

Juan Chivaria—Forgotten Friend of Arizona Pioneers

By Al Bates

In the early dawn of September 1, 1857, a sneak attack by invaders from the west threatened to wipe out the small Maricopa Indian villages of south central Arizona. Homes at the western edge of the villages were put to the torch and their occupants—men, women and children—were killed before there could be any effective resistance.

When word of the attack spread, it was sub-chief Juan Chivaria who led the hastily assembled Maricopa warriors, some on horseback, some on foot, in a whirlwind counterattack.¹ Wielding war clubs and lances to brutal effect, the Maricopas—joined by the more numerous Pimas—routed the invaders, killing almost all of them; leaving but a few to straggle back to their Colorado River source.

It was a war party of some 100 Quechans (Yumas) and a few Mojave and Tonto Apache allies that carried out the 1857 dawn attack that proved to be the final major episode in an extended history of intertribal warfare, and the last major battle in the

American Southwest fought exclusively between Native Americans.²

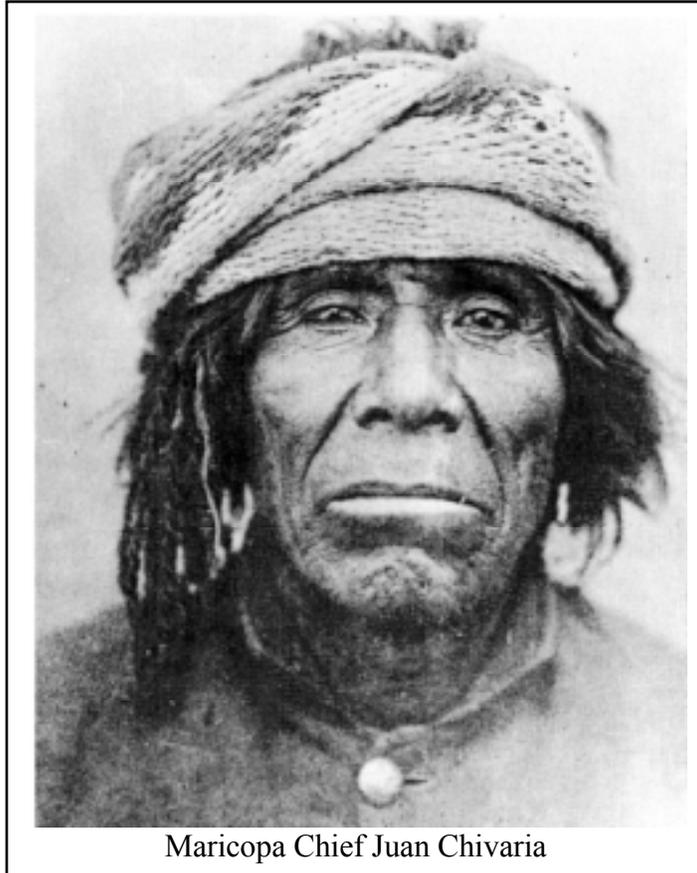
For the first time, the name of Chief Juan Chivaria appeared in the written records of

Arizona history, but it would not be the last. In the years that followed he would win the admiration and respect of the early white settlers for his unwavering support of them against Apache marauders, at times fighting side by side with the pioneers. Along the

way he formed strong friendships with two of Arizona Territory's most influential early pioneers, King S. Woolsey and John W. (Jack) Swilling.

The Maricopas were farmers who lived in peace with the neighboring Pimas in villages on the Gila River near its intersection with the Salt River. However these peaceable farmers were not passive and their warriors were quick to retaliate when raided by

other tribes. Over the years they had developed a deep hatred for the marauding Tonto Apache raiders who swept down from the northeast to obtain booty and prisoners from the Maricopas and their Pima neighbors.



Maricopa Chief Juan Chivaria

The Maricopas also had an ongoing feud with the Yuma area tribes who had pushed the Maricopas eastward from their traditional homes along the Colorado early in the 19th century.³ The accommodating Pimas made room for them, and the Maricopas resettled along the Gila River at a spot commonly called the Pima Villages where both tribes raised crops of wheat, melons and corn. This was a very important stopping place for early immigrants, both would-be prospectors and homesteaders, heading for California along the southern route. This was one of few places where they could trade for agricultural products with the friendly Maricopas and Pimas and for other goods at Ami White's flourmill and store.⁴

There was one white eyewitness to the 1857 battle. Isaiah C. Woods was camped on a nearby hillside. He wrote, "Besides warriors on foot, every Indian that could get a horse was in the fight, many of them going a half dozen miles to reach the battle ground." Woods wisely stayed well away from the battle so had no further details.⁵ Juan Chivaria's vital role in leading the mounted Maricopa warriors to the battle and their deadly use of their primitive weapons was documented in later interviews with participants.

The end result of this final battle was peace talks between the Maricopas, led by Chief Chivaria, and the Quechens that ended that long-standing tribal enmity. But problems with the Tonto Apaches persisted.

From the time the first American soldiers took control of the newly acquired Gadsden Purchase area in 1856, the Maricopas had tried to obtain guns from the soldiers to help stop depredations by the often better-armed Apaches.⁶ However it wasn't until the summer of 1862 when the Union Army's "Column from California" arrived to drive the Con-

federates from Southern Arizona and New Mexico that their wish was fulfilled. The Column's leader, General James H. Carleton, met Chief Chivaria at Maricopa Wells and immediately began arrangements to have 100 single-shot caplock muskets and ammunition supplied to the Maricopas and their Pima allies.⁷

The American army was not the only ones to recognize the value of these friendly Indians as allies. Governor Pesqueira of Sonora, Mexico, sent envoys with gifts to the Maricopas and Pimas in July of 1862 in an attempt to enlist 50 warriors from the two tribes, presumably to assist with his own Apache problem. The envoys were politely sent home empty handed.⁸

Chief Chivaria's participation in combined raids with whites against the Apaches may well have started in 1860. In early January of that year the Overland Stage Line sponsored the formation of a white militia company they called the Gila Rangers and sent them on an expedition to punish Apache raiders who had been stealing stock from the company and the miners at Gila City.

The Gila Rangers were joined on their expedition by a group of Maricopa warriors. The expedition headed north from Maricopa Wells, discovering the previously unrecognized Hassayampa River along the way. The Maricopas participated in one sharp skirmish with Tonto Apaches before turning back because of the wintry cold at higher altitudes (as they approached the Prescott Basin) and a shortage of rations.

The only published account of the expedition failed to note just who led the warriors, but most logically it was Juan Chivaria. The chief is known to have had a strong friendship with the Gila Ranger captain, John W. Swilling, who, just over three years later, guided the

Joseph R. Walker prospecting party to the Prescott Basin marking the beginning of the first gold rush in the central Arizona highlands.

That event set the stage for another anti-Apache expedition almost exactly four years after the Gila Ranger's incursion into the unknown area above the Gila. In January 1864 Chief Chivaria headed the band of 16 Maricopa warriors who joined with 30 miners led by King S. Woolsey on a mission to "chastise" the Tonto Apache horse thieves who had just raided the Prescott area. When members of the Woolsey party appeared at the Maricopa/Pima villages to gather supplies and to recruit Indian help, Chivaria was quick to seize the new opportunity to fight Apaches. When the miners and Maricopas encountered a larger than expected band of Apaches at Bloody Basin, a sharp battle occurred in which an estimated 23 Apache warriors and a Yavapai ally were killed with only one white killed and one Maricopa wounded.

Details of the Bloody Basin incident have been argued and embellished ever since, but one certainty is that Chief Chivaria and his Maricopa warriors fought side by side with the miners. Their success was only momentary for they were still outnumbered and a much larger force of Apaches, led by a chief named Wah-poo-eta—more commonly called Big Rump—was believed to be on its way. Early settlers learned to fear Big Rump, so named for his most recognizable feature, as the fiercest of the Tonto Apache raiders and he was blamed for more than his share of depredations, including some incidents that happened after his death.

Chief Chivaria is credited with leading the expedition's withdrawal on a night march to safety, while using false campfires to mislead any following Apaches. The Maricopas returned to their villages on the Gila with griz-

zly mementos of the encounter, while the miners returned to the Prescott area happy to have survived and with a determination never again to go deep into Apache territory in such small numbers.⁹

Back at the Pima Villages the returning warriors and a few of the white miners who had fought at Bloody Tanks encountered Territorial Indian Agent Charles Debrille Poston and his traveling companion J. Ross Browne. The white participants, including Abraham Peeples, related details of the affair—and Chief Juan's important role—which Browne recorded in shorthand and later published.¹⁰

Two months later, Chief Chivaria and warriors from both the Maricopa and Pima tribes provided an escort for Poston, and his traveling companion, Territorial Justice Joseph Pratt Allyn, on their way from Maricopa Wells to Prescott. On their way they encountered an express messenger bound for the Pima Villages with a letter begging the assistance of those friendly Indians in a campaign against the Tonto Apaches in retaliation for raids against isolated settlements in the central Arizona highlands.¹¹

In Judge Allyn's words, "Half the [civilian] population had left for the Colorado [River] to avoid starvation and death; a hundred men under Woolsey [by then Lieutenant Colonel of the voluntary territorial militia] were to start at once on a fresh campaign; Fort Whipple was thronged with fugitives; there wasn't an animal fit to use left in the country . . ."

Shortly thereafter, Governor John N. Goodwin arrived at their location. He announced that the state of things was deplorable, and stated that he had little hope of doing anything because of the shortage of provisions. Poston offered to lead the Pima and Maricopa Indians of his escort to join Woolsey if they could have provisions for the trip.

The Poston party continued on to Weaverville (between Wickenburg and Prescott) where grateful residents of the tiny mining community donated supplies from their meager holdings. Judge Allyn and one companion continued to Prescott while Poston and the Indians left to join Woolsey's expedition. Apparently they failed to make contact with the expedition, for a first-person account of the Woolsey second expedition mentions disappointment "at not meeting a party of the Maricopas that were to join us in this vicinity" [near Squaw Canyon].¹²

Chief Chivaria next appears in Territorial history on September 2, 1865, as Captain of the newly mustered Company B of the Arizona Volunteers, a military force established by Governor Goodwin with Federal authorization. Company B of the Volunteers was recruited from the Maricopas; the other companies also were formed along racial lines some Indian, some white, and some ethnic Mexicans. During his time as Senior Captain of the Arizona Volunteers, Chief Chivaria, in full US Army uniform, was honored with a tour of military installations in the San Francisco Bay area. Accompanied by a military escort, he traveled overland to Fort Yuma in March 1866 and then by ship to San Francisco where they were ceremoniously entertained.¹³

After the Territorial Militia was disbanded at the end of 1866—with the promised \$100 per man enlistment bonus still unpaid—a number of Maricopa warriors continued for a time to serve as scouts for the Army and they continued to track and fight the Apaches on their own hook.

When Anglo-American farmers moved into the Salt River Valley, beginning with the first canal dug by the Swilling Ditch Company in 1867, they did so with the certain knowledge that they had the support of the neighboring

Maricopa and Pima tribes to help keep the Apaches at bay.

In August 1869 a brother of Chief Chivaria led a group of Maricopa warriors that surprised a war party of Apaches at Castle Creek in a skirmish that finally ended the bloody career of Big Rump. Because there had been a very recent Indian ambush of a mail party near Date Creek, and the Maricopas had returned to Maricopa Wells with greenbacks and several pieces of mail, it was necessary to confirm their story that it was Big Rump's band that had robbed the mail.

First Lieutenant William McCleave was assigned to investigate, and led ten troopers from Camp McDowell, accompanied by 22 Maricopa warriors—led by Chief Chivaria—and an equal number of Pimas, to visit the site. The soldiers and Indians met in East Phoenix where, at the chief's request, a civilian friend of both McCleave and Chivaria, Salt River Valley canal developer John W. Swilling, joined them.

McCleave's written report confirmed that evidence at the site supported the Maricopa's story, and settlers in the central Arizona highlands breathed a collective sigh of relief at the news of Big Rump's death.¹⁴

By the 1870's, times were changing, and the US Army had less need for help from the Maricopas. Central Arizona's Apaches were mostly pacified and the only serious outbreaks came in the southeastern portions of the territory. Thus the army came to depend almost exclusively on Apache scouts willing to help control off-reservation renegades such as Geronimo.

There still were incidents where the friendly Maricopas and Pimas aided their white friends. U. S. Army First Lieutenant Charles Veil noted Chief Chivaria's help in an unusual

incident near Maricopa Wells in October 1870.¹⁵

Desertion from Camp McDowell was a continuing problem and Lieutenant Veil had been dispatched from Camp McDowell to bring back two armed deserters. When Veil tracked the deserters to Morgan's Ranch near Maricopa Wells, he encountered Chief Chivaria who reported seeing two men with carbines a short distance down the river. The Chief then accompanied the officer in his continued tracking of the fugitives, running easily ahead of the mounted Lieutenant.

When the deserters refused to lay down their arms and one took aim at Veil, the lieutenant snapped off a single pistol shot that killed one deserter and then continued on to mortally wound the second man as well. The Court of Inquiry found that Veil's prompt action saved his life since the carbine aimed at him was loaded and at full cock.

Chief Juan's elected term as chief of the Maricopas ended at the request of tribal members. The Weekly Arizona Miner told it this way in their July 26, 1873 edition: "Juan-Chivari [sic] is no longer chief of the Maricopa Indians. A delegation of warriors visited the old chief's campoodia [sic], some three weeks ago . . . and forced him to abdicate in favor of Jose, who now wields the big bow."

The old guard of pioneer settlers was beginning to fade away. Prominent pioneer King S. Woolsey died of an apparent heart attack or stroke at his Phoenix ranch in June 1879, at age 47. His was a large funeral and the local newspaper mentioned the presence among the mourners of his old friend Chief Juan Chivaria and a large group of Maricopa warriors. The Phoenix newspaper noted tears running down the cheeks of old Chief Juan.

Some of the Maricopas were employed in ditch construction and had an encampment near a ditch head in Phoenix at the time when Chief Chivaria died May 20, 1880. That ditch at times was known as the Juan Chivri [sic] ditch in his honor.

Few people today know the role of the Arizona Volunteers, but the Maricopas remember, and for many decades the tribe held a celebration on the muster date. In 1966 the tribe invited all residents of the Salt River Valley to join them in their celebration of the one-hundredth [sic] anniversary of the Volunteers, during which some of Chief Chivaria's descendents were featured in traditional tribal dances.



ENDNOTES

¹ Chivaria apparently was elected head chief shortly thereafter. See Clifton B. Kroeber and Bernard L. Fontana, *Massacre on the Gila*, The University of Arizona Press, Tucson, 1986, P 60

² Ibid P 11

³ Ibid, P 8-9

⁴ James E. Turner, *The Pima and Maricopa Villages, Oasis at a Cultural Crossroads, 1846-1873*, Journal of Arizona History, Vol. 39, No. 4, P 345-377

⁵ *Massacre*, P vii

⁶ Ibid, P 185 (N 122)

⁷ Andrew E. Masich, *The Civil War in Arizona*, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 2006, P 184,185

⁸ Ibid, P 213-214

⁹ Clara T. Woody, *The Woolsey Expeditions of 1864, Arizona and the West*, Vol. 4, No. 2, P 159-164

¹⁰ J. Ross Browne, *Adventures in the Apache Country*, Harper and Brothers, New York, 1871, P 120-124.

¹¹ John Nicolson, Ed., *The Arizona of Joseph Pratt Allyn, Letters From a Pioneer Judge, 1863-1866*, University of Arizona Press, Tucson, 1974, P 115-121

¹² Woody, P 166

¹³ Constance Wynn Altshuler, *Men and Brothers*, Journal of Arizona history, Tucson, Vol. 19, I. 3, P 315-322

¹⁴ William McCleve report, United States Archives

¹⁵ Proceedings of Court of Inquiry convened at Camp McDowell, AT October 22, 1870, National Archives, V67, CB 1870