. Proceed through the gate in the fence and follow the trail a couple of hundred yards to the site.



Mogollon Era Matate

**WHITE HOUSE ADOBE RUINS:**

The 19th century adobe ruins are referred to as the “White House” but there is no documentation as to how it received this name. It was probably built around the 1870s and was later abandoned because of pressure from the Chiricahua Apaches. The structure was recognized in surveys of the area conducted by a surveyor named John Rockefeller in the 1880s. Rockefeller Dome in the Dragoon Mountains was named for John Rockefeller. The US Army used the structure in 1876 during the relocation of the Apaches from the Dragoon Mountain Reservation to the San Carlos Reservation. An 1890 Cochise County map indicates that the property was owned by the K C Company. Various early 20th century maps identify the structure as Tweed’s Ranch and as the Horse Ranch. The designation of Tweed’s Ranch probably led to the rumor that Boss Tweed, the New York political Kingpin, once owned the ranch. There is no documentation however, that Tweed ever set foot in Arizona. The Horse Ranch designation is carried over to this day in that the road formerly used by the Hiking Club to gain access to the West Stronghold from St. David is still called the Horse Ranch Road on current maps of the area. The 1999 owners of the site were Jerry and Marjorie Dixon who owned the Dragoon Mountain Ranch. (Data provided by Mary Farrell, Archaeologist for the US Forest service, Tucson Office).



White House Ruins



White House Ruins

The access road to the ruins of the 19th century adobe structure is located 0.4 miles south of the entry gate to the Dragoon Mountain Ranch on FR-687. Turn left onto the unmarked dirt road and the ruins are about 1/4 mile up the road.

Summarized by T. Johnson from variety of sources including the following:

- 1.) *The Conquest of Apacheria* by Dan L. Thrapp. University of Oklahoma Press
- 2.) Account of General Howard's Mission to the Apaches and Navajos as reprinted from the Washington Daily Morning Chronicle of November 10, 1872
- 3.) *Cochise, Chiricahua Apache Chief* by Edwin R. Sweeney
- 4.) Discussions with the Amerind Foundation