

COLORADO INDIANS – RESERVATION LIFE

Moving to Reservations

What do these photos tell you about why Indians were moved to reservations?

White Painting Of Sand Creek

This painting shows soldiers attacking the Indian village at Sand Creek in Kiowa County, Colorado. The attack took place on the night of November 29-30, 1864, against Indians who were at peace with the United States. About 200 Cheyenne and Arapahoes, mostly women and children, were killed in this attack.



Sand creek painting

Photo: Colorado Historical Society

More About This Topic

The attack at Sand Creek is called a massacre because it was a surprise attack and because the soldiers killed women and children as well as warriors. The Indians were told that they would be safe camping at Sand Creek. The soldiers surprised the village when most of the warriors were away hunting.

Their Own Words

"Nothing lives long. Except the earth and the mountains."

Source: Death song sung by White Antelope, a 75-year old Cheyenne, as he was shot down by the soldiers at Sand Creek.

Indian Drawing Of Sand Creek

The attack at Sand Creek led to many fights between Indians and soldiers in Colorado. This is an Indian's view of one of those fights. The Indian dressed in yellow is rescuing the man mounted behind him, whose horse was wounded in battle. The soldiers at the right are firing their rifles at the Indians.



Sand creek drawing

Photo: Colorado Historical Society

More About This Topic

The picture on the left was drawn about 1865 on the blank page of a ledger book. These were books Indians got from white traders. This picture was drawn by the Cheyenne artist, Red Lance. It shows the warrior White Horse (dressed in yellow) rescuing his son (sitting behind him). The son, Old Lodge Skin, had attacked the soldiers, who wounded the young man's horse.

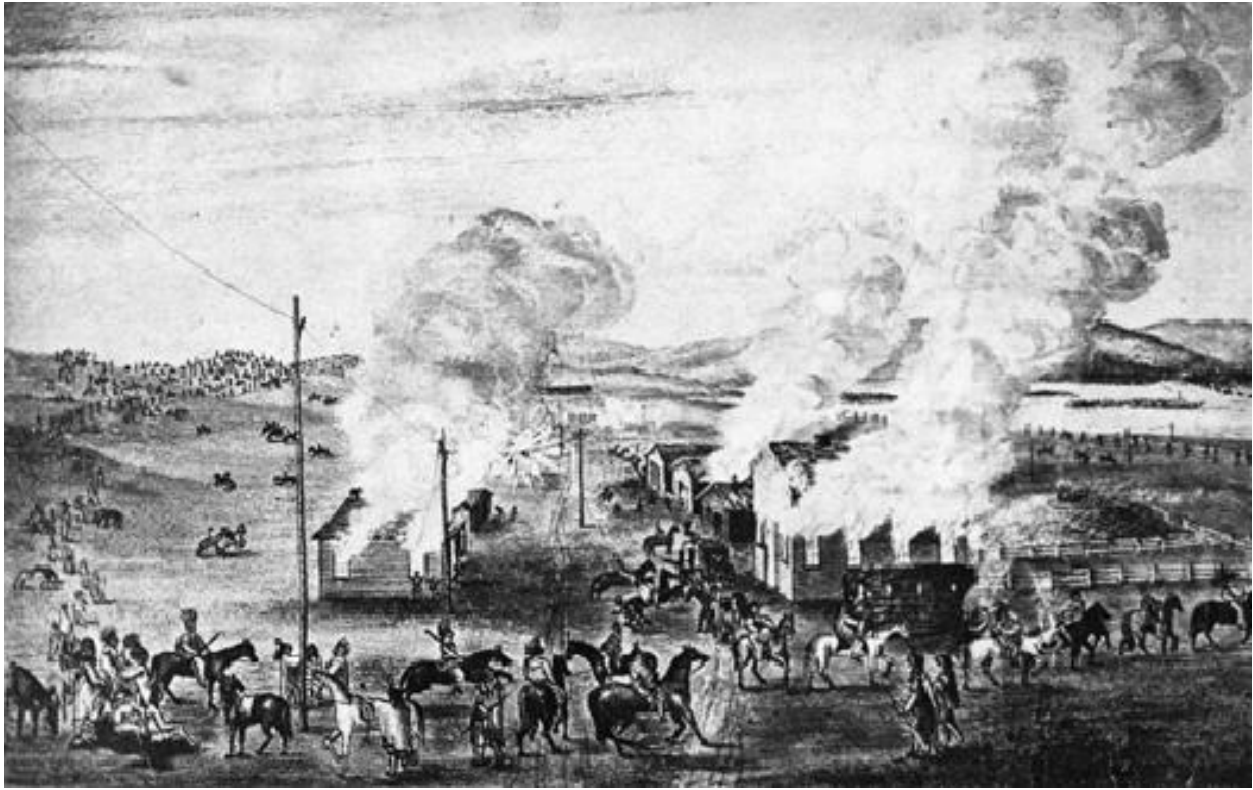
Their Own Words

"The picture is the rope that ties memory solidly to the stake of truth."

Source: A Lakota artist quoted in Jean Afton, et. al., Cheyenne Dog Soldiers: A Ledgerbook History of Coups and Combat (Niwot, CO: University Press of Colorado, 1997), xxvii.

Burning Julesburg

In January 7, 1865, Arapaho and Cheyenne Indians attacked Julesburg, Colorado. This drawing shows buildings in Julesburg burning while Indians on horseback watch.



Julesburg

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

After the Sand Creek Massacre, the Cheyenne and Arapaho went on the war path. They attacked white farms and ranches, killed whites traveling across the plains, and burned the town of Julesburg. Peace did not return to the plains until 1868. In that year, the Cheyenne and Arapaho left Colorado to live on reservations.

Their Own Words

"But what do we have to live for? The white man has taken our country, killed our game; was not satisfied with that, but killed our wives and children. Now no peace....We have now raised the battle-axe until death."

Source: Leg-in-the-Water, a Cheyenne warrior, quoted in Donald J. Berthrong, The Southern Cheyennes (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963), p. 224.

Portrait Of Nathan Meeker

This is a portrait of Nathan Meeker, a government agent who was killed by Ute Indians in 1879. He also helped start the town of Greeley. The killing of Meeker led to the removal of the northern Ute bands from Colorado.



Nathan Meeker

Photo: Colorado Historical Society

More About This Topic

Nathan Meeker was in charge of a Ute Indian agency in western Colorado. He tried to force the Utes to take up farming for a living. When Meeker plowed up their race track, the Utes rebelled. They killed Meeker and two other white men before soldiers put down the uprising.

Utes Sign Treaty In Washington, DC

This photo includes the Ute leaders (left to right) Ignacio, Woretsiz, Ouray, and his wife Chipeta. The white men are Secretary of the Interior Carl Schurz and General Charles Adams (standing). It was taken in 1880 in Washington, D. C., where the Ute leaders signed a treaty giving up much of their land in Colorado.



Utes sign treaty in Washington, DC

Photo: Colorado Historical Society

More About This Topic

After the Meeker uprising, whites in Colorado decided that the “Utes must go!” The men in this photo and other Ute leaders signed a treaty that removed the three northern Ute bands from Colorado. They went to live on a reservation in Utah. The three southern Ute bands agreed to live on reservations in southern Colorado.

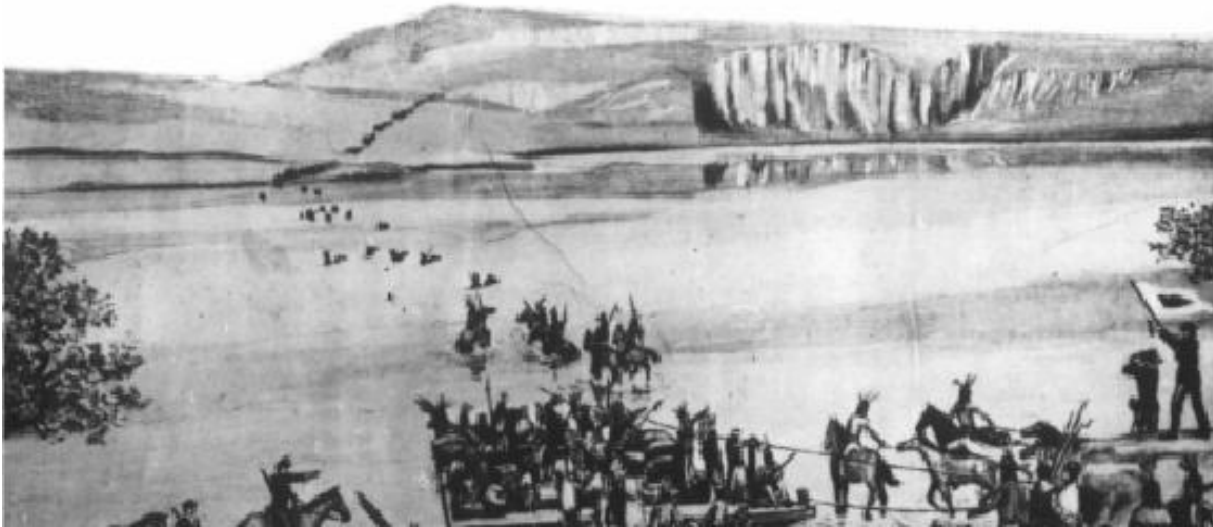
Their Own Words

"My idea is that, unless removed by the government, they [the Utes] must necessarily be exterminated.... The state would be willing to settle the Indian trouble at its own expense. The advantages that would accrue from the throwing open of 12,000,000 acres of land to miners and settlers would more than compensate all expenses incurred."

Source: Governor Frederick Pitkin, quoted in Richard K. Young, The Ute Indians of Colorado in the Twentieth Century (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997), p. 30.

Leaving For The Reservation

In 1881, the northern Utes left Colorado to live on a reservation in Utah. This drawing shows them crossing the Colorado River on ferry boats.



Leaving for the reservation

Photo: Colorado Historical Society

More About This Topic

In 1880, three Ute bands agreed to leave Colorado. These bands, the Yampa, Parianuc, and Tabeguache, were known as the White Water Utes. They moved to a reservation in Utah. The other three bands, known as the Southern Utes, were given a reservation in southern Colorado.

Band Of Utes Leaving Colorado

The Indians in this photo are Utes of the Tabeguache band. They are leaving Colorado for their reservation in Utah.



Utes leaving Colorado

Photo: Colorado Historical Society

More About This Topic

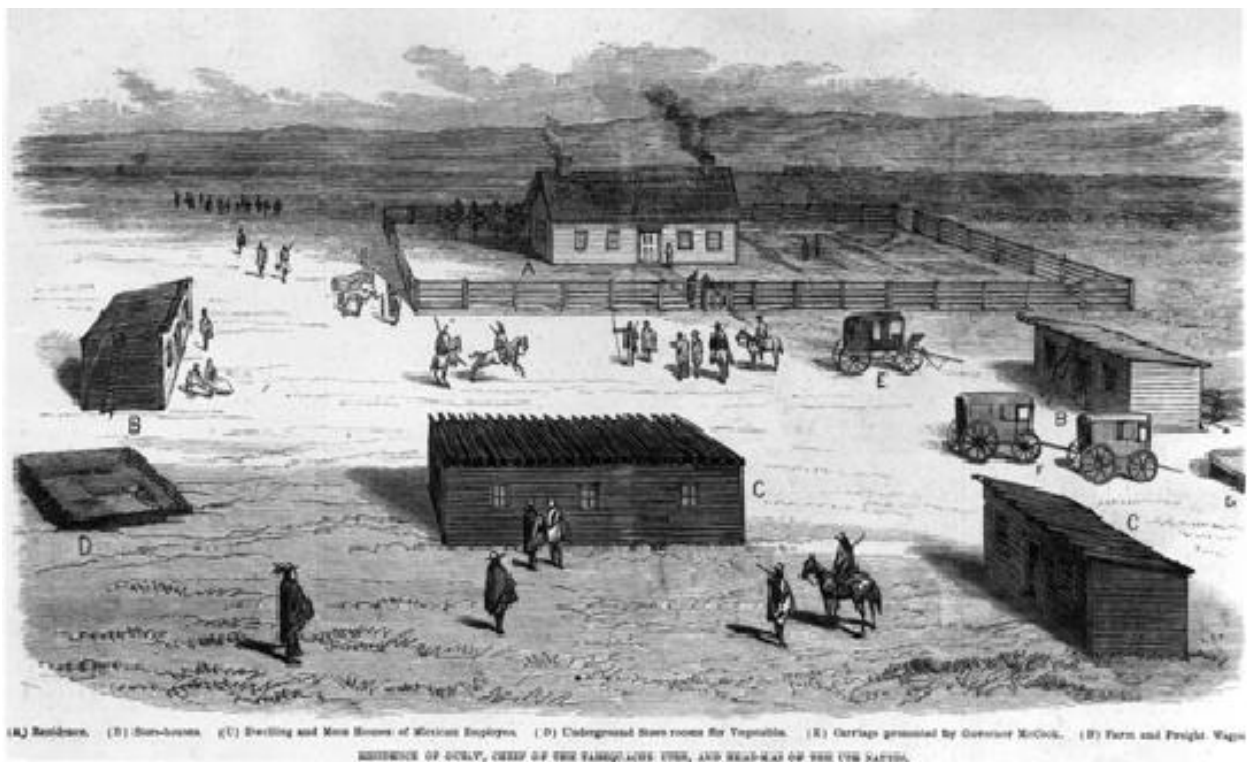
The Southern Ute bands were the Weeminuche, Capote, and Mouache bands. In 1880, they were allowed to stay in southern Colorado. Later, the Weeminuche split apart from the other two bands. They established their own reservation, which is now the Ute Mountain Reservation. The other two bands remained on the Southern Ute Reservation.

Living on Reservations

What do these photos tell you about how Indians lived on these reservations?

Ute Chief Ouray's Farm

The US government gave Ouray, the chief of the Tabeguache Ute band, a farm. This drawing shows Ouray's house and other farm buildings. It was located near the present city of Montrose, Colorado.



Ouray's farm

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

The US government gave Ouray this farm to set a good example. It hoped other Indians would want a house and out-buildings like Ouray's. Most of the people on the Southern Ute Reservation did live in houses, at least in the wintertime. Most of them also planted crops. However, the land at the Ute Mountain Reservation was too dry for farming.

Navajo Springs Ute Agency

These are the buildings at the Ute agency at Navajo Springs. This is where the US government's agent lived and worked. An Ute school also was located there.



Ute agency

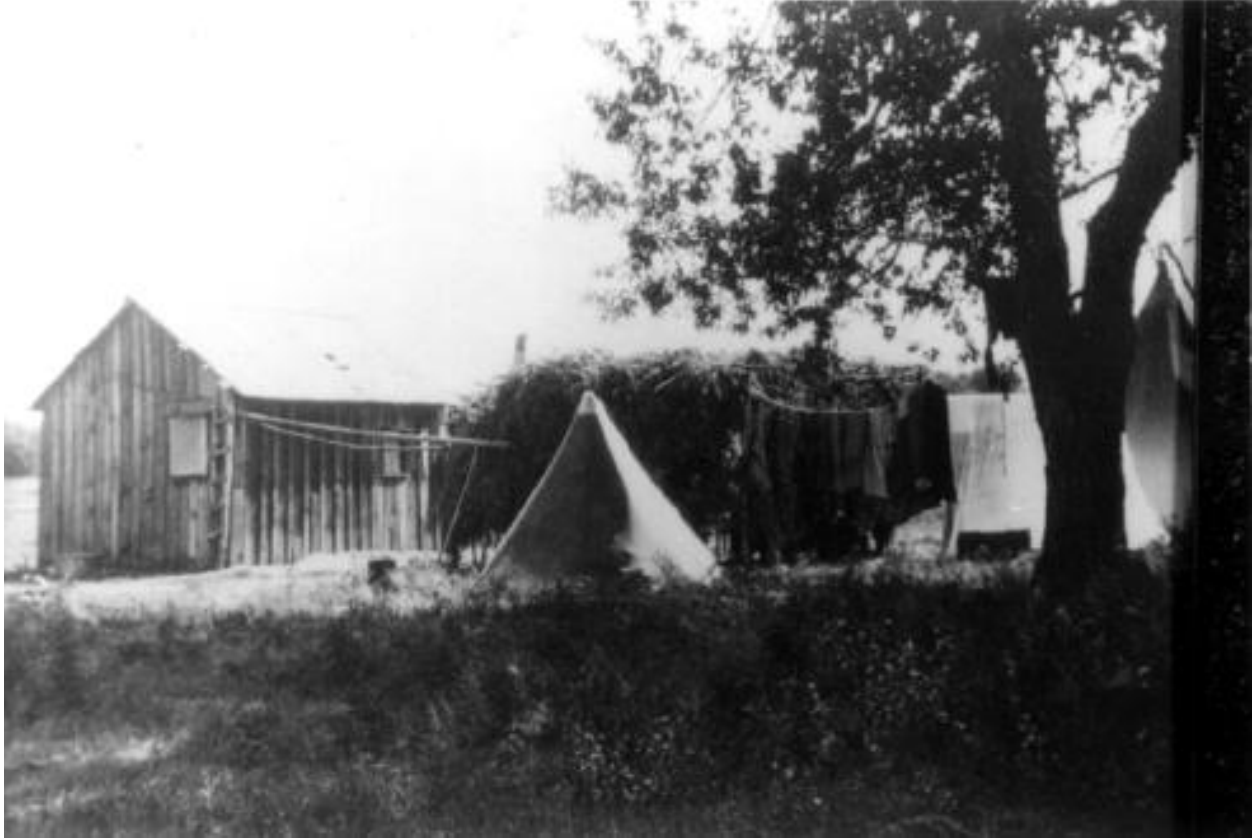
Photo: Colorado Historical Society

More About This Topic

The government agents on Indian reservations were white men hired to help the Indians get used to reservation life. They provided the Indians with beef and other rations while the Indians were learning how to farm and raise livestock. Some agents also were teachers at the reservation schools.

A Reservation Home

This photo shows a house on an Indian reservation with a tepee in the back yard.



Reservation home

Photo: Colorado Historical Society

More About This Topic

The government wanted the reservation Indians to live in houses. Each family was given an adobe or frame house. It took a long time for Indians to get used to living in houses. Many families continued to live in tipis and tents. Some lived in houses during the winter and tipis during the summer.

Their Own Words

"Most of the homes are supplied with tables, benches, chairs, and cooking stoves. The great majority have beds while the remaining sleep on the floors....The homes have fireplaces and at least two windows."

Source: A Southern Ute Agency report, quoted in Jan Pettit, Utes: The Mountain People (Boulder: Johnson Publishing, 1990), p. 142.

Indian Youth Gardening

These young people are setting out plants in a garden. They are students at the Southern Ute Agency school at Ignacio, Colorado. The school helped Indian boys and girls learn how to farm as well as to read and write. The photo probably was taken in the 1920s.



Gardening

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

It was not easy for the Southern Utes to learn how to farm. They had always lived by hunting and by gathering seeds, roots, and berries. For many years, they lived partly by farming and partly on rations provided by the government agent.

Their Own Words

"Even the smallest of us children began to learn to do things, indoors and out, as well as to read and write and figure. We watched the Mission people plough and harrow the soil in the garden, and when it was ready for planting we helped put in the seeds—radishes and lettuce and onions close together in long rows, and melons and cucumbers and pumpkins in hills, far apart. After the seeds came up, we helped with the hoeing, and we learned what plants were crops, and what were weeds and how to pull them."

Source: Althea Bass, The Arapaho Way: A Memoir of an Indian Boyhood [by Carl Sweezy] (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., 1966), p. 65.

Tending Sheep

The Indian men in this photo are taking care of sheep. The photo was taken on the Ute Mountain Reservation in the early 1900s.



Tending sheep

Photo: Colorado Historical Society

More About This Topic

The Ute Mountain Reservation in southwestern Colorado was too dry for farming. The Indians who lived there made their living mainly by raising sheep. They followed their flocks over a large area, living in tipis or tents. They sold the wool and bought the things they needed.

Their Own Words

"The Ute Mountain people do no farming, their land being arid with little or no water. Consequently these folk roam over a vast area with their flocks, living in tipis and wickiups."

Source: G.E.E. Lindquist (1931), quoted in Jan Pettit, Utes: The Mountain People (Boulder: Johnson Publishing, 1990), p. 148.

Reservation Schools

What do these photos tell you about what reservation schools were like?

School At Ute Mountain

The Indian children in this photo went to school at the Ute Mountain reservation in Colorado. Their teacher, Mr. S. F. Stacher, is standing at the left. His wife and daughter are in the middle of the photo. The photo was taken in 1906.



School at Ute Mountain

Photo: Colorado Historical Society

More About This Topic

At first, few children on the Ute Mountain Reservation went to school. Most Indian children who attended school went to boarding schools. The Ute Mountain Utes refused to send their children away from home. In 1906, the reservation established a "day school" to help children learn to read and write.

Their Own Words

"At first the Government schools were small and the attendance was poor, for schools were a new idea to us. Parents and grandparents and medicine men had always taught the children in the camps; we had never heard of a teacher whose only work was to teach."

Source: Althea Bass, The Arapaho Way: A Memoir of an Indian Boyhood [by Carl Sweezy] (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., 1966), p. 64.

Studying At a Southern Ute Agency

The Indian girls in this photo are studying in a dorm room. The girls lived in the dorm while attending school at the Southern Ute Agency School at Ignacio, Colorado. The photo was taken in the early 1900s.



Ute agency

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

In 1902, the Southern Ute agency opened a boarding school. Families scattered across the reservation sent their children to school there. The school was finally closed in 1920. After that time, children attended local public schools.

Playing Basketball

These Indian girls are playing basketball in the gym at the Southern Ute Agency School. The woman in the center is their instructor.



Playing basketball

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

The Southern Ute boarding school had a gym as well as classrooms. The school stressed good health as well as a good education.

Their Own Words

"It has seldom been my pleasure to see a group of children so happy and contented and so well nourished and in such good physical condition as those of the Southern Ute Boarding School."

Source: A visiting doctor, quoted in Jan Pettit, Utes: The Mountain People (Boulder: Johnson Publishing, 1990), p. 143-45.

Teller Institute Students

The young Indian women in this photo are on a sight-seeing trip in western Colorado. They were students at the Teller Institute, an Indian boarding school located in Grand Junction, Colorado.



Teller institute students

Photo: Colorado Historical Society

More About This Topic

The students in this photo attended the Teller Institute in Grand Junction. The school opened in 1885 and continued until 1911. At one time had as many as 200 Indian students. They came from the Ute, Navajo, and other Indian tribes.

Ute School Children

This photo shows Ute Indian children posing with a banner. The banner reads "American C. [Christian] E. [Endeavor Society], Grand Junction." The photo was taken sometime between 1900 and 1911.



School children

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

The Indian children in the photo attended the Grand Junction [Colorado] Indian School. This school was also known as the Teller Institute. The Indian boys in the photo were wearing military uniforms and the girls were wearing dresses. What might these clothes say about the school?