

The Big Dry Wash Campaign

6 – 17 July 1882

Staff Ride – Video Version

7 September 2020

MS 360 American Military History
Northern Arizona University

Agenda



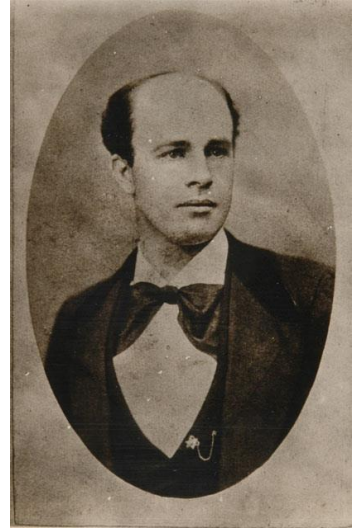
- ☐ Tensions Rise: 1874 – 1881
- ☐ Breakout! The campaign begins
- ☐ Following the campaign
 - ☐ Stand 1: Fort Verde
 - ☐ Stand 2: CPT Chaffee picks up the trail
 - ☐ Stand 3: Terrain below the Rim
 - ☐ Stand 4: CPT Chaffee and MAJ Evans link up
 - ☐ Stand 5: From the top of “the Tunnel”
 - ☐ Stand 6: Chaffee and Evans closing in
 - ☐ Stand 7: Na-ti-o-tish sets his ambush
 - ☐ Stand 8: Chaffee encounters the ambush
 - ☐ Stand 9: Chaffee’s scheme of maneuver
- ☐ The Outcome
- ☐ Conclusions

U.S. vs Apaches: the Tensions Rise

- ❑ 1874-77: Consolidation of reservations at San Carlos
 - ❑ Traditionally feuding bands placed together
 - ❑ “Friendly” and “hostile” bands get same treatment
 - ❑ 30 Aug 1880: Battle near Fort Apache
- ❑ 1881: *Na-il-de* movement, led by Nock-ay-del-klinne
 - ❑ 30 Aug 1881: Battle of Cibecue Creek



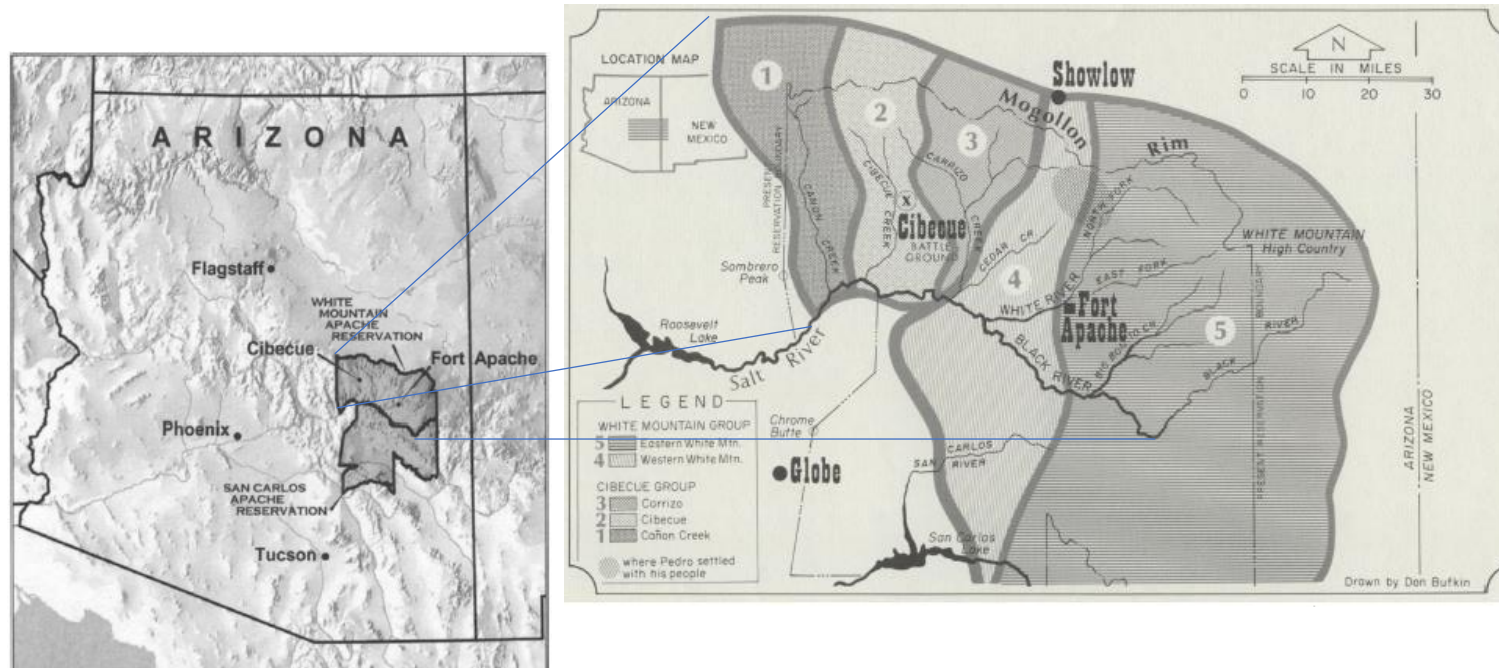
MG George Crook



John P. Clum,
Agent, San Carlos
Reservation



COL Eugene Asa Carr



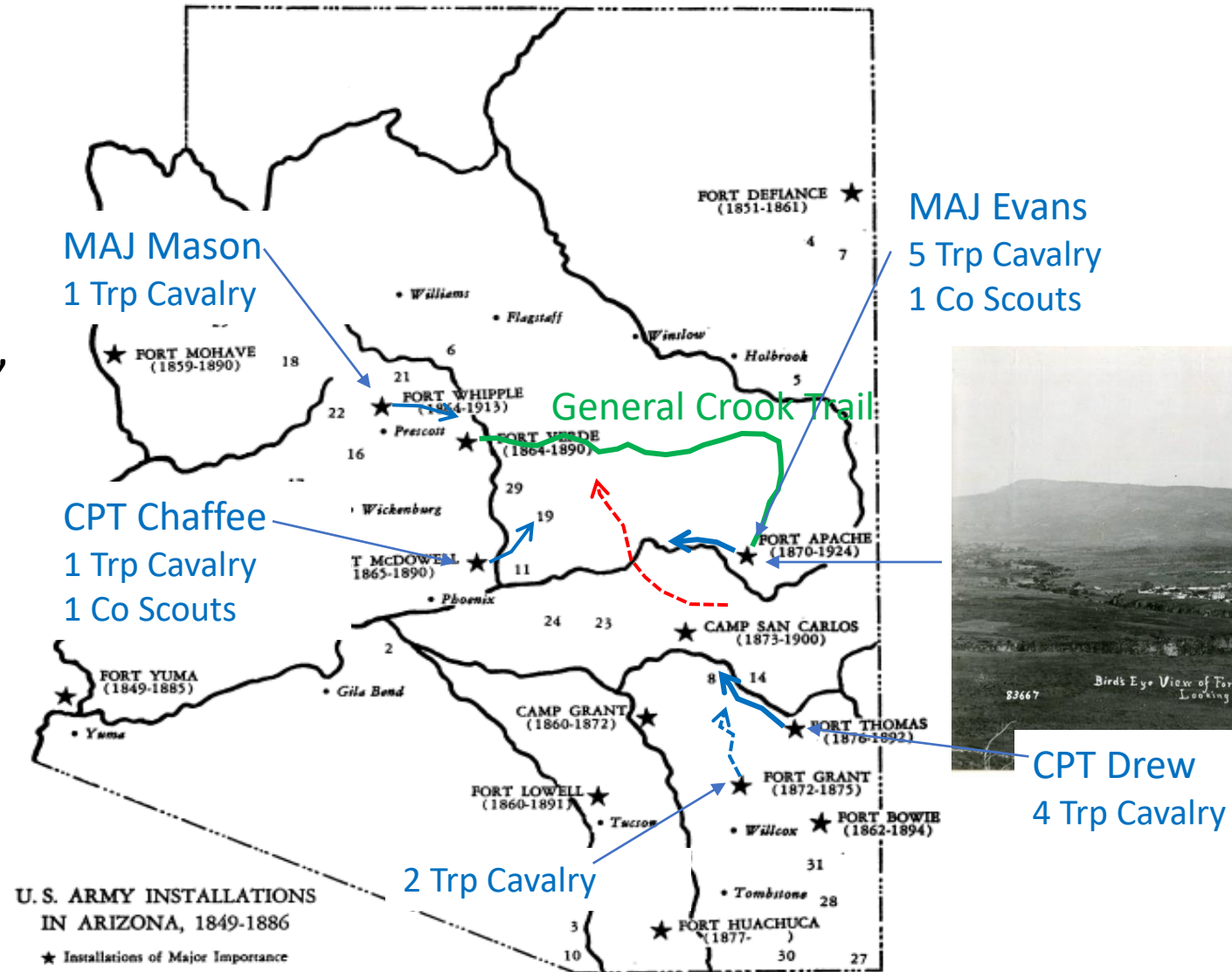
“White Mountain” and “Cibecue” Apache bands, ca 1870-1880



Joseph Tiffany,
Agent, San Carlos
Reservation

Breakout from San Carlos: the Campaign Begins

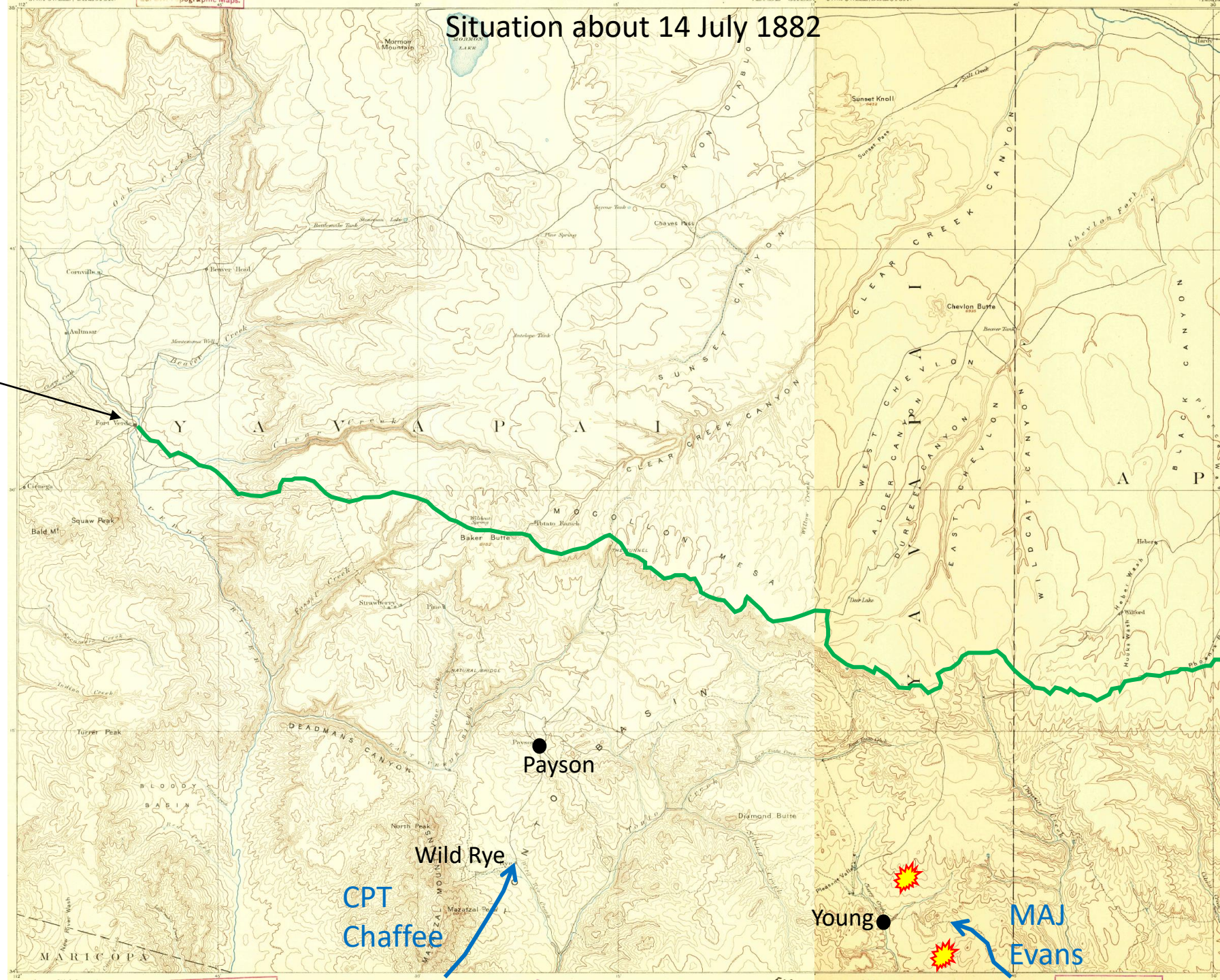
- ❑ April 1882: Chiricahuas raid San Carlos reservation
 - ❑ Assisted by “Na-ti-o-tish”
 - ❑ Raiders flee south to Mexico
- ❑ 6 July 1882: Na-ti-o-tish and ~54 warriors breakout from San Carlos



Situation about 14 July 1882

Stand 1:
Fort Verde

10 miles



Payson

Wild Rye

CPT
Chaffee

Young

MAJ
Evans

Situation about 15 July 1882

Stand 2: CPT
Chaffee picks
up the trail

Stand 3:
Approaching
the Rim

Wild Rye

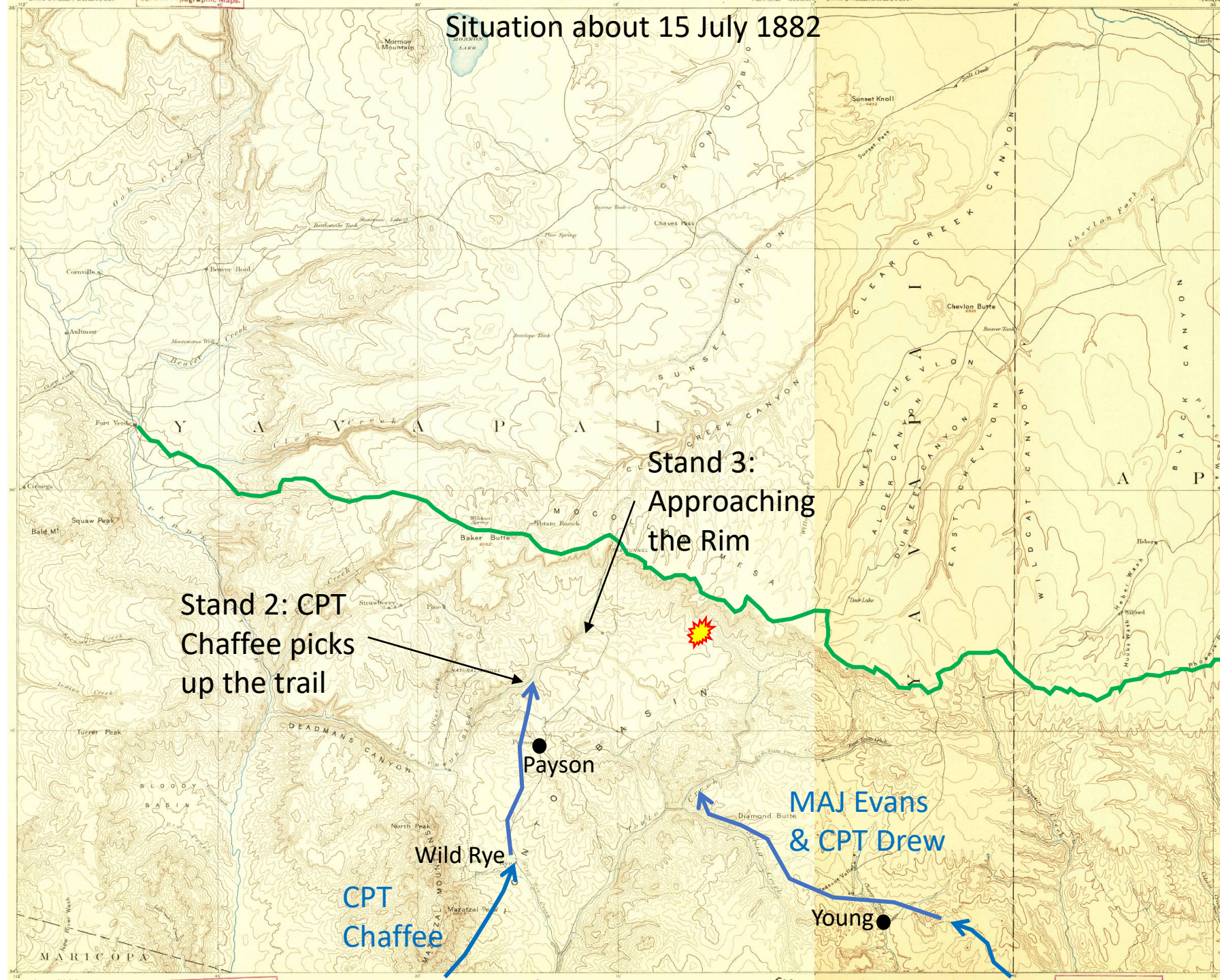
Payson

MAJ Evans
& CPT Drew

Young

CPT
Chaffee

10 miles



Situation about 16 July 1882

Stand 4:
Chaffee and
Evans together

Stand 5: Top
of the Rim

Payson

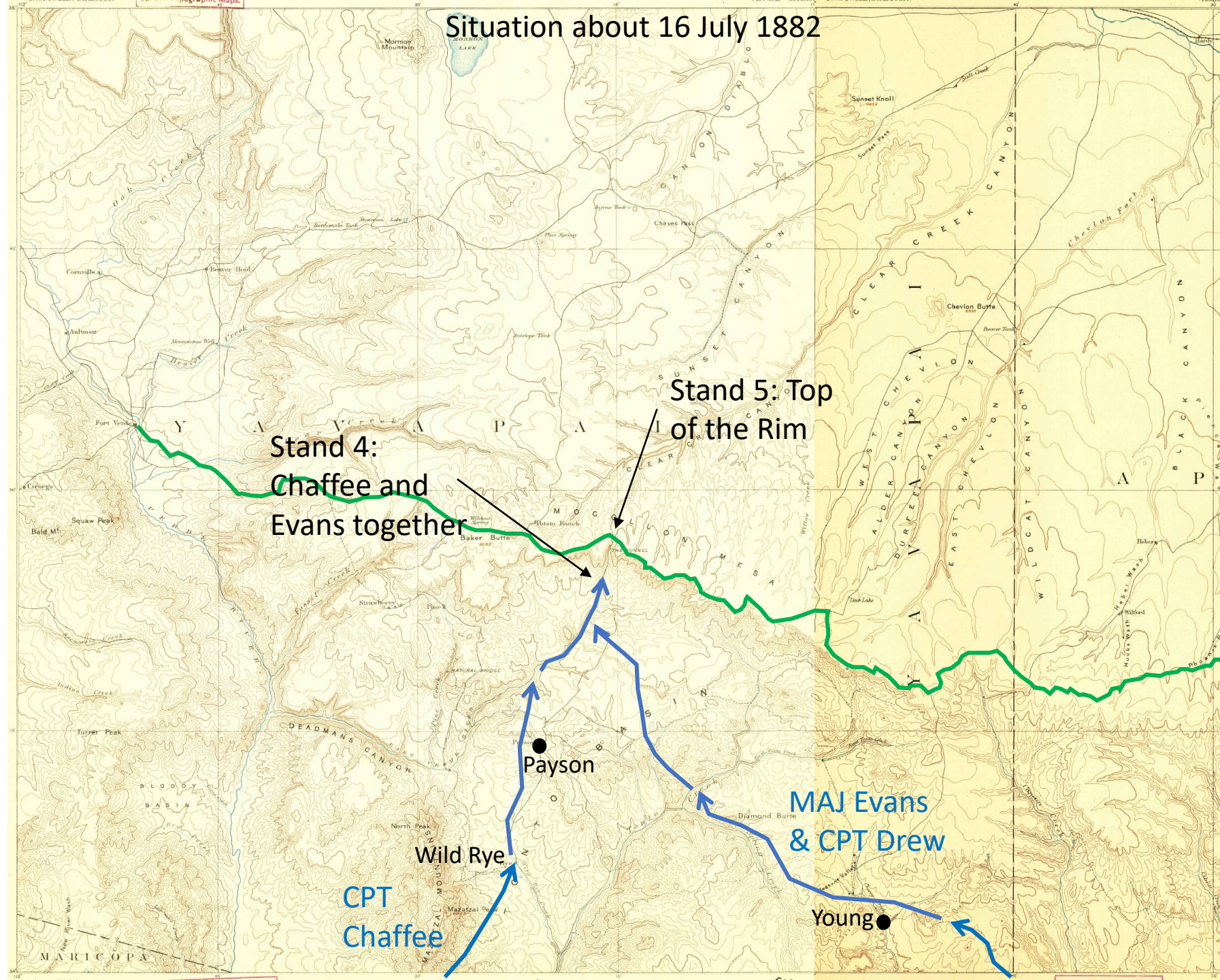
Wild Rye

CPT
Chaffee

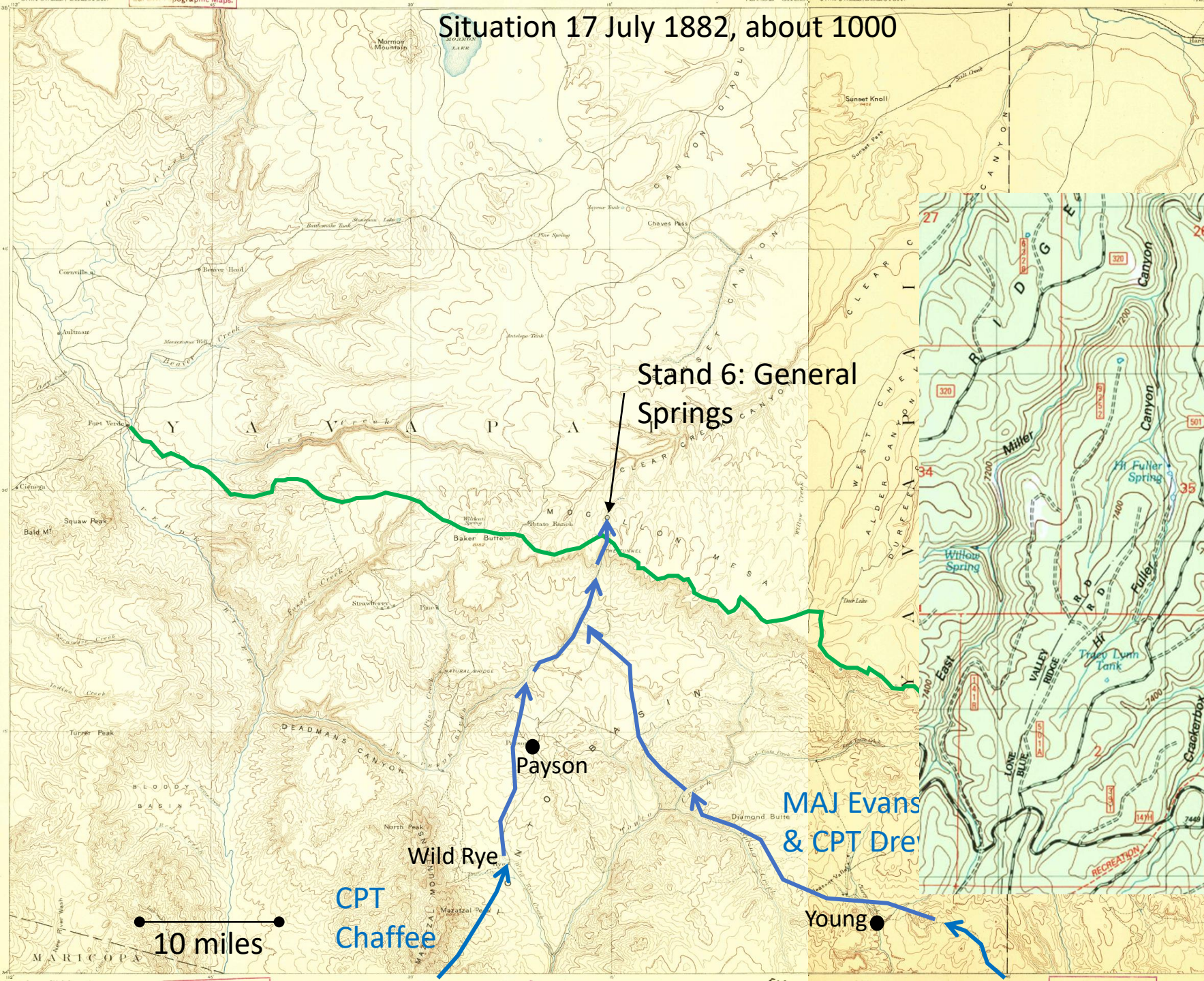
MAJ Evans
& CPT Drew

Young

10 miles



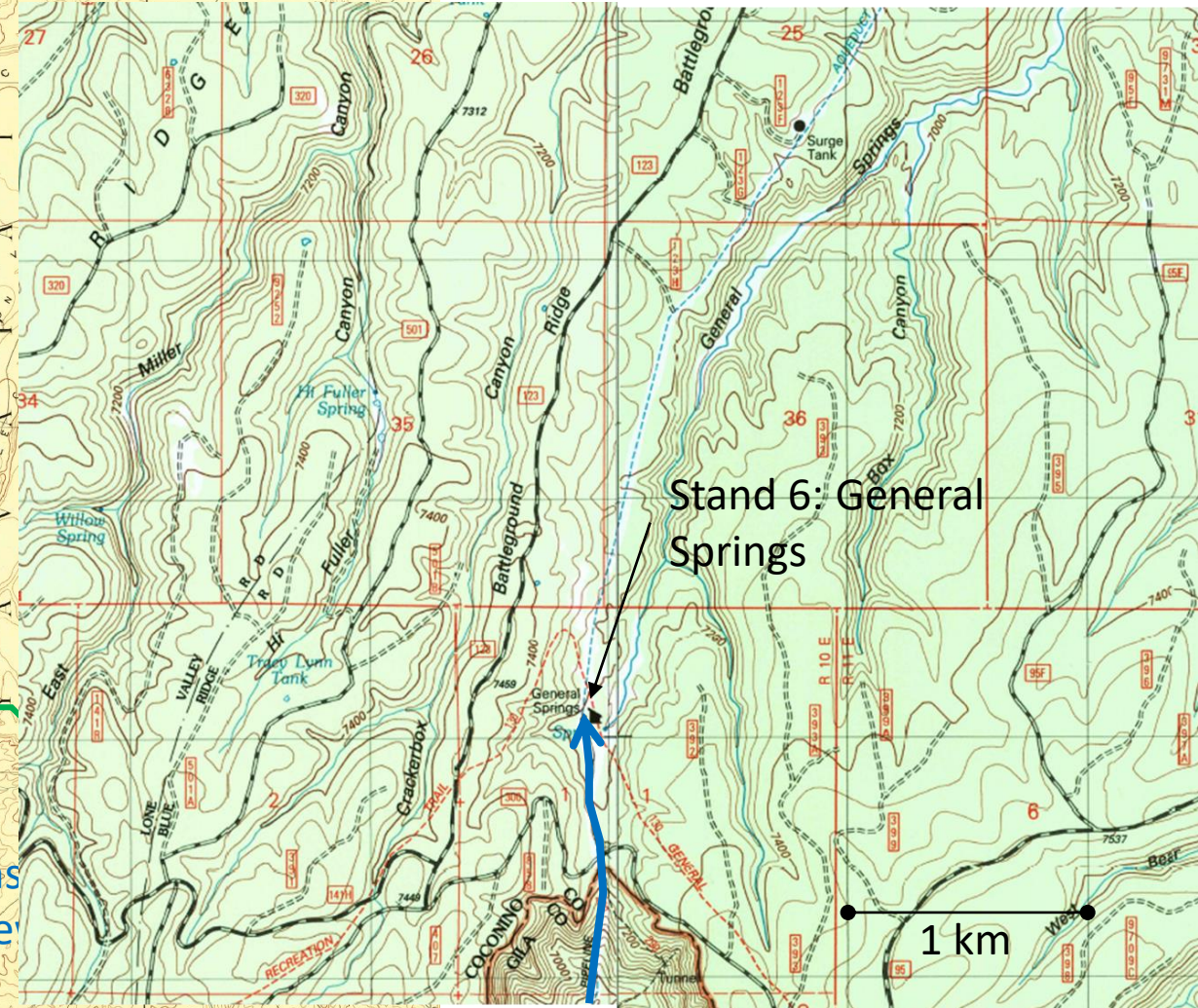
Situation 17 July 1882, about 1000



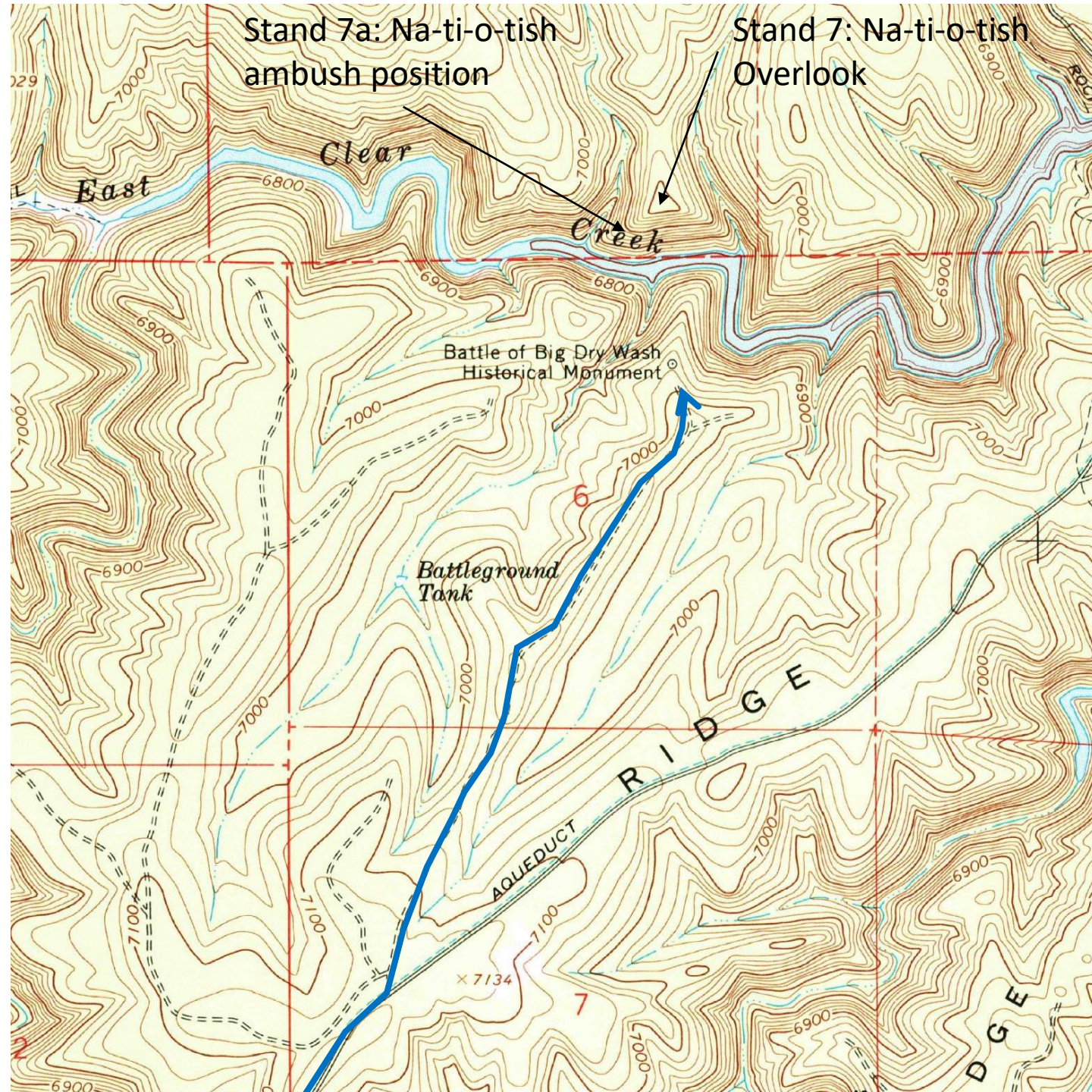
Stand 6: General Springs

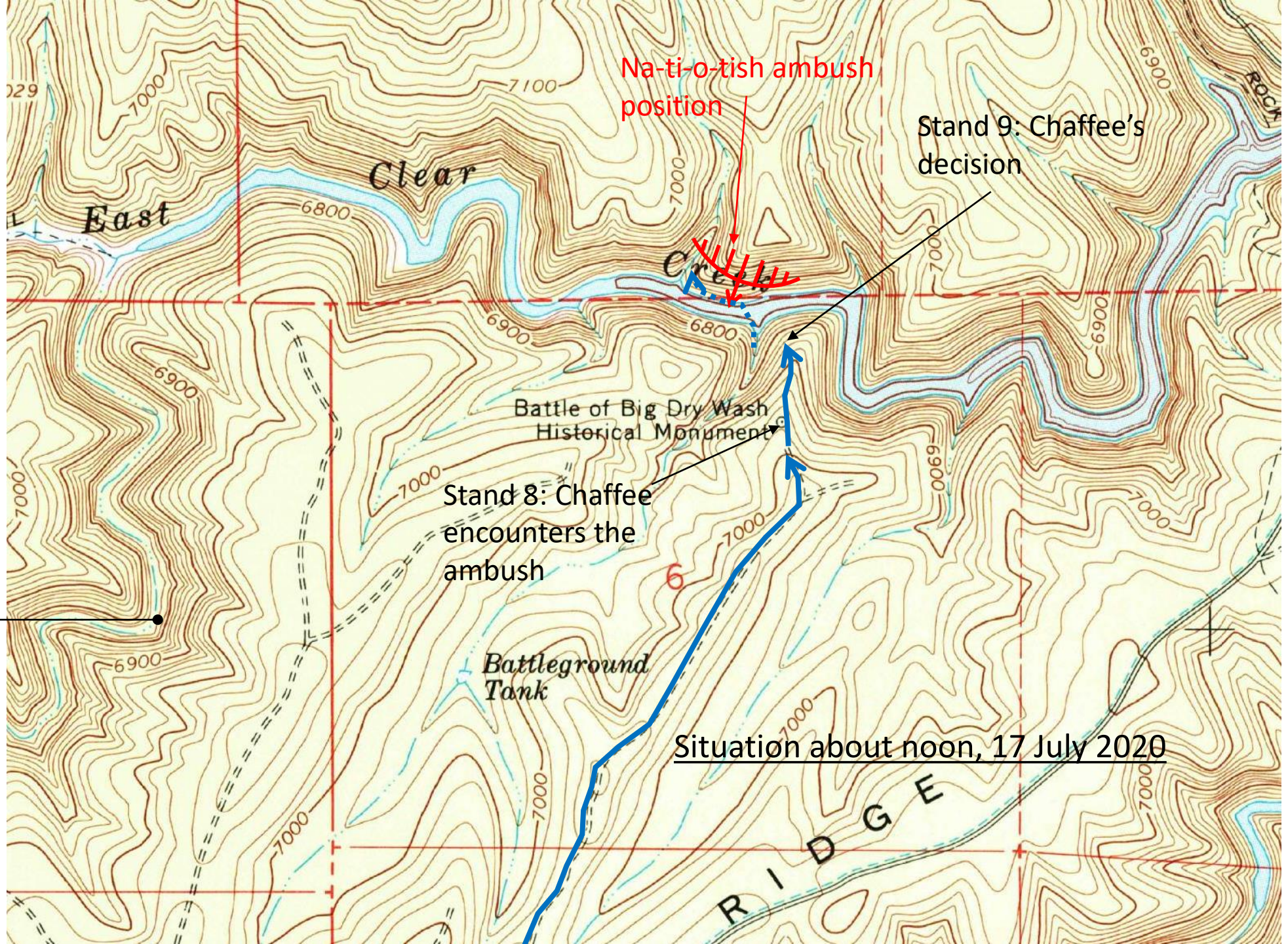
MAJ Evans & CPT Dreyer

CPT Chaffee



Stand 6: General Springs



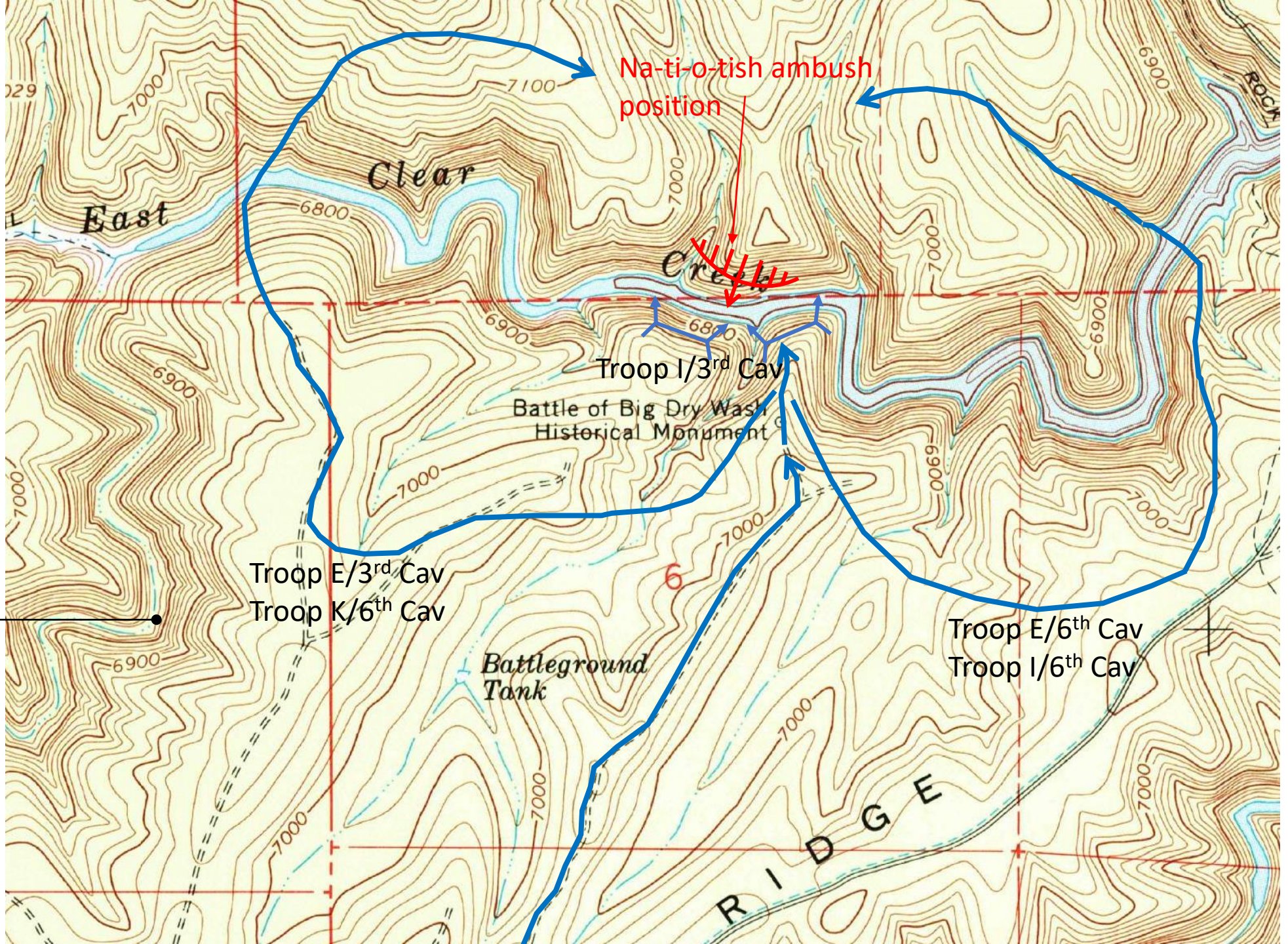


Situation about noon, 17 July 2020

An aerial photograph of a river bend, likely the Colorado River, surrounded by dense green forest and scrubland. The river is a murky green color. Two tactical annotations are present: a red line with perpendicular tick marks and arrows pointing down towards the river, and a blue arrow pointing from the bottom towards the river bend.

Na-ti-o-tish
ambush position

Chaffee's approach



Na-ti-o-tish ambush
position

Clear

East

Cre

Troop I/3rd Cav

Battle of Big Dry Wash
Historical Monument

Troop E/3rd Cav
Troop K/6th Cav

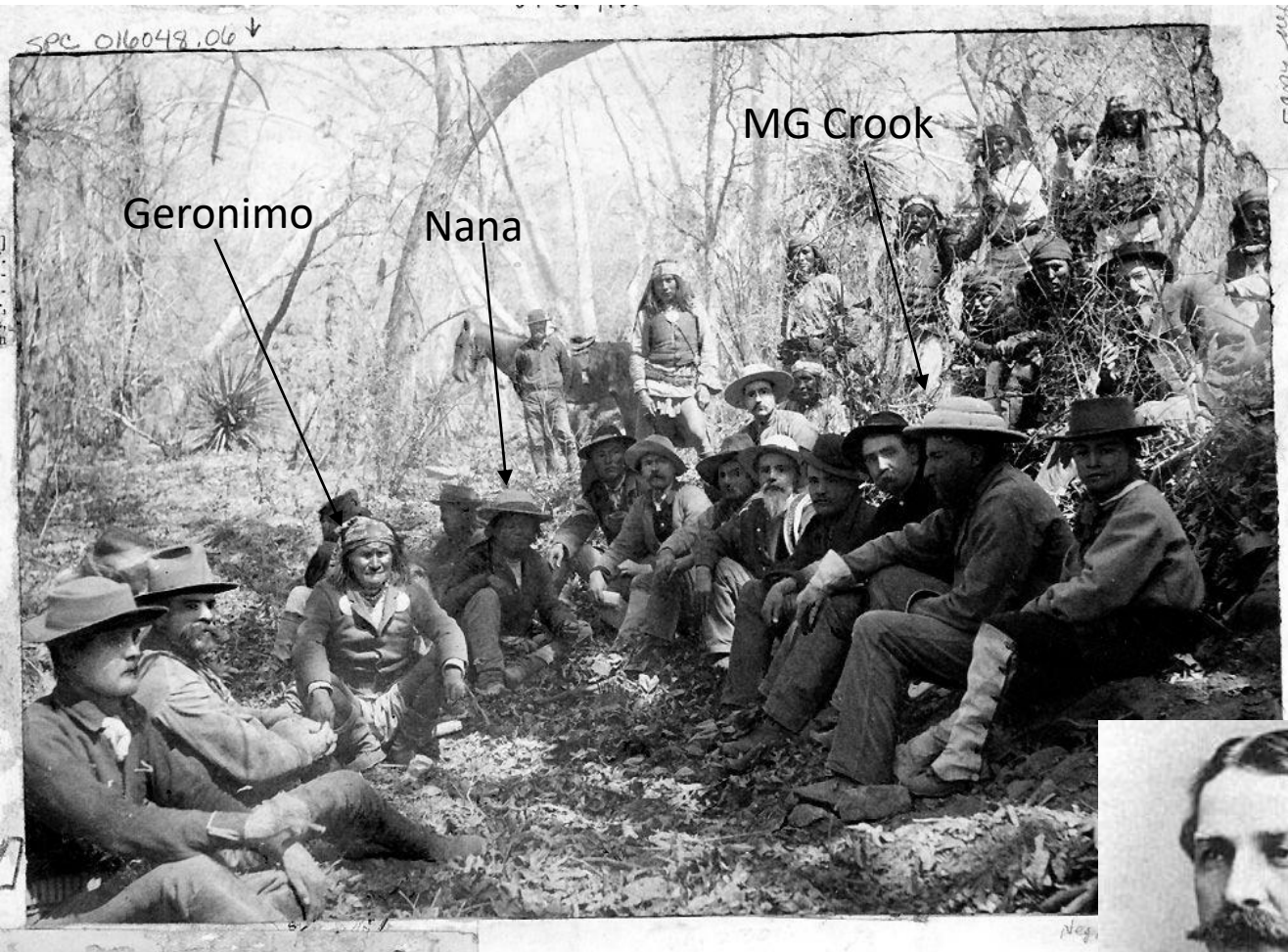
Battleground
Tank

Troop E/6th Cav
Troop I/6th Cav

RIDGE

1 km

Outcomes



Sonoita, Mexico, March 1886

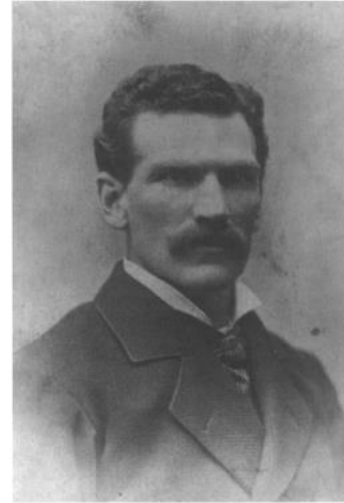


BG Nelson Miles

- ☐ U.S. casualties: two killed, seven wounded
- ☐ Apache casualties: ~fourteen killed
- ☐ Remainder of the band gradually filtered back onto the reservation
- ☐ By orders from Washington, no further action was taken against anyone on the reservation “regardless of their past history”
- ☐ Within six months, soldiers were able to talk with survivors and get their side of the story
- ☐ It was the last U.S. vs Apache action in Arizona

Final Questions/Thoughts

- ☐ What were the key factors that brought success to the U.S. Army's pursuit?
- ☐ How important were each of the following in CPT Chaffee's successful pursuit, and his victory in the final battle?
 - ☐ Luck
 - ☐ Numbers
 - ☐ The Apache Scouts
 - ☐ His own decisions (which ones)?
- ☐ Which decisions by Na-ti-o-tish led to his defeat?
- ☐ Could different decisions have brought a more successful outcome for him? If so, which ones?



CPT Adna Chaffee

Apache Scouts



Sources list

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