

John Philip Clum

On April 21, 1877, twenty-five year old John P. Clum and 100 Apache policemen from the San Carlos Indian Reservation accomplished a feat that thousands of soldiers before and after were never able to accomplish. They captured the renegade Apache Geronimo and they did it without firing a shot. Geronimo voluntarily surrendered on a few occasions, but this was the only time he was ever captured at gunpoint.

Clum was born on September 1, 1851, on a farm near Claverack, New York, in Columbia County. His parents, William Henry and Elizabeth Clum, also gave birth to Clum's five brothers and three sisters. Clum enrolled at Rutgers University where he was on the football team that participated in the first intercollegiate football game between Rutgers and Princeton.

Lack of funds caused him to drop out of school and seek employment. He was soon headed into the old west where he was to be employed by the US Government in the weather department at Santa Fe, New Mexico. He traveled by train as far west as the railroad went, then several days by stage coach. At the Seven River stage stop in New Mexico, the stage keeper pointed out the cemetery and explained that all "nineteen men in it; no women or children...died with their boots on." When Clum didn't understand "boots on" the stage keeper explained, "Died fightin' my lad, died fightin'." "The last burial we had was day before yesterday. Clay Allison and Chunk Dawson were in here gettin' supper, sittin' at this table where you're at now. They had a few drinks at the bar, but they wasn't drunk. Chunk called Clay a liar, so Clay whipped out his gun, and poor old Chunk slid down in his chair, like this—dead. Clay put his gun away, finished eatin' paid me four bits, and went on down the trail. What I didn't like about the whole thing was that Clay didn't stay to help me bury Chunk."

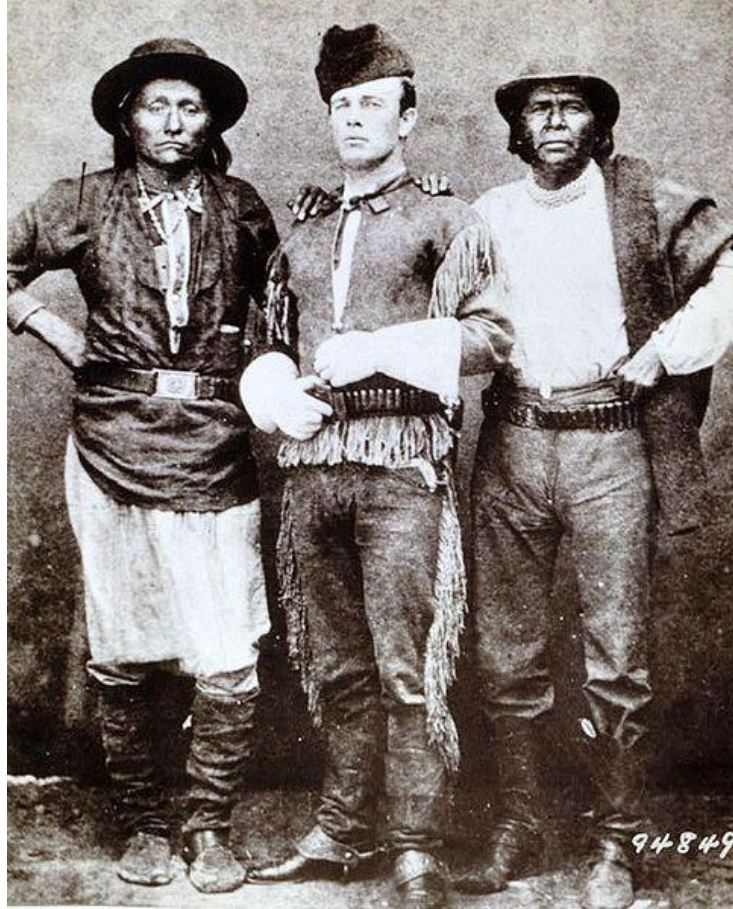
Clum set up his weather station in Santa Fe and began the first recordings of atmospheric conditions in that part of the United States. Being the weatherman did not occupy all of his time, so he established a private school and had seventy-five students at \$3 per month. In the summer of 1872, the governor of New Mexico was called back to Washington. He placed the twenty-one year old Clum in charge of the state.

In November of 1873, Clum received a letter from Washington offering him the job of Indian Agent on the San Carlos Reservation, Arizona. It seemed that the Apaches at the San Carlos Reservation had been turned over to the Dutch Reformed Church. John Clum was a member of that church and his classmates at Rutgers, knowing that he was in New Mexico, had volunteered him for the job of Indian agent. Clum's investigation revealed that the last three agents had not been very successful. Johnny Logan had been stabbed to death by a renegade; Lieutenant Almy of the US Army had been murdered in a like manner; and the last agent had been shot at so often he resigned his job and went back East.

At the very young age of 22, he accepted the responsibility of several hundred savage Apaches with an annual salary of \$1600. The President issued his commission on February 27, 1874. He made two astounding discoveries. First, the Indian had kept his word more often than the white man. Second, the US Government was protecting the Indian through the civilian Department of the Interior, while it was trying to exterminate them through the military Department of War.

His first decision was to make the San Carlos Reservation a self-governing entity. He disarmed all the Apaches on the reservation with the exception of his hand-chosen police force. He ordered the military off the reservation. He established a supreme court system with the tribal chiefs as justices and himself as chief justice.

Clum was made a full brother of the Apache nation and, since he was bald at a very young age, he was given the Apache name Nantan-betunnykahyeh meaning “ Boss with the high forehead.”



L. to R. Chatto, son of Geronimo; John Clum; Eskiminzin, Chief of the Aravaipa Apaches

There was a problem with Disalin, Chief of the Tontos. Clum had to upbraid Disalin for continually mistreating and abusing one of his wives. One day Disalin came into the agency plainly with the intention of shooting Clum. Thwarted by the timely arrival of the janitor and Dr. S. B. Chapin, the agency physician, Disalin fled toward the guardhouse to shoot the Chief of police. Two shots rang out and Disalin fell dead. He had been shot twice by Taelcleyee - his brother. Following his action he spoke these words to Clum: "Enju, I have killed my own brother - and my chief. He was trying to kill the white man and I am a policeman. I did my duty." Taelcleyee is known to us as Chief Talkalai from an earlier story.

In 1876, John Clum made plans to journey back east to be married. As the fierce Apache had never been seen there he thought it would be a great idea to take a bodyguard of Apaches with him. When he announced his plans, 4500 Apaches clamored to go along. Clum finally departed for the East with 22 Apaches; Merejildo Grijalva, the interpreter (another friend from a previous story); Dr. S. B. Chapin; and two teamsters on July 29, 1876. The group participated in a show called "Wild Apache" at intervals along the route to pay expenses. While in Washington the Apaches toured the national capitol and met several times with the Commissioner of Indian Affairs. A tragedy occurred during the Apache's stay in the white man's capitol - Tahzay, son of Cochise, developed pneumonia

and, though given all available medical attention, died within a few days. Tahzay was buried in the Congressional Cemetery.

By 1877, over 4,500 Apaches were settled on the reservation. This was all of the Apaches in Arizona with the exception of the renegades led by Geronimo who were causing depredations all over southern Arizona, New Mexico and Sonora, Mexico.

Even though eleven troops of the United States Cavalry could not capture Geronimo, J. Q. Smith, Commissioner of Indian Affairs asked Clum to do the impossible. Geronimo was located at Ojo Caliente in New Mexico at this time. Clum agreed to take on the task and with 40 of his tribal policemen began a 400 mile march on foot. At Silver City, New Mexico, he was joined by Clay Beauford, a Medal of Honor recipient, and another 60 Apache policemen.

On the morning of April 20, 1877, Clum mounted 22 of his policemen on horses obtained at Silver City and rode the 20 miles remaining to the Ojo Caliente agency. Beauford and the remaining Apaches would continue on by foot and join them. Clum and his 22 Apaches reached the agency about 4:00 in the afternoon and determined that Geronimo was camped about 3 miles away. He immediately sent word for Beauford to employ the utmost caution and sneak his men, with their weapons loaded and thirty rounds of ammunition, into the large commissary building which had a large sliding door. They arrived about 4:00 in the morning. At daylight, Clum sent word for Geronimo to come in for a talk. They came quickly and were equipped for a fight. Clum faced the most feared Apaches known - Geronimo, Francisco, Ponce, Gordo, and their warriors. The young agent called Geronimo a thief, murderer, liar, and a treaty breaker, then told him that he was there to take all of them back to San Carlos. Geronimo replied that he did not like Clum's words and that he had no intentions of going back to San Carlos and that neither would the agent or his Apache police, as Geronimo would leave their bodies for the vultures.

At these words twenty-two rifles, held by the police, centered on Geronimo. Clum also gave the signal to Beauford and the men eased silently out of the commissary with ready weapons and the renegades were virtually surrounded. The war chief thought long about using the rifle he held; but he knew he was outbluffed and surrendered. Clum personally took the rifle from Geronimo and handed it to Talkalai. Beauford took the rifles from the other chiefs.

The band was marched the 400 miles back to San Carlos. Geronimo was a captive, but he was not to remain so. If the government of the United States had paid heed to 25-year-old Indian Agent John Clum and hanged the murderer Geronimo when Clum captured the wily Apache, and delivered him into their hands, 500 human lives and \$12,000,000 would not have been forfeited, and the Apache Wars would have ended in 1877 - not 1886.

In the three years that Clum had served as Indian agent his salary was still \$1,600 per year. In that time four other reservations had been closed and the Indians sent to Clum at San Carlos, increasing the number of Apaches from 800 to 5,000. Seven other Indian agents had been fired as they were not needed. Clum was very unhappy with the situation and a final blow came when the Indian Bureau moved the Army in to periodically inspect Clum's charges.

Clum resigned in July 1877, and moved to Tucson where he bought a newspaper, "The Arizona Citizen." Then he became enamored with the new town of Tombstone and moved there in early 1880. As he said, "every Tombstone must have an epitaph," so he provided the Tombstone Epitaph. His decision brought about the birth of the newspaper that still exists in the "town too tough to die." He became friends with the Earp faction

and sided with them against the ranching faction and he was elected as the first mayor of Tombstone.

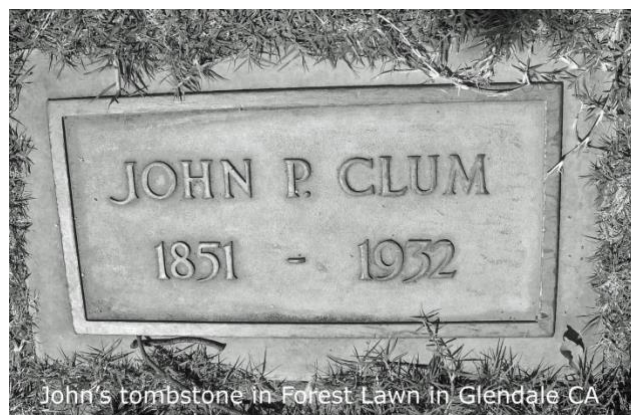
Clum's wife died while in Tombstone and was laid to rest in Boothill. His small son was living with his parents in Washington, D. C. Perhaps he grew tired of his one man war on crime in Tombstone or it could be that he simply ceased to care. At any rate on May 1, 1882, exactly two years from the day he started the Epitaph, Clum sold his newspaper and moved away.

Though he sold his newspaper and left Tombstone at the height of its boom, John Clum could no more stay away from the boomtowns than a moth from the flame. He spent his life moving from one camp to another - California, Nevada, and the frozen north. He joined the gold rush to the Yukon and was commissioned by the government to establish a territorial postal service there. While he was working at this job he met a number of his old Tombstone acquaintances, among them Wyatt Earp and Nellie Cashman.



John Clum at 81

Eventually Clum returned to Arizona and settled in Tucson. He even became friends with Johnny Behan, an old political enemy, who also had settled in Tucson. Eventually he moved to California where he died on May 2, 1932. He is buried in Forest Lawn in Glendale, California along with several of his brothers and sisters. Also buried there is Woodworth Clum, his son and author of the book **Apache Agent, The Story of John Clum** where much of the information for this article was derived. Woodworth was also the recipient of Geronimo's rifle when John Clum died.



John's tombstone in Forest Lawn in Glendale CA