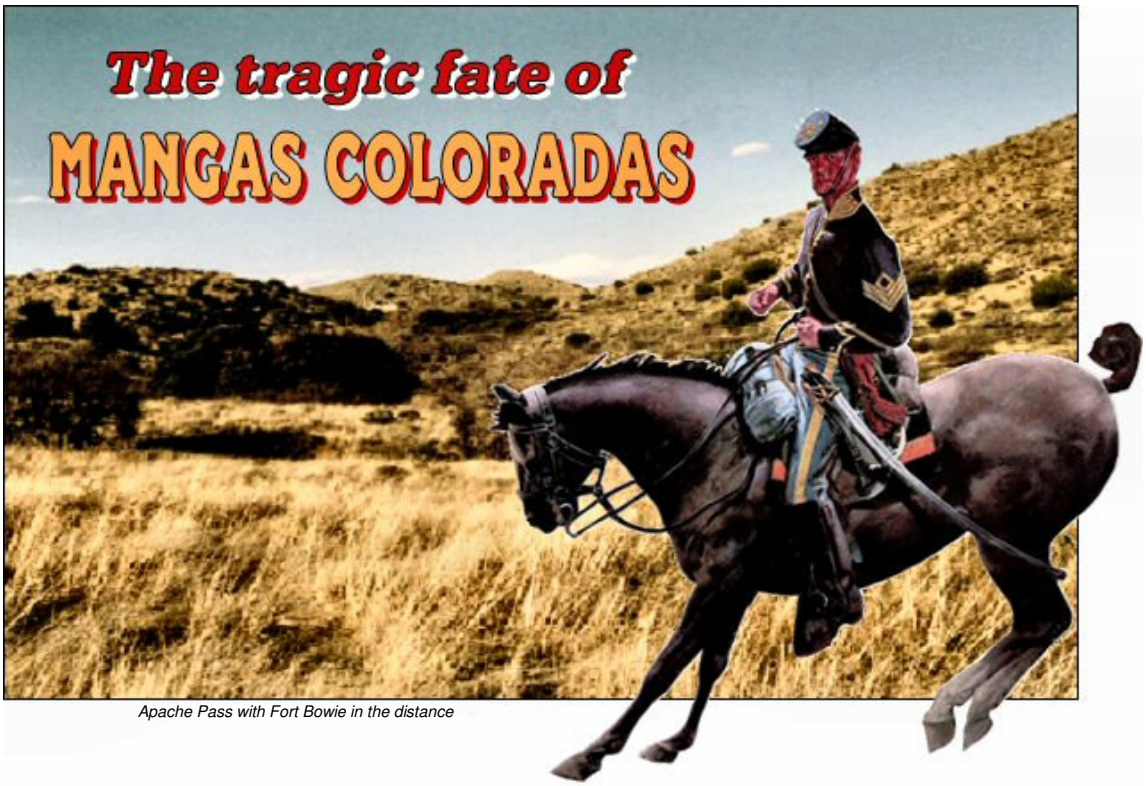

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Apache Pass with Fort Bowie in the distance

An anthology by Gerald Hawkins

In the spring of 1862, California volunteers marched east from Fort Yuma, California, into the Arizona desert. They were the vanguard of a Union force of eleven companies of infantry, two of cavalry and two artillery batteries known as the California Column. This column, under Colonel James H. Carleton, was to confront and defeat the Confederate Army of Brigadier General Henry H. Sibley who had taken control of the southern part of New Mexico Territory. The Union troops left southern California on 13 April 1862, marched through hostile Apache country, and reached Santa Fe on 20 September 1862. The Californians left Fort Yuma company by company and it took several weeks to get the entire column underway. Carleton's men advanced in small parties since the supplies of water and forage along their route to Mesilla and Santa Fe could not support a large number of men and horses traveling "*en masse*".

In the meantime, Colorado troops had defeated the Confederates of Sibley's brigade at the battle of Glorieta Pass on March 28, 1862, forcing them to retreat into Texas. Thus, few men of the California Column ever saw a Rebel soldier and it was the Apaches and the Navajos that kept them busy until the end of the war and even later. The first detachment of Carleton's California Column entered Tucson on May 20, 1862, and reached Mesilla, New Mexico, in July 1862.

On July 9, Captain Thomas L. Roberts, with his Co. E, 1st Infantry California Volunteers, and Captain John C. Cremony's Co. B, 2nd Cavalry California Volunteers, with two mountain howitzers under the command of Lieutenant William A. Thompson, 1st Infantry, left Tucson for Rio de Sauze, where they were to establish a camp, having with them rations and forage for Colonel's Edward E. Eyre's command (Eyre was the commanding officer of the vanguard of the California Column), in case they were forced back by the Texans. Arriving at the San Pedro River, it became necessary to know whether Dragoon Springs, some 28 miles further on, could supply the two companies at a time

(Roberts and Cremony) with water, or whether they would obliged to break into detachments. Captain Cremony remained behind with fifteen cavalrymen and ten infantrymen from Roberts' company.

The following day, between three and four A.M., two cavalrymen sent back by Roberts informed Cremony that there was an abundance of water at Dragoon Springs. In obedience to Roberts' order, Cremony set forward before daylight with his train. *"A long and fatiguing march of 40 miles had to be made before reaching Apache Pass"* said he. *"I should remain at Dragoon Springs until next morning, while Captain Roberts was to push ahead with his infantry and seven of my company, leaving the train under my charge. (…) By daylight next morning, we were again in the saddle. (…) A little before dark we arrived at Ewell's Station, 15 miles west of the pass, and I determined to park the train (…). Just as I had come to this conclusion, we perceived several riders coming toward us at full speed, and they soon proved to be the detachment of my company which had been detailed to act with Captain Roberts. (…) All had evidently ridden hard. A sergeant approached and said : Captain Roberts has been attacked in Apache Pass (…) and finally compelled the Indians to run. He directed us to come back through the pass, and report to you (…) to take every precaution"*. When his command reached Apache Pass, Roberts was attacked by a large force of Apache warriors, under the leadership of Cochise, the Indians having possession of the water at that point. After a stubborn contest, in which both trains of mountain howitzers were broken while elevating the pieces to reach the Indians, the Apache were forced to retire with a loss of nine killed, while the troops suffered a loss of two killed and two wounded.[1] On leaving Apache Pass, the riders were pursued by fifty well-armed and mounted Apaches. Sergeant Mitchell deplored one wounded and the loss of private John Teal who was cut off by a band of fifteen or twenty warriors, while his companions were unable to render him any assistance. However, as Cremony reported it to Captain Roberts, private Teal was still alive and had accomplished a feat of arms.[2]

"APACHE PASS, ARIZONA TERRITORY, July 16, 1862"

"Captain,"

"I have the honor to inform you of the following circumstances :
On the 15th instant, while en route from Dragoon Springs to this place with a force of about fifty-four men in charge of the Government train of twenty-one wagons, under the care of Mr. Jesse R. Allen, wagon-master, and at about 7.30 o'clock in the evening, when fourteen miles distant from the station in Apache Pass, I was met by Sergeant Mitchell and Privates Maynard, Keim, King, and Young, of Company B, Second Cavalry California Volunteers, who informed me that you had been attacked by the Apaches in Apache Pass about noon of that day and that after a sharp conflict you had routed the savages, and also informing me that you would come out to meet me with an infantry force, so as to assure the security of the train. Not knowing how near I might be to the cañon in which your greatly superior force had been attacked, and being unwilling to subject the train and the men under my orders to a moonlight attack in the pass in which the savages would possess every advantage, I immediately corralled the train and held it in security and unmolested until joined by you about 11.30 o'clock of the same night. I regret to report the loss of three horses, one saddle, one bridle and saddle blanket, one nosebag, one currycomb and brush,

[1] Capt. G.H. Petis, USA, *The California Column*, published by the Historical Society of New Mexico, Santa Fe, 1908, p. 13 ; J.C. Cremony, *Life among the Apaches*, San Francisco, 1868, pp. 155-59.
[2] *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (0.R.), Washington DC, 1881-1901, Series 1, vol. L-1, pp. 132-33.

one carbine sling, one haversack, and one pair of spurs, the horses being killed and the articles above specified being captured by the Apaches, who waylaid Sergeant Mitchell and his small party on their way back from the pass to the train. I am also pained to report that Private Jesse T. Maynard, of the same party, was severely wounded by a musket shot through the right forearm, near the elbow."

"The following verbal report of the attack on Sergeant Mitchell's party has been made to me by him : He states that in obedience to your order he left Apache Pass on the afternoon of the 15th instant, after you had routed the savages, accompanied by Privates Maynard, King, Young, Keim, and Teal, of Company B, Second Cavalry California Volunteers, and then, when about four miles to the westward of the cañon, on his way to rejoin the train, his party was waylaid and attacked by about forty Apaches, who were in ambush among some mesquite trees and rocks between two swells of land. The horses of Privates Maynard and Keim were shot, and Maynard wounded by the fire. At this time, Private John W. Teal was about 250 yards in the rear, leading his horse to rest him, and the savages were between Teal and his party. Finding the enemy too numerous to attack with the small and weakened force, the sergeant retreated and arrived safely in camp with Privates Maynard, King, and Young, Private Keim's horse having fallen in a dying condition about a mile distant and he having remained to secure his saddle, bridle, &c., which he did, and came up about twenty minutes later".

"There was every reason to fear that Private John W. Teal had fallen a victim to the savages, but it affords me pleasure to add that about 10.30 o'clock of the same night Private Teal arrived on foot unharmed, and bringing with him all his arms and ammunition. His report is as follows : Finding himself cut off from Sergeant Mitchell's party he struck off by himself at a gallop down the valley which forms between the two swells of land already mentioned, and was closely pursued by fifteen savages, who fired repeatedly at him, shooting his horse through the heart. He immediately threw himself flat on the ground and defended himself with his carbine. The savages seemed disposed to close upon him, when he drew his pistol and fired one shot from it, when, discovering that he had a pistol and saber, they drew off and circled round him, firing at him and he returning their fire with his carbine. This unequal contest lasted for one hour and a half, when they gradually withdrew and he made good his retreat to the place where the train was encamped, arriving at the time above specified.

I have the honor to be, your obedient, humble servant,

JOHN C. CREMONY,
Captain Commanding Company B, Second Cavalry California Volunteers".

Captain J.C. Cremony's report relating to the performance of private John W. Teal is short in the Official Records of the War of the Rebellion. In his book *Life among the Apaches* published in 1868, Cremony goes into details about John Teal's adventure. *"Teal's narrative is so full of interest, and so well illustrates a phase in Apache character"* said he *"that it is worth recording"*.

"Soon after we left the pass" told Teal, "we opened upon a sort of hollow plain or vale, about a mile wide, across which we dashed with speed. I was about 200 yards in the rear, and presently a body of about 15 Indians got between me and my companions. I turned my horse's head southward and coursed along the plain, lengthwise, in the hope of outrunning them, but my horse had been too sorely tested, and could not get away. They came up and commenced firing, one ball passing through the body of my horse, just forward of his hind quarters. It was then about dark, and immediately dismounted, I determined to fight it out to the bitter end. My horse fell, and as I approached him, he began to lick my hands. I then swore to kill at least one Apache. Lying down behind the body of my dying animal, I opened

fire upon them with my carbine, which being a breech-loader, enabled me to keep up a lively fusillade. This repeated fire seemed to confuse the savages, and instead of advancing with a rush, they commenced to circle round me, firing occasional shots in my direction".

"They knew that I also had a six-shooter and a saber, and seeming unwilling to try close quarters. In this way, the fight continued for over an hour, when I got a good chance at a prominent Indian and slipped a carbine ball into his breast. He must have been a man of some note, because soon after that, they seemed to get away from me, and I could hear their voices growing fainter in the distance. I thought this a good time to make tracks, and divesting myself of my spurs, I took the saddle, bridle and blanket from my dead horse and started for camp. I have walked 8 miles since then".[3]

Captain Cremony subsequently ascertained that the savage shot by private Teal was no less an individual than the celebrated Apache chief Mangas Coloradas, but he survived his wound to cause more trouble.

Mangas Coloradas is a true legend. His real Indian name, *Dasoda-Haï*, remains uncertain, posterity having only retained his Mexican nickname Mangas Coloradas (red sleeves). The US archives do not hold any photograph of him, but his contemporaries assert that his grandson Taza, the son of Cochise and his daughter, looked exactly like him. The Apache nation was divided into several tribes, one of them the Chiricahuas who comprised many clans. Mangas Coloradas was born around 1791 amid the Eastern Chiricahuas (or Mimbrenos or Gila Apaches) whose homeland stretched west from the Rio Grande to present day southwestern New Mexico. Mangas was a stocky man, over six feet in height, reportedly courageous, intelligent, and kind. His wife *Tu-es-seh* gave him many children. One of their daughters married Cochise of the Central Chiricahuas, an important chief by the 1850's and an ally of Mangas during his raids on Mexican and American settlements. Well before the United States took control of most of the Chiricahua lands, Mangas and his Apaches either terrorized or traded with the Mexican settlers in the provinces of Chihuahua and Sonora. By the mid-1840's, Mangas was acknowledged by his tribe as a leading Chiricahua chief.

In 1846, at the beginning of the American-Mexican War, Mangas set word to General Stephen W. Kearney that he was willing to offer his support against the Mexicans, but the US officer declined the offer. However, until the expansion of the American population in the area became a real threat to their way of life, the Chiricahuas considered the settlers as their allies against the Mexicans and thus continued raiding Sonora and Chihuahua. Nevertheless, Mangas and his warriors often attacked American mining settlements, isolated ranches, solitary travelers and stagecoach depots. This led the American authorities to appoint a Chiricahua agent in 1851. The same year, a series of incidents culminated in hostilities when Mangas Coloradas suffered a humiliating flogging at the hands of some miners, an insult no Apache could forgive or forget.

In 1853, the Gadsden Purchase allocated to the United States vast tracts of Mexican land located south of the Gila River. Mangas and his followers were suddenly faced with ruthless American miners and ranchers overrunning their homeland. With his territory besieged, his people threatened and American trustworthiness shattered, Mangas Coloradas joined forces with Cochise and both called the Chiricahuas to war. Despite his efforts to improve relations with the Mexican authorities, Mangas was held in contempt by Mexican troops who killed two of his sons as well as other Apache followers. In revenge, during 1858 and 1859, Mangas and Cochise wreaked havoc in northern Sonora and Chihuahua, stealing large herds of cattle and driving them into the United States. They also raided ranches in Arizona and New Mexico and sold the livestock to Mexicans. By 1860, a full-blown war

[3] Cremony, *Life among the Apaches*, pp. 159-60.

had developed between the Chiricahuas and the United States, with Mangas acting as a key player. His Apaches tried to stall all traffic through their territory, ambushing wagon trains and attacking stagecoaches. Mangas even raided Los Pinos, a mining camp in the heart of the Eastern Chiricahua territory, but his warriors were repulsed after a tough fight.

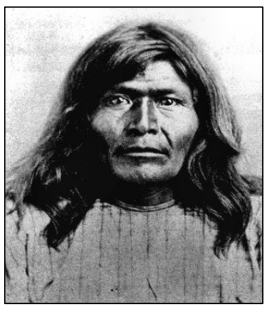
The Apaches were not concerned with the white man's civil war and they attacked Confederate and Union troops alike. When, in July 1862, the Chiricahuas tried to block Apache Pass, Union forces fought their way through with light losses. As described above, Mangas was later shot by cavalryman John Teal. His wound would have been fatal had Cochise not taken him urgently to Janos (Chihuahua) where, at the point of a gun, he forced a Mexican doctor to extract the ball that his father-in-law had received in the chest. [4]

Mangas never fully recovered from his bullet wound. His weakened state may have induced him to negotiate with the Americans. At that time, General James H. Carleton who commanded the Federal forces in charge of subduing the Apaches had demanded Mangas' unconditional surrender. In early January 1863, the old Chiricahua chief, then in his seventies, decided to take up a truce offer from Captain Edmond Shirland's of the California Volunteers, but it turned out to be a trap. Arriving at the camp, soldiers jumped from some nearby bushes and took him prisoner. Mangas was escorted into custody near Pinos Altos (New Mexico) and then sent to Fort McLane, an ante-bellum post located a few miles to the south. During the night of January 18, 1863, his guards taunted him with heated bayonets, and when he jumped to his feet in pain, they shot him dead. In his official report, General West said that Mangas was shot while attempting to escape. However, there was testimony that he was executed with the consent of General West. Mangas was a giant of a man and before dumping his body into a ditch, some troopers severed his enormous head from his body, boiled it in a kettle and sent his skull East for study by phrenologists.[5]

Sergeant George Hand was a member of the California Column and he kept a diary recording his service with the Union Army in New Mexico and Arizona. On January 25, 1863, he wrote : *"General West arrived from Pinos Altos with the news of the fight between Captain McCleave and Indians, the death of the Chief Mangas Coloradas, his two wives and one son. Some of the boys brought in scalps"*.

The story of the capture and the murder of Mangas Coloradas remains a matter of controversy. His son Mangas (or Mangus) continued the fight against the Whites alongside Victorio, Nana and Geronimo. Upon surrendering to General Crook in 1886, the group had been nearly wiped out, counting only a handful of warriors and a few women and children.

Mangus Coloradas
(Smithsonian Institution)



Victorio
(With kind permission of the Arizona Historical Society)

Nana
(Detail - Courtesy Palace of the Governors, MNM/DCA, Neg. # 16321)

Geronimo
(Smithsonian Institution)

[4] F. C. Lockwood, *Apache Indians*, New York, 1938, p. 125 ; Sweeney, *Cochise*, p. 187 ; B.E. Johansen & D.A. Grinde, *Encyclopedia Native Americans*, New York, 1997, pp. 234-35 ; R.M. Utley, *Encyclopedia of American West*, New York, 1997, pp. 269-70 ; B. Capps, *Great Chiefs*, New York, 1975, p. 72.

[5] N.B. Carmony (editor), The Civil War in Apacheland ; Sergeant George Hand's Diary, 1861-1864, Silver City, New Mexico, 1996, p. 101.