

JICARILLA DAY HISTORY

Francisco Vasquez de Coronado first encountered a band of Jicarilla Apache during his expedition into New Mexico territory in 1541. From this date to 1821, Spanish explorers encountered many bands of Jicarillas in northeastern New Mexico, southeastern Colorado and the panhandles of Oklahoma and Texas. In 1821, Mexico claimed all the area south of the Arkansas River until August 18, 1846 when New Mexico became United States territory by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.

During the early years, the Jicarillas attempted to live as they had for centuries. With the demise of the buffalo herds and the invasion of Spanish and Mexican settlers, their pattern of life was altered significantly. After two decades of fleeing and fighting with the Spanish, Mexicans and English, the Jicarilla Apache grew to become a disheartened but not defeated people.

In the spring of 1880, a delegation of five Jicarilla Apaches: Juan Julian, Huerito Mundo, Augustin Vigil, Santiago Largo and San Pablo, made a historic journey to Washington DC, traveling over 1,500 miles by train to secure a reservation for their people. A reservation was set aside by executive order on September 21, 1881; however, the Jicarilla Apaches were not placed on the reservation. Instead they returned to Cimarron in the summer of 1881 and continued their usual activities. It was reported by the Commission of Indian Affairs that one thousand settlers were already homesteading the reservation with more coming. In December 1881, the Jicarilla were ordered to the reservation and the move began soon after. On July 11th, the Jicarillas were reported absent from the reservation and had left because they were not properly fed by the government and it was necessary for them to leave to hunt.

Political pressures from settlers resulted in \$5,000 being allocated to remove the Jicarillas to the Mescalero Reservation. On August 20, 1883 the transport to the Mescalero Reservation began despite the dissatisfaction among the Jicarillas. They arrived on October 9, 1883, after a trip marked by hardship, smallpox and six deaths. The reservation that had been created for the Jicarillas was returned to the public domain in May 15, 1884.

The Jicarillas were bitterly disappointed and in the fall of 1886, began making their way back to northern New Mexico in small groups. The military commanders of the district of New Mexico finally agreed to provide them protection and the Governor of New Mexico consented to allow them to stay in the northern part of the territory. The reservation was finally set aside on February 11, 1887 by President Grover Cleveland's Executive Order.

Today, the Jicarilla Apache commemorate and celebrate that the Jicarilla Apache still live. They honor the precious gifts that are passed down from the grandfathers: the language, the traditional values, the songs, the prayers, the ceremonies and respect for all life. In 1987, the Jicarilla Apache Nation's government set aside February 11 as Jicarilla Day, a day to celebrate the Jicarilla Apache heritage.