

PENNSYLVANIA LOCAL NEWS

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'Lost one' buried in Carlisle inducted into American Indians' oral history

by RICK SELTZER, Of The Patriot-News
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Richard and Anita Gonzalez, of San Antonio, Texas, sing at the grave of Jack Mather in the Carlisle Indian Industrial School Cemetery at Carlisle Barracks.

Richard Gonzalez and his wife, Anita, performed a prayer ceremony Saturday in Carlisle to bring one of their ancestors into the oral history of the Lipan Apache Band of American Indians.

They stood in the Carlisle Indian School Cemetery at Carlisle Barracks at the grave of Jack Mather, who was Richard Gonzalez's great-grandmother's first cousin, sprinkling Mather's headstone with water and soil while praying and singing. The Lipan Apache Band has considered Mather a "lost one" and did not know his whereabouts for 123 years.

Mather was taken from the Lipan Apache Band in 1877 when it was attacked by Col. Ronald McKenzie's Fourth U.S. Cavalry unit just south of the border between the United States and Mexico. He was sent to the Carlisle Indian Industrial school to be assimilated into a western lifestyle, and died in Carlisle as a teenager in 1888. The school operated at the barracks from 1879 to 1918.

"For us, our people, it closes the circle of life," said Richard Gonzalez, who drove to Carlisle from San Antonio Texas with his wife for the ceremony. "When we first heard about this - how it touched us. We always wanted to know - what happened to them?"

The Lipan Apache Band referred to Mather and Kesetta Roosevelt, his older sister who was taken from Texas with him, as lost ones for over 100 years. Then, a guest professor at Dickinson College contacted the band with Mather and Roosevelt's story. Jacqueline Fear-Segal, an American studies professor at the University of East Anglia in Norwich, England, was doing research for her book "The White Man's Club: Schools, Race, and the Struggle of Indian Acculturation" while at Dickinson in 2000 during a faculty exchange program.

Later today the Gonzalezes plan to perform a prayer ceremony at the grave of Roosevelt's son, Richard Kaseeta, in Cumberland Valley Memorial Gardens off the Ritner Highway at the west edge of Carlisle. They also plan to perform a ceremony at Roosevelt's grave, which is located in Lahaska in southeastern Pennsylvania.