

Courtesy Los Angeles Public Library

THE APACHE KID

THE ESCAPE OF THE APACHE KID

November 2, 1889

(By MERTICE BUCK KNOX, Kelvin, Arizona.)

The old Stage Station at Riverside, on the south side of the Gila, across from and a little above Ray Junction, was a center for several converging stage lines. There was a corral where horses were kept to rest and to replace those jaded by long hauls of heavy stages. There was a good blacksmith shop for shoeing the stage horses and repairing vehicles. There was an inn of sorts and a post office.

One building still remains in a fairly good state of preservation, as shown in the illustration. This is visible to travelers on the highway to Winkelman, or on railroad trains. But one who wishes to see it closely must ford the river, as the old road on the south bank is almost obliterated. This was once a main traveled road from Benson, on the Southern Pacific, through Mammoth and Dudleyville to Riverside, an all-night stop. A connecting route started from Riverside and went to Florence, 32 miles distant, then across to Casa Grande on the Southern Pacific. These two stages connected at Riverside with the daily one from Globe, some 42 miles up in the mountains, the river being forded near Riverside. In the foothills a few miles across the river, was a good spring. At this place called Cane Spring a woman bandit named Pearl Hart was, it is said, the leading spirit in a scheme to rob one of the stages in which a Globe gambler named Neal was expected to travel, carrying a roll of three or four hundred dollars. This is a familiar story and needs no re-telling here.

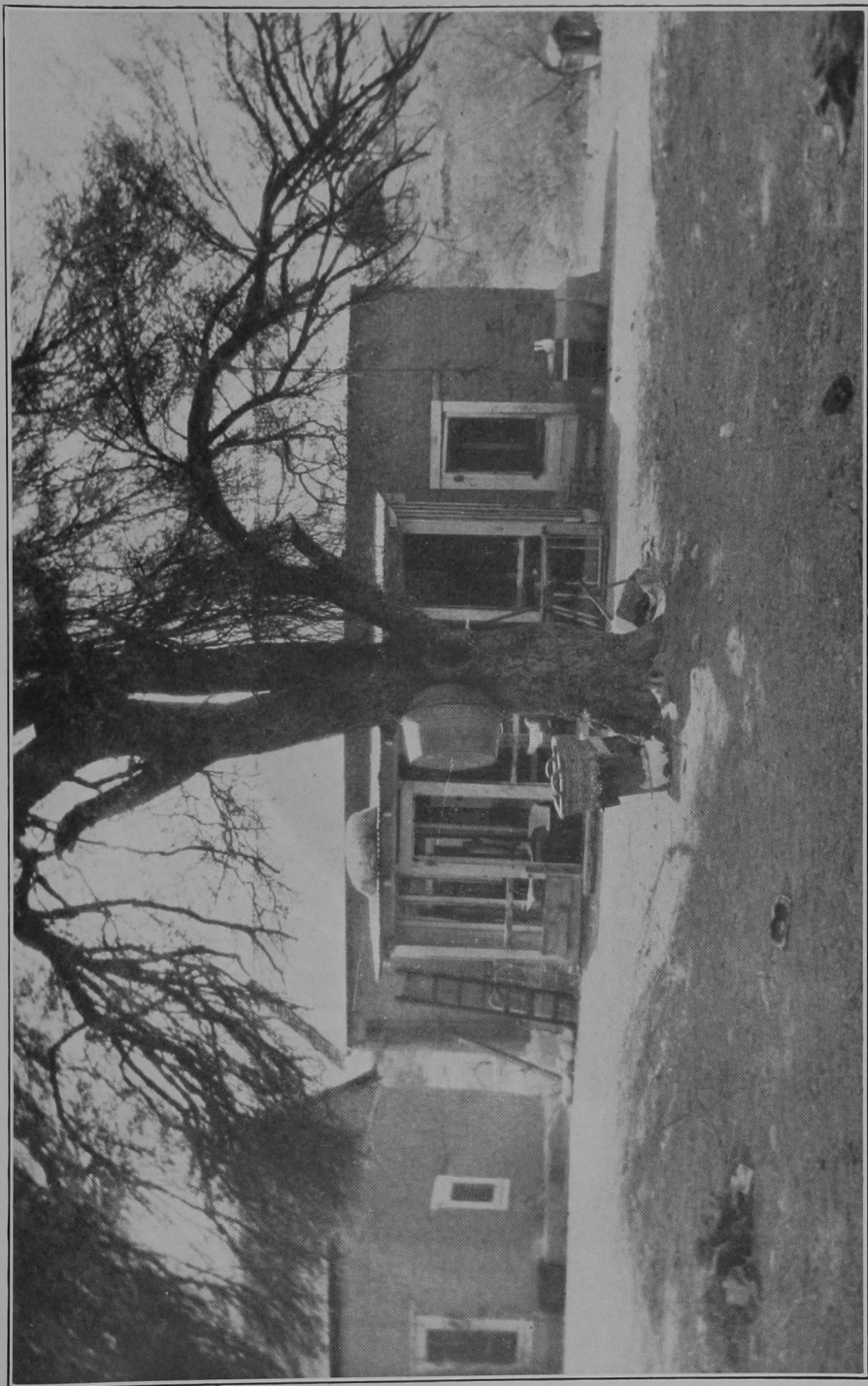
There is so much that is interesting in regard to the old stage-coach days and the travel over those elementary roads that many pages might be devoted to a recounting of the experiences of drivers and travelers. Mail stages were supposed to ford no stream in which the water was more than eighteen inches deep. At Riverside there was a strong cable crossing the Gila, and if the water was high a crate carrying mail was transported across on this cable. The crate was large, and strong enough to carry any passenger intrepid enough to travel in it. If on the Riverside bank, he could stay at the Stage Station until the water went down, but if on the other bank he was out of luck, as he had to cross by crate or return over the wet, muddy, slippery

roads to Globe. Mat Davis of Ray, for years a driver of the stage to Dudleyville and Mammoth (with connections for Benson, a route of 105 miles), often stopped to chat with an old Apache by name of El Capitan Chiquito, sometimes mentioned as a friend of the Apache Kid. Capitan told Mr. Davis that he had served five years in the territorial prison for the murder of one Augustine Lopez, who was really killed by the Apache Kid in a fight subsequent to the latter's escape, November 2, 1889.

Riverside was the overnight stop of the daily stage of November 1, 1889, driven by Eugene Middleton. This stage carried the Apache Kid, other Apache prisoners, a Mexican prisoner, and a deputy sheriff from Globe, W. A. Holmes, known as "Hunky Dory." Sheriff Reynolds accompanied the stage on horseback. When Riverside was reached his horse was so tired after 42 miles of bad roads that he left him at Riverside the next morning and traveled in the stage. It is said that the sheriff had been criticized for using too many deputies; spending too much county money in transporting prisoners, so he took only Holmes on this trip. Then, too, a deputy he had been depending on was ill and could not work that day. He had no very adequate irons with which to confine the prisoners, and there is conflicting evidence as to how they were confined. Not all were shackled at any rate.

There are a number of people still living in the locality who lived near here at that time, and the state historian has asked me to get any bits of information they might have in regard to the stop at Riverside, and the start the next day which ended so tragically. The man in charge of the horse corral at the station was a young fellow named Jack Branaman who had known the Apache Kid for years, for he was in Globe when the Indian boy first started to work as orderly for Al Sieber. The Kid had also worked on the Branaman ranch a few miles up the river, and for another rancher named Swingle. Mr. Branaman says the prisoners may have had some chance to talk with each other in Apache, but he does not think the escape was planned at Riverside, at least not in detail.

William Sparks in his excellent story of the Apache Kid, recently published, gives the account of the circumstances which led up to the trial of the Kid and other young Apaches for mutiny. In the trouble, which seems to have been caused primarily by too much "tulipie," Al Sieber was shot in the leg and lamed. This shooting was blamed on the Kid, whom he had befriended and trusted, and although some others said another Indian named Curley had fired the shot, Sieber always laid it to the



OLD STAGE STATION ON THE GILA RIVERSIDE

Photo by Mertice Bruce Knox

Kid, and as we say now, "had it in for him." These young Indians were given a long sentence in a federal penitentiary for the crime of mutiny, but long-distance influence at Washington led President Cleveland to pardon them. It was an easy matter to bring another civil charge against them in Gila County, and they were convicted and sentenced the last of October, 1889, to seven years in the Yuma penitentiary.

It is probable that both Sheriff Reynolds and the stage driver, Eugene Middleton, were anxious to get rid of their unruly charges, and they felt that once aboard the train at Casa Grande the two officers would land them safely inside the prison walls. So they planned to get a very early start from Riverside, and were off long before dawn of a cold, raw morning. Both sheriffs were in the stage, wearing heavy overcoats under which were buckled holster belts containing their six-shooters.

The accounts of the number and kind of irons used on the prisoners as mentioned vary considerably; also, in the earlier records there is a difference of opinion as to the number of Indian convicts, whether there were seven or eight. However, there is no question but that to the Apache Kid, at least, the region was familiar, and once free he could soon get to friends. Knowing every ranch where he could steal food, and every spring, he could take care of himself while getting to his cronies.

The road over which the clumsy, heavily loaded Concord coach traveled in the faint light was a very bad one, up and down steep grades and through sandy washes. The Ripsey Wash, about a quarter of a mile in width, opens into the Gila about four miles from Riverside. The old road crossed this, then climbed the hill through a narrow, crooked ravine some half-mile long, striking at the top what is now the state highway to Florence. The horses were winded and sweating after struggling through the deep sand of the Ripsey Wash, and when the hill was reached Middleton suggested that the officers and some of the prisoners walk up the hill to relieve the horses and get warmed up.

Most accounts agree that the Apache Kid and two Indians, Hale and Say-Es, were left in the coach. Sheriff Reynolds walked some distance behind the stage, then came the Mexican, Jesus Avott, who did not belong with the Apache group, but was sentenced to a two-year term for horse stealing. Holmes followed at the end, behind the Indians. Reports vary as to exactly what occurred, but in a few minutes, and long before broad daylight, the two officers lay dead; the driver had been left for

dead, and the Apaches were gone. Old residents say the Indians stole up on Reynolds and one of them slipped his handcuffed hands over the officer's head, and got a pistol and a key which unlocked some of the irons. The officer was hampered by his overcoat, and stood a poor chance against the Indians when freed of their handcuffs.

I have been to some pains to identify the spot where the officers were killed, near the mesquite shown in the photograph, under which there was formerly a "monument" similar to those piled up to mark miners' locations; but heavy rains have carried down torrents which scattered the stones. Anyone curious to see the place can easily find it by following down the old Territorial Road from the state highway, starting about two miles from sign "Zellwegger Ranch." Notice in the photograph that just above the tree is a sharp curve in the road.

I quote below the account of the crime as reported in the next issue of the Arizona Silver Belt, which appeared about a week after the crime. Mr. Sparks' book corrects some inaccuracies and the driver, Mr. Middleton, made some additions when sufficiently recovered to do so. But the original account seems worth preserving in this quarterly as a historical document.

Arizona Silver Belt.

November 9, 1889.

SHERIFF REYNOLDS AND W. A. HOLMES MURDERED
BY INDIAN CONVICTS. EUGENE MIDDLETON
WOUNDED

DETAILS OF TRAGIC AFFRAY

This community was thrown into a state of great excitement and consternation last Saturday, about noon, by the arrival of S. C. Saylor with a dreadful report that Sheriff Glen. Reynolds, of Gila County, and W. A. Holmes, who left Globe on the previous morning with a Mexican and eight Indian convicts, whom they were conveying to Yuma for incarceration in the territorial prison, had been overpowered and murdered, and Eugene Middleton badly wounded, by the Apache prisoners. The startling news was accepted as authentic, notwithstanding that it seemed incredible that such a calamity should have befallen.

MEN OF KNOWN BRAVERY AND EXPERIENCE.

As were Reynolds and Holmes. A posse composed of Deputy Sheriff Ryan, Arana, Roberts, Fowler, Parades and Blevins started almost immediately for the scene of the tragedy, about four miles west of Riverside. Several versions of the killing, all differing somewhat in material points, were received, and it is doubtful if the exact and complete details of the dreadful affair will be known until the perpetrators of the crime are apprehended and have told their story. The account given by the Mexican, Jesus Avott, in connection with Eugene Middleton's story, is sufficiently clear and full, however, to leave no doubt that Reynolds and Holmes were surprised and murdered by six of their Indian prisoners.

(Next comes a description, unnecessary to give here, of the start on the morning of the second, and the way the prisoners were confined.) Then follows the report of

THE REVOLT

The party began the ascent of the wash in the following order. First the coach driven by Middleton with the Kid and another Indian on the inside, shackled but not together; a short distance behind walked the Mexican, Jesus Avott, and then Reynolds; then the Apaches and Holmes in the rear. The distance between Reynolds and the prisoners immediately behind him, and between Holmes and those in front of him, has not been definitely stated but it is presumed that the officers allowed what they considered to be a safe distance to intervene between themselves and their treacherous prisoners; but as they proceeded the Indians must have stealthily diminished the space separating them, until within a few feet of the officers, when those behind Reynolds grappled with him, and at the same time other prisoners turned suddenly upon Holmes and caught him before he had time to bring his Winchester into play.

THE MEXICAN'S ALARM AND FLIGHT

The above were the positions of the officers and their prisoners when the Mexican, hearing the scuffle, turned, and seeing that the Indians had surprised the officers and being unarmed himself, he ran forward and shouted to Middleton: "For God's sake, let me get in, the Indians will kill me." Avott claims that he was shot at three times. The Kid and his companion with a yell attempted to get out of the coach, which was then about a hundred yards in front of Reynolds in the murderous grasp of three

Indians, and Holmes struggling with the other Indians, must have been fifty feet behind Reynolds as their bodies were found about that distance apart.

MIDDLETON SHOT.

Middleton turned and made the Kid resume his seat, covering him with his pistol, but the other Indian escaped from the coach, ran back to the scene of the affray, secured, it is believed, Reynolds' shot gun, and ran up again on the side of the road near the coach, and as Middleton leaned out and looked back to see what the trouble was, he received a shot in the right cheek. But the bullet passing through his face and neck without striking a bone, came out at the back of the neck, narrowly missing the vertebrae. It was a close call, and as it was, Middleton was stunned and fell to the ground and with

RARE PRESENCE OF MIND

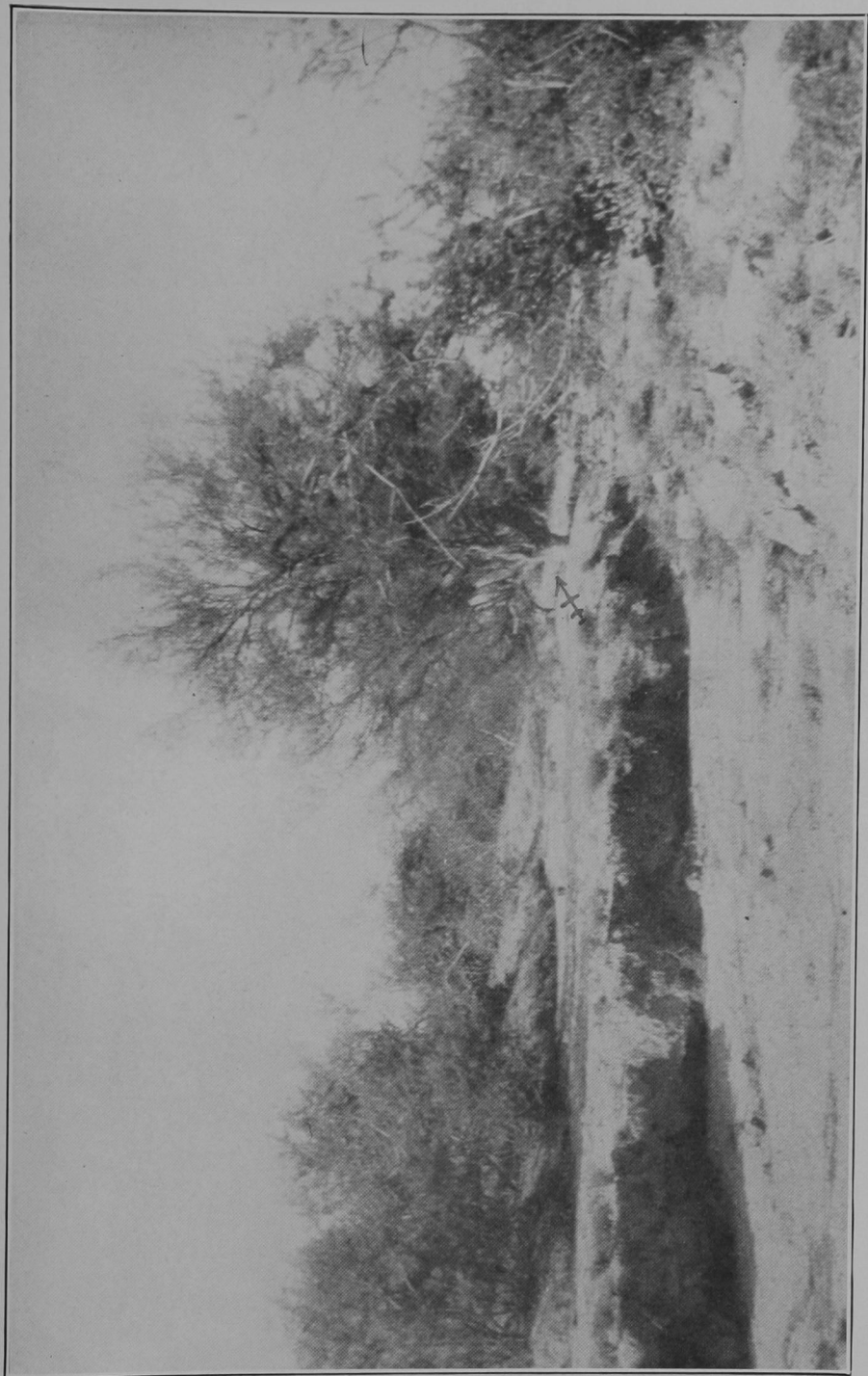
lay motionless and limp while the Indians stripped off his coats and rifled his pockets. They even inspected his wound, and evidently considering it fatal, left him without inflicting further injury. The Mexican, horses and coach in the meantime had passed over the summit and out of sight. The Indian Kid had jumped from the coach and joined his confederates.

(Next comes a discussion of who shot Middleton, not essential to our narrative.)

The description of Reynolds' wounds follows, also those of Holmes; who, later reports stated, died of heart disease in the struggle, and received no wounds. Reynolds was found lying on his face, his overcoat and gauntlet gloves still on, Holmes also wearing an overcoat,

ROBBED AS WELL AS MURDERED

The Indians rifled the pockets of their victims, obtaining from Reynolds his gold watch and chain, valued at over \$200, upwards of \$200 in cash and the key belonging to the shackles, also all the papers on his person. The contents of Holmes' pockets is not known, but everything he had was taken, also his hat which was picked up near the trail of the Indians, twelve miles from the scene of the killing, by the citizens' posse from Globe; papers which they had torn up and thrown away were also found. Eugene Middleton lost two coats, a watch and chain and other articles. A shot-gun, Winchester, and three six-shooters belonging to the officers were also taken.



Under this mesquite was "monument" to Reynolds and Holmes

After the murderers had started away one of them came back and ran down the wash toward Middleton, who feared it was for the purpose of giving him a finishing shot, but the Indian passed on without molesting him, to where Reynolds lay, probably to get the key of the shackles which may have been overlooked in the first search of the dead man's pockets. After the Indian had disappeared, Middleton, faint and sore,

WALKED BACK TO RIVERSIDE

where he arrived about seven o'clock, and reported the frightful disaster. In the meantime the Mexican, Jesus Avott, had taken one of the stage horses from the team, which he mounted and, as he claims, started for Florence with the object of

INFORMING THE AUTHORITIES

of Pinal County of the frightful occurrence.

THE NEWS AT FLORENCE

The horse not accustomed to be ridden, bucked him off three times, and Avott then tied him up and continued on foot, and barefooted, to White's Ranch, where he told the story of the murder, and with the man at the ranch went as rapidly as horses could carry them to Florence. Sheriff Jerry Fryer, accompanied by Pete Gabriel, Kibbey, Martin, Gilbert and Miller, lost no time in preparing for their departure from Florence, and were early at the scene of the killing.

FIRST ON THE GROUND

D. H. Snyder and the watchman at the Ray Mine were the first to reach the scene after the killing. They reported having found pony tracks on one side of the road and moccasin tracks on the other; also a whip-stock with blood stains on it, from which the lash had been torn. They firmly believed the officers had been ambushed, but there seemed to be no reason to support such an opinion. The bodies of Reynolds and Holmes were left where they fell until the afternoon of the day of the killing, when they were removed to Riverside and an inquest held by the coroner of Pinal County.

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PROMPT ACTION OF THE MILITARY

Immediately upon the receipt of the news of the disaster B. G. Fox telegraphed the meagre information to Capt. L. Johnson, commanding at San Carlos, who with commendable

promptitude notified every military post in Central and Southern Arizona as quickly as the electric wire could carry the dire tidings. As a result, within a very brief space of time, detachments of troops, under experienced officers were

IN THE SADDLE

and hurrying in the direction of Riverside, or to points where the fugitive Indians might possibly be intercepted. Lieutenants Wilder and Hardeman, with thirty men from Troop G, 4th Cavalry, and Lieutenant Watson with twenty scouts, left San Carlos at 3 P. M., Saturday, and moved rapidly toward Riverside. A detachment from Fort Thomas was among the first in the field. Troops from Fort Grant, Lowell, McDowell, Apache, and Huachuca were also quickly in the field.

Lieutenants Wilder, Wilson and Hardeman took up the trail near Cunningham's Ranch, on the San Pedro, Sunday, and followed it eight miles beyond Dudleyville, where

THE INDIAN FUGITIVES, HOTLY PRESSED

took to the rocks in the foot-hills of the Saddle Mountains, and, snow and rain interfering, the trail was lost and the progress of the troops temporarily hindered. Lieutenant Watson and scouts are reported to have subsequently trailed three of the Indian escapes to Kid's camp on the reservation. Kid and Pash Tan Tan are reported to have been seen, mounted near the San Carlos River, four miles from the agency, on Sunday afternoon. Lieutenant Overton and troop from Fort McDowell, reached Pinal Ranch on Monday, with the view of guarding the passes in that vicinity. The detachment came to Globe on Wednesday for instructions, and remained until Thursday morning when they departed in the direction of McMillen.

After leaving the San Pedro the trails showed that the Indians had separated and up to the present writing they have not been located.

CITIZENS IN PURSUIT

The combined posses from Globe and Florence were the first to take up the trail, and starting on Sunday morning, where the fell deed was committed, they followed it in the various windings to within three miles of Dudleyville, where they were obliged to abandon the hunt owing to rain which obliterated the trail, and exhausted, they dispersed. About a mile from where the tragedy occurred, a pair of blue pants and white cotton drawers with

BLOOD STAINS UPON THEM

were found discarded by the Indians, and in a pocket of the pants, the key of the handcuffs; papers taken from the pockets of the officers and torn up were found along the trail, and about seven miles out, Holmes' hat. A carcass of a steer was also discovered, a part of which had been taken and some of the hide stripped and used for foot covering, as evidenced by the peculiar tracks made by one of the fugitives after leaving the spot. After giving up the chase, Deputy Sheriff Ryan and companions returned directly to Globe, arriving home Tuesday afternoon.

Nathan Brundage of Ray, for years a freight hauler over this route, was one of the first to travel the road after the shooting. He naturally wondered what had become of the horses and stage. He found the terrified animals had circled twice around the place, banging the vehicle nearly to pieces on the rocks before they freed themselves. He says they were no good afterwards for stage hauling. He says he tracked the Kid and the other Indians and that some, if not all, forded the Gila near where the shooting occurred. He tracked them to a ford across the Gila at the bottom of Ripsey Wash, and it is his opinion that the murderers continued up the north bank of the Gila, and crossed again miles upstream.

Mr. Brundage spent the night with Middleton at Riverside. Later the driver was taken to Florence and was laid up for some time there.

Middleton died April 24, 1929. The Arizona Republican commented thus on his experience with the Apaches: "Middleton, whose early life was one of thrills, owed the past forty years of his existence to his quick wit and his ability to assume the appearance of a dead man during one of the bloodiest tragedies ever enacted in this part of Arizona. It was from the date of that incident that the Apache Kid, notorious renegade Indian, went on a rampage which spread terror through Arizona for many years."

The article quoted from the Silver Belt, states that Reynolds died of heart disease, but it was Holmes whose heart, it is said, gave out in his terrible struggle with the Apaches, but the papers reported a gunshot wound through the heart.

As is well known, the other Indians were caught, and their tragic fate is well known, but the Apache Kid was never apprehended.

Es-Kim-Min-Zin is said to have given his daughter to the Kid, but he left her at home and took from time to time some other Apache girl to carry his camp stuff, cook his food and, in short, be his slave. This clipping mentions another wife, but may be inaccurate in regard to El Capitan Chiquito belonging to the outlaw band.

Tucson, A. T., Sept. 15, 1890.—Forty years ago—A private dispatch this afternoon to San Carlos announces that Chiquito, father-in-law of the renegade Indian Kid, has surrendered himself to John Forrester, a white man living at the mouth of the Arivaipa Canyon. Chiquito was a peaceable Indian until this spring when he joined the band of renegades under the Kid, after the murder of Sheriff Reynolds.

Although I was asked to tell what I could find out locally about the escape of the Kid only, I might add a few words as to local opinion regarding his fate. Most people here believe that he died from the effects of shots fired by one "Wallapai" Clark, whose partner, Diehl, had been an early victim of the Indian. If so, he was either hidden by his confederates until he died in some remote retreat, or he escaped to Mexico. Reports of crimes committed by him continued to come in for years, and occasionally some white man announced he had seen him. Edward Schuyler, who knew many Apaches, among them one Big Foot, told me that in September of '93, while prospecting near Fort Grant, he gave food to Big Foot and the Apache Kid, or so this Indian proclaimed himself to be.

El Capitan Chiquito believed that the Kid died some time later from the effects of Clark's shot, but in Mexico, not in the Arivaipa Canyon as was reported. Be that as it may, reports of murders committed by him in the late 90's are to be found in old newspaper files. Within the last six or eight years appeared a sketch of a blanket Indian with a feather head-dress, purported to be his portrait sketched in Mexico by some artistic traveler who had "discovered" him living in the Sierra Madre Mountains.

In looking over a collection of clippings in the Munk Library of Arizoniana, in Los Angeles, I found one taken from the San Francisco Examiner of April 29, 1894. This was a sketch of a wild mountainous scene which was claimed to be the Apache Kid's favorite haunt—**Sombrero Pass**. There is a **Sombrero Butte** in the Galiuros near the San Pedro River, which is no doubt the region meant. Anyone who has wandered through this wild country is able to credit some of the stories of the Kid

sustaining himself as an outlaw with these fastnesses as a retreat. If living now, he would be a man about seventy, as he was fifteen or sixteen when he first went to Globe and began his career under Al Sieber in 1875.

Perhaps no one figure in Arizona history has aroused as much speculation as has the Apache Kid, owing to the mystery surrounding him. That he became an outlaw and a desperate one, there is no question, but no one man, even having other criminals at his beck and call, could have committed the diverse crimes credited to him for years after his escape. His portrait, as shown herewith, shows more intelligence than many Indian faces, and he had the resourcefulness due to his long experience as a scout to aid him. And there were no airplanes from which to look down on his mountain hiding places. Yet it seems that if he did not die from the wounds inflicted by Clark, he must, if he remained in this part of the country, have been caught eventually.