

John Carey Cremony

1815 – August 24, 1879

Major John C. Cremony was a Boston newspaperman who enrolled in the Massachusetts Volunteers in 1846, serving as a lieutenant.^[1]

He served as a Spanish language interpreter for the U.S. Boundary Commission which laid out the Mexican and United States Border between 1849-1852. He went on to serve as Captain in Company B, 2nd Regiment California Volunteer Cavalry a unit of California Volunteers, with the California Column in New Mexico Territory. He eventually achieved the rank of Major in 1864 and commanded the 1st Battalion of Native Cavalry, California Volunteers until 1866.^[2] He was the first editor of San Francisco's *Weekly Sunday Times* newspaper.

Despite being an Indian fighter, Cremony was an admirer of the Apache people and authored *Life Among the Apaches*, published in 1869.^[2] A first-hand balanced perspective on the Native American tribe. He was the first white man to become fluent in the Apache language, learning it in his role as an interpreter, and publishing the first written compilation of their language as a glossary for the army.^[3] As a result, Cremony was often able to resolve numerous issues between the military, reservation authorities and the Apaches.^[4]

Not all of Cremony's discourses with the Apache were peaceful, however. He killed one warrior in a grueling knife fight and chronicled a non-stop 21-hour chase when he was pursued by a band of Sierra Blanca Apache (White Mountain Apache) of some 125 miles through the desert of New Mexico while on horseback; 70 miles of which were at a full gallop.^[4]

Cremony served most of his military career in the Southwest and personally knew Apache Chiefs Mangas Coloradas and Cochise.^[4] After retiring from the army, Cremony settled in San Francisco, becoming a founding member of the Bohemian Club and establishing the club's membership guidelines in 1872.^[2] A "Bohemian" meaning to Cremony: "a man of genius who refuses to cramp his life in the Chinese shoe of conventionality, whose purse is ever at the disposal of his friends, and who lives generously, gaily, carefree, and as far from the sordid, scheming world of respectability as the south pole is from the north". These standards are known as the Cremony Standards and are still in use by the club today.^[5]

Cremony is buried at Cypress Lawn Memorial Park on the Laurel Hill Mound in San Francisco, California.

Notes

- 1) Soldier in the California Column, The Diary of John W. Teal, *Arizona and the West*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (Spring, 1971), pp. 33-82
- 2) Varner, K.(2007) *John Cremony*. [Cypress Lawn Heritage Newsletter](#). 5(3)p.6
- 3) [Geronimo](#) (edited by Barrett) *Geronimo, His Own Story* New York: Ballantine Books 1971.
- 4) Nevin, David (1973). *The Old West: The Soldiers*. New York: Time Life. p. 238.
- 5) Reinhardt, Richard(1980) *The Bohemian Club*. *American Heritage Magazine* 41980