

MS 399 Military History Spring 2020  
Staff Ride Assignment

Timeline:

- 12 Feb: Detailed introduction
- 17 Feb: Preparation time (President's Day)
- 19 Feb: Team backbriefs (see below)
- 24 Feb: Field phase and final discussion (be prepared to spend the day outdoors)

A Staff Ride is a military professional development and planning method, using a historical battle or campaign as a means to develop experience and professional judgment. Invented by the Prussian Great General Staff in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars. By the 1820s they were an annual event for the Great General Staff, and were also carried out by unit staffs at all levels. With the lighting Prussian/German victories over Austria in 1866 and France in 1870-71, armies across Europe, as well as the United States, developed a fascination for all things German, and the Staff Ride idea began to spread. The first official U.S. Army staff ride was carried out by MAJ Eben Swift of the General Service and Staff School (now the Command and General Staff College) in 1906.

What distinguishes a Staff Ride from a battlefield tour is two things: first, the preparatory study involved for the participants; and second, the feedback and briefings carried out among the participants and with the instructor before, during, and after the "field phase." A battlefield tour is a picnic, a Staff Ride is a professional academic exercise.

There are a number of ways to do a Staff Ride (Center for Military History publication CMH Pub 71-20 outlines the process). We will carry it out as follows:

12 Feb: I will introduce the Big Dry Wash campaign of 1882 (the last action of the Apache Wars in Arizona), and explain the team assignments.

19 Feb: teams will brief the class on different aspects of this campaign, to provide a baseline understanding. Each team will have 10-15 minutes for their briefing. Team assignments:

- Team 1: military methods and capabilities of the Apaches, including organization and leadership, weapons, training, planning, and tactics.
- Team 2: military methods and capabilities of the U.S. Army on the frontier in the 1880s, including organization, leadership, weapons, training, planning, and tactics.
- Team 3: historical background of the campaign, including previous major events in the Apache Wars and the events that led to the breakout of Natiotish and his band from the San Carlos reservation, leading to the Army pursuit.
- Team 4: terrain and weather analysis pertinent to the campaign (summer 1882), including human terrain (civil considerations).

I've begun posting resources to BBlearn under the "Staff Ride" folder. I will continue posting worthwhile items as I find them...you of course can carry on your own research as well. I also have a couple of books in my office that have value for the Apache and U.S. forces:

Utley, Robert M. *Frontier Regulars: The United States Army and the Indian*. Macmillan Publishing Company, 1973

This source is valuable for its information on weapons, equipment, and doctrine of U.S. forces on the frontier (chapters 3 and 6). It also includes some historical background on the Apache Wars (chapters 18 and 19).

Basso, Keith H. (ed). *Western Apache Raiding and Warfare: From the Notes of Grenville Goodwin*. University of Arizona Press, 1993

Grenville Goodwin lived among the Apaches on the San Carlos reservation for eight years. This book is based on his original set of monographs, written in the 1930s. It is still the definitive work on Apache warfare. Chapters 7, 9, and 10 pertain most to our subject.