

The Sacred Mountain

"It is a gift to be bestowed not only for virtue but for prayer and courage."

While Guilfoyle's weary troopers rode up to the gruesome scene, dismounted, and set to work hacking shallow graves in the hard ground, the lieutenant was probably asking Sgt. Chihuahua how it was the scouts had fumbled their chance to catch the murderers. If so, it's doubtful Chihuahua was entirely candid with him. According to Sweeney the scouts actually caught up with Kaytennae, exchanged words – Chihuahua presumably urging surrender while Kaytennae returned defiance – and then let him go on his way.¹ Their "long range" shots were a warning to the hostiles that the pursuing cavalry was coming up as Kaytennae followed Nana and his companions west into the dunes of the White Sands.

While the lieutenant and the white scout Bennett conferred, Sgt. Chihuahua may have been sitting by the fire or standing off by himself near the horse lines, watching the sunset over the jagged peaks of the San Andres and thinking about a sergeant's pay. Twenty-four dollars a month was a lot of money on the reservation, and his family ate Army rations even when he was in the field.

But it could be he hadn't really thought it through when he made his mark on the paper and took the blue soldier coat. Leading the buffalo soldiers after the Mescalero was one thing. You might not be easy about it in your heart, but *Nantan Lupan*, the soldier chief the whites called Crook, talked very strong for it. You could sit under the sparse shade of a *palo verde* tree and watch your women try to scratch corn out of the hard, dry ground at San Carlos. You could try to hunt deer to feed your family, or maybe ride south across the line to steal horses from the Mexicans. Or you could hunt men, for \$24 a month.

Chihuahua might have considered that hunting other Chiricahua was something else again, especially when one of them was Nana. That *viejo* was crafty and double-tough, and trailing the old fox into those mountains ahead was going to be *muy peligroso* – very dangerous. As Chihuahua rolled himself into his blanket that night he might have remembered Nana's Power over rattlesnakes, and resolved to watch his step carefully the next few days.

Led by Chihuahua, Guilfoyle and his buffalo soldiers doggedly trailed Nana through the San Andres for the next six days. Nana had a lifetime's acquaintance with those rugged mountains and knew the terrain like the back of his hand. But it's difficult to understand why he would waste valuable time playing cat and mouse with his pursuers in the San Andres when his real goal was across the Rio Grande. Hatch had almost succeeded in trapping Victorio between three converging columns in those same mountains the previous year, and Nana must have realized that the longer he stayed in the area, the more likely the soldiers would draw a similar net around him.

Once he had broken contact at Arena Blanca there was little risk his pursuers could have caught up with him had he ridden directly west to the Rio Grande. Chihuahua and his scouts might have kept pace with the old man, but the troopers on their heavy cavalry horses would certainly have been left far behind.

Guilfoyle's arrival at Dog Canyon may have thwarted a planned rendezvous with the Mescalero renegades the lieutenant and his scouts had been sent to find in the first place. At some point on the raid Nana was undoubtedly joined by Mescalero warriors, but it's not clear when and where they met up. They may have joined Nana at Dog Canyon – or that appointment may have been prevented by the arrival of Guilfoyle and his men. A prudent guerrilla leader might have set an alternate rally point in the San Andres to guard against just that possibility.

¹ Sweeney, Edwin R. From Cochise to Geronimo, p. 173.

Tracking Nana

But I believe Nana's ultimate destination in the San Andres was Salinas ("Salt Flats") Peak, the Chihenne sacred mountain.² It was there that young men went to seek Power. "Those who seek it go alone, that they may be tested for worthiness," Kaywaykla later told Eve Ball. "It is a gift to be bestowed not only for virtue but for prayer and courage."³

On the Sacred Mountain, Nana would have been able to renew his Power and commune with the Mountain Spirits, gathering his strength for the next phase of the raid. Meanwhile, the Apaches were discovering that the hated prospectors were penetrating even into these remote mountains. On July 24, the hostiles attacked a mining camp at the northern end of the San Andres, killing one man and stealing two horses and a mule.⁴

After a weary week of searching the rocky, barren mountains, Guilfoyle finally caught up with the hostiles on July 25 in a canyon at the north end of the San Andres, somewhere near the pass that separates that range from the Ocuras. As always, there is some variation in the details offered in different accounts. Wellman reports that the soldiers surprised Nana's band encamped, captured 14 horses as well as blankets and provisions, and wounded two of the hostiles.⁵

According to Thrapp, the "soldiers captured a couple of horses, twelve mules, all of Nana's camp supplies, and believed they had killed two hostiles."⁶ According to Bennett's account, one of the hostiles was shot by Chihuahua.⁷ If so, that should have relieved any doubts the young lieutenant might have been harboring about the reliability of his Apache scouts.

Whatever the actual casualty count, Nana and his band were not badly hurt by this skirmish. A wounded man (if there were any) would either keep up or drop off into the mountains, where he would either heal himself or die alone. "March or die," is the unofficial motto of the French Foreign Legion, but Nana and his men would have recognized and respected the hard truth beneath it. There was no room in their world for weak sentiment. As to "camp equipment," the raiders carried little more than a few blankets and perhaps a cooking pot, all of which they could do without. Whether horses or mules, the animals captured by the soldiers were likely broken down by hard travel in the mountains, and would have proved a hindrance rather than an asset to the Apaches in their flight.

Guilfoyle must have felt profoundly discouraged as he watched Nana's band melt back up into the mountains. Two prospectors who encountered the lieutenant and his men soon after the fight found him "hatless, coatless, weary and worn," while scout Bennett "had been thrown by his horse and could hardly sit up."⁸

Chihuahua and his Apache scouts were still combat effective, but tough as they were most of Guilfoyle's black troopers were probably close to the end of their endurance. It's worth remembering that cavalymen walked as much as they rode, since a prudent commander had his men dismount and lead their horses half the time on an extended march. Even with that routine, the grain-fed cavalry horses were certainly broken down by a week of hard work on the scant graze available. The rations drawn at Fort Stanton must have been almost exhausted, and water, as always, was a constant worry.⁹

Despite all this, Guilfoyle doggedly continued the chase, following the hostiles' trail across the Jornada del Muerto, crossing the new railroad tracks near Round Mountain and through the pass between the Fra Cristobal and Caballo Mountains to the banks of the Rio Grande. The war party crossed the river about six miles south of the little village of San José (now drowned beneath the murky waters of Elephant Butte Reservoir). On July 28, near the mouth of Cuchillo Negro

² At 8,965' Salinas Peak is the highest point in the San Andres Mountains and is said to offer superb 360° views over much of central New Mexico. Unfortunately the mountain is now on White Sands Missile Range and public access is strictly forbidden.

³ Ball, *Victorio*, p. 11.

⁴ Kühn, *Chronicles of War*, p. 243.

⁵ Wellman, Paul I. *Death in the Desert*, p. 198.

⁶ Thrapp, Dan L. *The Conquest of Apacheia*, p. 213.

⁷ Thrapp, Thrapp, Dan L., ed. *Dateline Fort Bowie: Charles Fletcher Lummis Reports on an Apache War*, p. 158.

⁸ "Murderous Mescaleros," *Albuquerque Daily Journal*, July 25, 1881.

⁹ *The springs in the San Andres were dangerous; a whole company had been laid low by gypsum poisoning during the chase after Victorio the previous year.*

Tracking Nana

arroyo (now near the dam, at the north end of the town of Truth or Consequences) the hostiles killed two men at the ranch of José and Merced Montoya and another two men at another nearby ranch.¹⁰ According to Lekson, they killed two miners and “at least four Mexican shepherders” as they climbed into the foothills of the San Mateos.¹¹

According to Charles Francis Lummis, a newspaperman who interviewed Scout Bennett five years later, the Apaches also carried with them “three Mexican boys captive.”¹² In previous outbreaks, the Chihenne had generally spared the isolated Hispanic ranchers and shepherds, who often served as a valuable source of information and sometimes arms and ammunition. But presumably vengeance for Tres Castillos could be visited as appropriately on defenseless New Mexico Hispanics as on Anglos.

The *Journal* reported 11 Mexicans killed at *Paraje* (a “stopping place or campground” now like San Jose lost forever under the waters of the lake). “One Indian was taken prisoner and burned alive at the stake,” according to the *Journal*, and the hostiles, led by “young Nana,” were reportedly “making for their old reserve near Ojo Caliente.”¹³

The contemporary newspaper accounts are generally no more reliable than today’s evening news, however. Other accounts mention no Indian captured and most agree on a figure of eight killed – two ranchers near the river and two prospectors and four shepherds killed as the raiders moved northwest into the mountains.

From the east there are several canyons leading into the San Mateos that would present no obstacle to an Apache. But I believe it likely that Nana and his band turned north from the Cuchillo Negro arroyo and followed the Rio Alamosa (along what is today NM142) up to the little village then known as *Cañada Alamosa* and today called Monticello. A few miles beyond is the narrow canyon that leads to the sacred warm spring, and Nana was aiming for those healing waters.

But on July 28, after he had received report of the war party crossing the railroad tracks headed for the Rio Grande, Hatch had ordered Co. D across the San Mateos to occupy the abandoned Ojo Caliente agency. Although these troops missed encountering the war party, it could be their presence blocked the Indians from reaching the spring. Warned off, Nana would likely have turned north up Rock Springs Canyon on today’s FR139 toward Luna Park.

At this point Co. D was presumably camped at Ojo Caliente and Guilfoyle had been forced to temporarily abandon the chase and ride north to Fort Craig to re-provision. But by the time the raiders disappeared into the San Mateos, the people in the southern half of New Mexico Territory were thoroughly alarmed – as we would be today if a gang of violent criminals were running loose on a murderous rampage across the countryside. And while some frightened and indignant citizens besieged Santa Fe and Washington with demands for protection, others were taking the field to confront the threat directly.

Army officers were generally strongly opposed to citizen posses, militias and other ad hoc civilian initiatives in the Indian wars. True, a band of civilian volunteers from Hillsboro had saved the buffalo soldiers from disaster in a fight with Victorio in the fall of 1879, but in general the Army had good reason to regard these amateur Indian fighters as more hindrance than help. That would certainly prove to be the case in the summer of 1881.

Despite the disapproval of the regulars, the Western frontier was peopled by tough, independent men with a strong vigilante tradition. At the end of July Chloride and Fairview (now Winston), the twin mining camps in the Black Range most directly threatened by Nana’s raiders, mounted a posse of three dozen miners, local ranchers and farmers, “all under the leadership of a prominent citizen named James Mitchell” to pursue the hostiles.¹⁴

According to the *Albuquerque Journal* the posse consisted of nine men from Chloride and Fairview, led by “Constable Frank Mitchell,” with another 30 men recruited from Cuchillo Negro,

¹⁰ Kühn, *Chronicles of War*, p. 244.

¹¹ Lekson, *Nana’s Raid*, p. 16.

¹² Thrapp, *Dateline Fort Bowie*, p.157.

¹³ *Albuquerque Journal*, Aug. 3, 1881.

¹⁴ Lekson, *Nana’s Raid*, p. 19.

Tracking Nana

San José and Cañada Alamosa.¹⁵ While these communities traditionally maintained mutually beneficial if not always friendly relations with the Apaches, presumably the murders of Hispanic ranchers and shepherds Nana's men had committed on crossing the Rio Grande motivated them to join in the hunt for the marauders.

Based on the outcome of the expedition it seems unlikely Mitchell or any of his volunteers had previous experience fighting Apaches. Wellman says the posse was following Nana's trail,¹⁶ but according to Thrapp, the posse had found "no trace of the illusive (*sic*) warriors" by the time they stopped for dinner at a spring in Red Canyon the afternoon of Aug. 1.¹⁷

Given their feckless conduct, it's unlikely the men had any apprehension the Indians were anywhere in the neighborhood. I believe Nana was descending the canyon from the other side of the mountains, not coming up from the plain.¹⁸ What horses or mules the raiders still possessed would have been badly used up by the time they descended into the upper reaches of Red Canyon, and the band of horsemen riding so carelessly up the canyon must have seemed a gift from the Twin War Gods, Born for Water and Killer of Enemies.

Nana placed most of his force on the cliffs, with a few of his boldest warriors concealed in the brush along the sides of the canyon. The riders unsaddled and set their horses to graze under the protection of a guard while the rest of the men had dinner and then retired for a siesta under the inviting shade of the cottonwoods. Thus they were literally caught napping when shots rang out from the heights above and a handful of Indians sprang out of the underbrush, waving blankets and shouting to stampede the horse herd down the canyon,

It was over in minutes. By the time the dust and gunsmoke cleared, the posse had lost one man killed and seven wounded (one mortally), and all their horses were between the knees of Nana and his warriors. The hapless Indian fighters couldn't even claim their return fire had hit any of the raiders. Defeated, dismounted and discouraged, there was nothing to do but trudge back home on foot, carrying their wounded with them.

At the mouth of Red Canyon, the posse members may have encountered Lt. Guilfoyle, whose men were burying the remains of yet another victim – a lone *pastor* Nana's men had murdered on their way out of the canyon. The lieutenant's reaction on hearing the posse's sad tale can be imagined. Their amateur carelessness had gifted Nana with three dozen fresh mounts, while Guilfoyle and his troopers were almost certainly still riding the same tired horses they had left Fort Stanton on two weeks and hundreds of hard miles ago.

The good news was that Guilfoyle now knew where the raiders were, they had left a broad trail for him to follow, and he was only a few hours behind them.

Guilfoyle could have spent no more than a day at Fort Craig before returning to the pursuit. From Craig he probably rode south and then west and north around the San Mateos, his movements part of Col. Hatch's grand plan for corralling the marauders before they did more damage. Patrols from Forts Craig and Selden were deployed to prevent Nana from re-crossing the Rio Grande and heading back east toward the Mescalero Reservation, while detachments from Forts Cummings and Bayard were to catch the raiders if they tried to turn south to Mexico.

Guilfoyle's swing around the southern and western face of the San Mateos was intended to intercept Nana on the assumption the raiding party would make for the Black Range and from there either head south to Mexico or west to the San Carlos Reservation in Arizona. As commander of the New Mexico Military District, Hatch would probably have been only too happy to see the raiders cross into Arizona Territory, where they would no longer be his problem.

But from Red Canyon Nana headed neither west nor south but north, because the old man had another objective in mind. He rode along the foot of the San Mateos for a few miles, roughly

¹⁵ *Albuquerque Journal*, Aug. 3, 1881.

¹⁶ Wellman, Paul I. *Death In The Desert*; p. 199.

¹⁷ Thrapp, Dan L. *The Conquest of Apacheria*; p. 213.

¹⁸ *There is are two Red Canyons as well as a Red Rock Canyon in the San Mateos; both Lekson and Sweeney place this encounter in East Red Canyon, while Frank Bennett told Lummis it was Red Rock Canyon. I believe the ambush actually occurred in West Red Canyon.*

Tracking Nana

following what is today NM52, and then turned up Bear Trap Canyon, a narrow defile that cuts NNE into the mountains toward Mount Withington.

Along the way, Nana stopped first at Frank Pierce's ranch and captured him, then went on to Joseph Ware's spread farther up the canyon, where the raiders captured that rancher, his brother, and his family – all without a shot fired. The captives were forced to stand outside in the rain (an ordeal in itself, as anyone who has ever been caught in a summer thunderstorm in these mountains can testify) while the Apaches looted the Ware ranch house, but it appears that neither Pierce nor the Wares were otherwise physically harmed.¹⁹

The raiding party lingered at Ware's for five hours, probably because of the rain. What is now Cibola FR 549 is little improved today from what it was 130+ years ago, and I've known flash floods to completely wipe out sections under a heavy rain. Even if he knew or suspected pursuit was close behind, Nana may have had little choice but to at least wait for the rain to let up before pushing on up the canyon.

His next stop, about a mile above Ware's ranch, was at a sawmill run by Robert H. Stapleton. I believe this may have been near the site now known as Hughes Mill, a tiny Forest Service CG at a trailhead near the upper reaches of Bear Trap Canyon. Stapleton was a 53-year-old ex-soldier who had formed a friendship with Nana when he was working as a civilian employee at the short-lived Tularosa Agency and later at Ojo Caliente. Whatever kindnesses he had done Nana and his people in the past certainly saved Bob Stapleton's life that day, and probably the lives of his neighbors as well.

Nana spoke no English, but Stapleton had been employed as an interpreter at Tularosa²⁰ and so must have had some fluency in Apache as well as Spanish. That afternoon was the only occasion on which Nana tried to explain himself to a white man, and so it's worth pausing to consider his remarks.

"We have killed everybody we came across so far, and after we leave here we will kill everybody we meet again," Nana told him. He rejected Stapleton's suggestion that he give up. "There's no place for me here anymore. Everywhere I go, they shoot at me. I'm ready to die anytime."²¹

Perhaps it was that same grim fatalism that led him to tell Stapleton what he planned to do next, even though he must have realized that even though this white man might be a friend, he was bound to tell the soldiers whatever he learned that could help them catch the raiders. Gesturing at two young Chihenne warriors behind him, Nana told Stapleton, "This is all that I have left of my once powerful band." Now, he said, he was on his way north to Navajo country.

"I want to try and get some Navajos with me," he said before he rode away. "Soldiers, miners, ranchers, everyone is against me, and I must get help or they will get me soon." With that, Nana "borrowed" two mules from Stapleton – presumably to carry the loot from the Pierce and Ware ranches -- promising to return them when the two men next met, and rode on up the canyon.

"Come, there are bloodhounds on our trail," he called to his men as he led out. Stapleton never saw the old man – or his mules – again.

Estimates of the number of warriors in Nana's raiding party at any given time vary from as few as a dozen to 70 or more. Higher figures can be discounted as either panicky rumor repeated in the newspapers or by military reports seeking to excuse a defeat. And Apaches generally refused to stand still long enough to be accurately counted. In a firefight in a desert canyon, with heads popping up and down from behind rocks, sudden puffs of gunsmoke, the echoing bang of rifles, the whine of ricocheting bullets and a rain of razor-sharp arrows arcing in from unexpected directions, it was easy for even an experienced soldier to over-rate the opposition.

Nana had 13 followers with him when he exited Red Canyon, according to Sweeney, and in Bear Trap Canyon we have a rare snapshot of the band as it existed that day. Stapleton was an eyewitness and a veteran, not just of some Civil War militia regiment but an experienced regular, honorably discharged from the 2nd Dragoons in 1854. He counted a dozen Indians and said Nana told him he had 10 Mescalero and 2 Navajo riding with him. Stapleton also reported seeing a young Hispanic boy with the raiders; the boy had been captured in the San Mateos, where he

¹⁹ Sweeney, pp. 174-76.

²⁰ Thrapp, Victorio, p. 149.

²¹ Sweeney, p. 175.

Tracking Nana

was herding sheep with two men who were both killed by the Apaches. Counting Nana, the two young Chihenne warriors and the young boy would make a total of 16 riders.

Ware, another eyewitness who had no motive to misrepresent numbers and was apparently resident in the country long enough to distinguish one Indian from another, reported 20 riders – including seven Chihenne, seven Mescalero, and two Navajo. With Nana and the two Chihenne warriors he pointed out to Stapleton and the Mexican boy that would make a total of 20. The exact number in the raiding party at that point is not as significant as the confirmation that Nana had succeeded in recruiting at least a handful of warriors from the Mescalero Reservation.

But where did the two Navajo braves come from?

And where, in the meantime, was Lt. Guilfoyle, his Apache scouts and his detachment of buffalo soldiers?

Stapleton reported that Nana stopped at his mill between two and three o'clock in the afternoon, and from his account of his conversation with Nana it's clear the ambush in Red Canyon had occurred late the previous afternoon. If Guilfoyle arrived at Red Canyon in time to encounter the footsore posse, he might have been no more than a few hours behind Nana at that point. While Nana's progress up Bear Trap Canyon the next day was delayed by the heavy rain, it may be that instead of following the war party up Bear Trap Canyon, Guilfoyle took counsel with Bennett and Chihuahua and devised an alternate plan.

From the upper reaches of Bear Trap Canyon, with a herd of more than three dozen horses and mules, Nana had three choices. He could turn northwest on what is today FR 476 into Point of Rocks Canyon, descending from the mountains onto the Plains of San Augustin, Or he could go south and then east, climbing the shoulder of Mount Withington on what is today FR138, a narrow and precipitous trail that leads to FR330 and ultimately (with luck, a good vehicle and determination) to NM 107. That route would use up his horses and bring him closer to Fort Craig. Or he could continue straight north over Monica Saddle and down Monica Canyon.

It must have been clear to Guilfoyle that a "stern chase" into the mountains was a fool's errand. Nana had relatively fresh horses with remounts for every man, while Guilfoyle's own mounts were nearly used up. Plus, Nana had just shown that he was perfectly ready to turn and snap at the hounds when the opportunity offered. Trailing the Apaches into the steep defiles of Bear Trap Canyon would require a high degree of caution, further slowing the pursuit.

But there was an alternative. Nana had to come out of the mountains somewhere. Like sharks, a raiding party had to keep moving or die. If he lingered too long in the San Mateos, the Army would inevitably tighten a noose around him. So Nana had to exit the mountains someplace, and soon. The trick was to guess where that would be, and to be waiting there when he showed up.

Picture the San Mateos as the face of a huge clock. At the mouth of Bear Trap Canyon, Guilfoyle was at 8 o'clock, Point of Rocks 10 o'clock, Monica Canyon 12 o'clock. Guilfoyle could guess that the rain would slow the hostiles as they rode up Bear Trap Canyon. By riding hard around the shoulder of the mountains, there was a chance he could be waiting at Monica Spring when Nana and his men rode down out of the canyon.

It was a bold plan, and it almost worked.

After a long ride around the mountains, Guilfoyle and his men arrived at Monica Canyon the next day, but instead of surprising Nana in an ambush, they found the raiders already watering their horses at the spring. Soldiers, scouts and hostiles exchanged fire without any decisive result. As in the San Andres, Guilfoyle claimed to have wounded two of the raiders and captured 11 horses, but Nana and his men disengaged either by retreating back up the canyon or swinging around Guilfoyle's command and riding out onto the Plains of San Augustin.

For the cavalry, the skirmish at Monica Spring was a small tactical victory at best; Guilfoyle had momentarily thwarted Nana's move north to Navajo country, but the hostiles were not badly hurt in the encounter, and they could quickly replace the lost stock at the next ranch they came to. But the hard ride had used up the troopers' horses. Guilfoyle could do no more than detach Bennett and his scouts to stay on Nana's trail, while the lieutenant and his weary buffalo soldiers camped at the spring to recuperate.

Tracking Nana

Bennett and his scouts fought a 16-mile running battle with the hostiles as they escaped from Monica Spring toward the Datil Mountains,²² roughly along the route of today's US60. Then as now the Plains were open grassland with scarcely a tree or bush in sight. The terrain is not as flat as it appears from a distance, but a gently rolling landscape. By dropping one or two rear guards with good rifles on a rise, Nana could keep pursuers at a distance.

Bennett would have sent one of his scouts back to pick up the cavalry and guide them back on the trail, and Guilfoyle almost certainly dispatched a courier to the nearest telegraph line with a report updating Col. Hatch on the unexpected direction the hunt was taking. On August 6, three days after the skirmish at Monica Springs, two companies of the 9th Cavalry rode out of Fort Wingate headed south and east in an attempt to head Nana off.

One of these patrols, a 15-man force of Co. K led by Lt. Henry Wright, encountered Guilfoyle "north of Monica Springs" on August 9, six days after the fight there.²³

Nana probably entered the Datils through Main Canyon, climbed up past Blue Spring and descended the north side of the mountains down Red Canyon. Guided by the two Navajo renegades Stapleton had seen with him at the mill, Nana was on his way to meet friends among the people today known as the Alamo Band Navajo, somewhere in the rugged country west of Ladrone Peak.

Separated from the Big Rez by the Zuni, Acoma and Laguna pueblos, the history of the Alamo (sometimes referred to as the Puertecito) people is murky. Some say they are descendants of the few survivors crafty and determined enough to evade "Rope Thrower" Carson's 1864 roundup and the subsequent "Long Walk" to Bosque Redondo. But some of the words in their language and some of their names are clearly Apache in origin. According to a woman who ranched in the Datils in the 1880s, there was some intermarriage between the Alamo Navajo and the Jicarrila Apache to the north,²⁴ but it's likely some refugees escaped the closing of the Ojo Caliente Reservation and the forced exile to San Carlos by melding into the little Navajo bands scattered through the rough country west of Sierra Ladrone. Whatever their origins, in 1881 – more than a decade after the chastened Navajo had been allowed to return to their homeland – there were small groups of these Indians scattered in the mountains and canyons south of the new reservation, and they included men like Nana who were yet unreconciled to defeat.

It was a hard existence on marginal ground. By their own tradition, Apaches had once been agriculturists, until they were driven into the mountains by Spanish slave raids – the Chihenne were growing crops at Ojo Caliente before they were forcibly removed to San Carlos in 1877,²⁵ and the Navajo were sheep-herding pastoralists, rich in orchards and fields before the Long Walk. But now the best farming and grazing lands were being taken up by Hispanic and Anglo homesteaders, the mountains were full of prospectors, miners and loggers, and the wild game was hunted almost to extinction. The ecological niche remaining for the few Navajo and Apache holdouts still off the reservations was being squeezed to the vanishing point. They were men who "carry their lives on their fingernails," in the words of another Apache chief in similar circumstances,

In 1877, Victorio brought his followers close to Fort Wingate (near present-day Grants) and indicated their willingness to settle near there. It's indicative of their growing desperation that he and his people were prepared to accept a reservation that was even farther north than Tularosa, which they had disdained a year earlier. The Navajo were agreeable, and the Army was prepared to accept any resolution that would put an end to the long and frustrating pursuits through the mountains.

But the Indian Bureau in far-away Washington was not just indifferent to the Indians' plight but adamant in opposition to their pleas. The Warm Springs Apache were assigned to the San Carlos Reservation; if the Army would round them up and deliver them there, the Bureau would undertake to feed and care for them, in its fashion. But Indians not on their assigned reservation

²² Thrapp, Dan, ed. Dateline Fort Bowie, p.158.

²³ Lekson, Nana's Raid, p. 21.

²⁴ Cleaveland, Agnes Morley. No Life for a Lady, p. 301.

²⁵ Faulk, Odie B. Crimson Desert. New York, 1974, p. 177.

Tracking Nana

were the Army's problem, not the Bureau's. And allowing any group of aborigines to live where they wanted to live – rather than where the Bureau had determined in its wisdom was best for them – was likely to set a “bad precedent” among the Indian Bureau's other hapless charges.

If that seems bone-headed even by Washington standards, remember that the Indians were not just penniless indigents trespassing on the public lands and purse, they weren't even voters. The Bureau's real constituency was not its official wards but the unscrupulous Western businessmen whose “rings” profited from plundering the pittance Congress appropriated for the upkeep of the dispossessed tribes. And so the Victorio War continued to its tragic conclusion with the near-destruction of the Chihenne people.

Nana was on the Mescalero Reservation when Victorio was negotiating with the soldiers at Fort Wingate, but there was communication between the Mescalero, Chihenne and Navajo. At that time the fugitives were camped in the Mangas Mountains about 90 miles south of Fort Wingate, where they were certainly in contact with the scattered bands of Navajo in the area. Now, with Victorio dead and the surviving Chihenne either penned on the reservation in Arizona or in exile in Mexico, Nana turned to the Navajo for reinforcements.

Whether from the desire for loot, for revenge, or simply from the kinship born of shared grievances, “some ten Navajos, led by Margacito and Cibusto, joined him.”²⁶

The rendezvous was probably somewhere on Alamocita Creek near the mouth of Red Canyon. With these new recruits Nana may have counted 40 or 50 warriors, but the expanded raiding party quickly split into two or more separate groups and spread out through the region. Kühn lists six separate attacks over the next three days as the raiders struck ranches, sheep camps and travelers from the Datils to beyond Rito Quemado to the west.²⁷ Altogether thirteen men and a woman were killed and five young boys carried off as captives.

Two graves are still faintly visible today by the side of the road not far west of Red Canyon along Alamocita Creek. The victims were freighting supplies to their sheep ranch near Quemado, according to descendants of local settlers. A third man escaped on foot, “and did not stop running until he got into Colorado.”²⁸

The two men were reported killed on August 7, although this may have been the date the bodies were discovered and the murders actually occurred a day or two earlier.²⁹ It may be significant that the Apaches burned the ranchers' wagon in this instance. It's hard to believe that Nana, knowing he was closely pursued, would have countenanced an act of destruction that would send up a column of smoke visible for miles – unless he intended it *should* be seen. The Indians were laying an obvious trail to draw the cavalry away to the west.

These decoys probably included both Navajo and Apaches; one incident involved 8 attackers, while 12 were counted in another attack. Somewhere west of the Sawtooth Mountains they scattered, some escaping north to the Navajo Reservation while the others faded into the Mangas Mountains to the south. Guilfoyle “was thrown off the trail of the hostiles, who were killing people, and followed some of the bands of renegade Navajoes (sic) and others, who had taken advantage of the raiding party under Nana to run off stock,” Hatch reported.³⁰

When Guilfoyle realized that the tracks he was following were thinning out, there was nothing for it but to retrace his path and try to take up the trail of the main war party again somewhere back on Alamocita Creek. That bitter pill could not have cheered the mood around the campfire, or improved the relationship between Guilfoyle, Bennett and Chihuahua. Guilfoyle and his scouts were back on Nana's track when they encountered Lt. Wright August 9. Tragically, they were by then more than two days behind the old man.

²⁶ Sweeney, *From Cochise to Geronimo*, p. 176.

²⁷ Kühn, *Chronicles of War*, p. 245.

²⁸ Roland, A.E. “Bob,” ed. “*The Ballad of Plácida Romero*,” *New Mexico Historical Review*, Summer 2011, p. 318.

²⁹ Thrapp, *Dateline Fort Bowie*, p. 158.