

## The Council House Fight Sounded the Death Knell to the Comancheria

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The Council House Fight was one of the lesser battles between the settlers and the Comanche, but it was significant in its long term impact. The new American settlers and the Comanche came together at the Council House in San Antonio, Texas, on March 19, 1840, to negotiate a peace treaty and settle the boundaries of the Comancheria. However, the meeting went horribly wrong, and neither the Indians nor the settlers were without culpability. Neither was willing to give up land for peace; the settlers wanted the land for farming, and the Comanche wanted their traditional hunting grounds. Expecting a celebration, the Comanche brought their wives and children. The settlers brought the Republic of Texas army because they did not. In the end, the Comanche could not fight the combined efforts of the Texas Rangers, the United States Army, and the diseases that the Europeans and settlers from the east brought with them. The dream of the Comancheria died.

The Council House building no longer exists. Only a marker off Market Street shows where it used to stand.<sup>1</sup> The Council House fight took place long after the Comanche had made themselves known to all of the settlers of Texas. There could never have been a lasting peace between the Comanche and the settlers, in part because the settlers did not understand the culture of the Comanche. The Comanche were made of many different independent divisions, bands and families.<sup>2</sup> In Comanche culture, one did not mention the name of the deceased person; therefore, the name of different Comanche groups evolved in a way that it made it nearly impossible to follow the many different bands of the Comanche history.<sup>3</sup> Peace treaties failed because of the unique nature of the Comanche organization. Each tribal division or band had two chiefs, a peace chief and a war chief. The positions were not hereditary and band members chose who would lead. Leadership positions often passed within the same powerful families, but the chiefs only maintained their authority as long as they had the confidence of the band. Their societal structure allowed individuals to cross not only between bands but between divisions as well. When one band of the Comanche signed a peace treaty, no other band was bound to its promises. The officials—Spanish, Mexican and American—never understood the different cultural practices of the Comanche organization.<sup>4</sup>

The original Spanish Indian policy encouraged peace and stability in the Spanish territories, but they punished raids and killings as well. As the violence continued, the Spanish “encourage[d] warfare

between Indian nations as a means of breaking their power.”<sup>5</sup> The resulting sequence of aggression, interspersed with times of relative peace, directly influenced the growth of the Spanish settlement at San Antonio de Bexar, beginning in 1716. The Spanish crown developed San Antonio north of the other Spanish colonies, and it was intended to serve as a bulwark from Indian and French infringement.<sup>6</sup>

The Comanche were a nomadic people, and as they moved further south, taking horses and European goods, they became a threat. The Spanish sent envoys to the Comanche in the summer of 1785, inviting them to a conference in San Antonio de Bexar. A few chieftains accepted the invitation and signed a treaty with the Eastern Comanche in October 1785. Many promises were made to one another, and that treaty was supposed to end hostilities with all Spanish settlements beyond the Texas borders. The Comanche promised to return all Spanish captives, to continue fighting the Apache Indians, and to not allow foreigners into their villages. By foreigners, it is easy to conclude that the Spanish meant the French and the new Euro-American settlers. Both the Comanches and Spaniards assured each other that the friends and enemies of one party would be the friends and enemies of the other party. The Spanish assured the Comanches that their chiefs would be presented with annual gifts. This peace lasted for the next thirty years. The Comanches loved their annual gifts and eventually they were given muskets, gunpowder and shot.<sup>7</sup> San Antonio de Bexar established itself as the place for appointments with the Indians of Texas, both violent and diplomatic.<sup>8</sup>

In 1818, the Comanche began a series of raids against the settlements of the San Antonio region because the incursion of new people from the United States was impacting the hunting ground of the Comanche. The Comanche felt that the Spanish had failed to adhere to the promises they had made in the treaty of 1785.<sup>9</sup> Juan Antonio Padilla, a Spanish army officer, submitted a report in 1819 where he claimed that the Comanches were “treacherous, revengeful, sly, untrustworthy, ferocious, and cruel, when victorious; cowardly and low, when conquered.”<sup>10</sup> Padilla also claimed that they were “inconsistent in their friendships and break their contracts for any cause.”<sup>11</sup>

As the Comanche continued to trade with the Spanish, the Comanche’s desire to obtain more guns and other goods increased. Eventually, the Spanish traded some guns to the Comanche, but the Comanche turned to illegal American traders when they could not get what they wanted from the Spanish.<sup>12</sup>

The last eight years the Spanish ruled colonial Mexico were rank with disorder that prevented royal officials from sending the Penateka Comanche their gifts, and also prevented Spain from sending troops to the region for control of the frontier. Because of the Spanish failure, tribes from central Texas and the United States, primarily Creeks, Cherokees, and Choctaw, entered Comanche territory. All of these tribes contributed to the decimation of the buffalo herds,

thereby threatening mass starvation of the Comanche Indians. The decrease in buffalo, together with a smallpox epidemic in 1816 that killed an estimated four thousand Comanche, had a catastrophic effect on the Comanche.<sup>13</sup>

After a series of uprisings that grew out of the increasing political disorder both in Spain and Mexico, a treaty was signed granting Mexico independence on August 24, 1821.<sup>14</sup> In order to strengthen their defenses against Indian attacks, the Mexican government allowed Stephen F. Austin to bring three hundred American families to settle in Texas. They hoped that by doing so they would help slow down the American expansion inside Texas and allow the settlers to form a buffer between the Mexicans and the Comanche.<sup>15</sup> An unintended consequence of the three hundred American families settling in Texas was the Americans' refusal to recognize Comanche claims to the land, resulting in increasing tensions and violence with the Indians of the region. The American ideas of individual land ownership with the opportunity to amass wealth along with the appeal of free and open land were in direct conflict with the Comanche concepts of communally owned hunting territories. Although initial contact with the colonists that Austin brought to Texas was peaceful, relationships with the Indians soon deteriorated and the Comanche began to distinguish their American trading allies from the Americans that had settled in Texas.

After Texas won its independence from Mexico, conflicts between the Texans and the Comanche continued. The majority of the settlers in the new Republic of Texas came from Southern states and they had experience dealing with other Indians.<sup>16</sup> Some of the Indians who were now in Texas had been forced there because of Americans pushing the frontier westward. The new Republic of Texas sought ways in which to deal with the Indian problem.

Sam Houston, during his first term as president of the Republic of Texas, looked for more peaceful solutions with the Indians than most of the Texas settlers wished. The Constitution of the Republic provided that the first president should serve two years and the succeeding ones should serve three. Houston was, therefore president for five years. President Lamar served in the interim between Houston's first and second term as chief executive of the Republic of Texas. Houston's attitude toward the Indians was indisputably one looking for friendliness and goodwill.<sup>17</sup>

The administration of Mirabeau B. Lamar followed Houston's first term, and he had a much different attitude toward the Indians. Lamar declared war on the native population. In Lamar's first message to Congress, he said that Texas was to begin "an exterminating war upon their warriors, which will admit no compromise and have no termination except in their total extinction."<sup>18</sup> Lamar had learned hatred for Indians when he served as the private secretary to Georgia Governor George M. Troup. In Georgia, a treaty had been signed at Indian Springs, but the Creek Indians claimed that the treaty was obtained

by fraud. President John Quincy Adams had agreed and vacated the treaty, but the Cherokee were forced to move west. Lamar's first opportunity to initiate his Indian policy began with the Cherokee in East Texas; the Cherokee came to Texas around 1824 and settled on land highly desired by many white settlers coming to the territory.<sup>19</sup>

In 1837, Cherokee tribal leaders and Mexican officials met in Matamoros.<sup>20</sup> Lamar believed that this meeting proved an alliance between the Cherokee and the Mexicans and thought that such "treasonable correspondence" should be rebuked. Accordingly, the Cherokee were told to leave the Republic of Texas.<sup>21</sup> The Cherokee were warned to expedite their exodus from Texas, and commissioners said that "every friendly means" was used but on July 15, they announced that they had failed in convincing the Cherokee to leave.<sup>22</sup> This resulted in a fight between the Texas military and the Cherokee, and on Christmas Day 1838 the Cherokee were forcibly removed to Indian Territory in Oklahoma.<sup>23</sup>

With the removal of the Cherokee, the greatest threat to Texas settlement became the Comanche. The Comanche continued to make raids on the Texas settlers and to take white captives and hold them hostage until they received European goods.<sup>24</sup>

In February 1838, one hundred Penateka Comanche came to San Antonio to invite the Texans to the Hill Country so that they could talk about making a lasting peace between the Texans and the Comanche. A member of the Texas Congress named Moseley Baker returned with the group to their encampment on the Colorado River. There he met with fifteen headmen and noted that the Comanche had made a declaration for a boundary line, defining their territorial limits. According to Moseley, the Comanche claimed the "finest country in Texas... the territory north and west of the Guadalupe Mountains, extending from the Red River to the Rio Grande."<sup>25</sup> Although they sought peace, they "would listen to no terms unless the government secured to them the full and undisturbed possession of the land north of the divide between the Colorado and the Guadalupe rivers west of Bastrop."<sup>26</sup> More terms were discussed and the Comanche agreed that they would return to San Antonio at a later date to finalize the treaty. Houston received notice of these negotiations from Robert A. Irion in March, detailing the report written by Col. Henry Karnes, another attendee. Irion sought further guidance from Houston for the planned future engagement.<sup>27</sup>

Early in 1840, a small group of Comanche approached the officials in San Antonio with a proposal that they set a future date to negotiate a lasting peace between the Comanche and the Texans. The Comanche promised to return with a larger deputation and their American captives to finalize the treaty. When he heard of this pending deputation, Lamar immediately dispatched troops to San Antonio because he believed that it was possible the Comanche would not honor their end of the bargain. Since the Texans did not know the Penateka Comanche were only one band among the several bands of

the Comanche tribe, they could not know that the Penateka Comanche could not return with all of the white captives. They could only bring the white captives under their control. The failure of the Texans to understand the nature of the Comanche is one of the reasons that the Council House Fight was so tragic.<sup>28</sup>

Sixty-five Comanche arrived in San Antonio on March 19, 1840, but they brought only one American captive, Matilda Lockhart. It was clear that the 15-year-old Lockhart had been tortured. She had many bruises, burns, and her nose had been burned to the point where all of fleshy tissue was gone.<sup>29</sup> The Comanche either did not realize the reaction the Texans would have upon seeing the disfigured young girl, or they did not care.

Matilda told the story of her abuse, and told them that there were other captives in the village and that the Comanche planned to sell the captives one at a time.<sup>30</sup> With that news, the troops surrounded the council house. The commissioners asked the Comanche to produce the other prisoners. The main peace chief of the Comanche, Chief Muguara, said that they had brought the only captive that they had, the others were with other bands. After that answer, Muguara asked, "How do you like that answer?" Whereupon Lt. Colonel Fisher replied, "I do not like your answer. I told you not to come here again without bringing in your prisoners. Your women and children may depart in peace, and your braves may go and tell your people to send in the prisoners. When those prisoners are returned, your chiefs here present may likewise go free. Until then we will hold you as hostages."<sup>31</sup> The Comanche interpreter refused to translate the message until Commissioner Cooke insisted. The chiefs were informed that they could send several of their young men back to their camp to retrieve the other captives.<sup>32</sup>

Capt. George T. Howard's company was ordered by Col. Fisher into the council room and into the adjoining room in the back near the courtyard, where the other Comanche warriors were. Once inside, Capt. Howard placed soldiers at the doors and across the room to act as guards. The Texans explained to the Indians that they would not be released until the captives were safely returned to San Antonio. The interpreter translated this ultimatum and bolted from the room.<sup>33</sup>

The Comanche inside the room strung their bows and pulled out their weapons.<sup>34</sup> One of the chiefs ran for the doorway and plunged his knife into the soldier that barred his way. With this, a confused battle began. Chief Muguara stabbed Capt. Howard in the side and then was shot to death. A few chiefs fought their way out of the door and the commotion aroused the rest of the Comanche in the Plaza. The streets, alleys, and backyards for blocks around became a battleground. It was after midnight when the last two Indians were burned out of a backyard kitchen in which they had taken refuge. Casualties from the battle were thirty-five Comanche dead, including three women and two children, and twenty-seven women and children

captured. Seven whites were dead and eight were wounded. The captured Indians were locked up, but one woman was given a horse and provisions and told to take word to the tribe that if they wanted their chiefs back, they must bring in the rest of the white captives.<sup>35</sup> Only after she returned with these hostages would the Indians captured by the Texans be freed. She claimed she could return in four days with the captives, but twelve days was granted to provide her sufficient time. The Texans warned the woman that if she did not return in the given time they would assume the hostages had already been killed by the Comanche in retaliation and the Texans would be forced to kill the Penateka captives. According to Colonel McLeod, the woman was well mounted, given provisions and sent off. Both Colonel McLeod and Colonel Cooke remained in San Antonio to await her return, and when she did not come back in the prearranged twelve days, the Texans assumed the worst.<sup>36</sup>

All of the Texans' Comanche hostages were eventually moved from the city jail to the San Jose Mission.<sup>37</sup> Many of the people of San Antonio went to see them, and, according to Mary Maverick, many felt very bad for their situation. They were treated kindly, and were hired into local homes to live and work. And while some Indians were ransomed and exchanged, the rest managed to escape one way or another.<sup>38</sup>

The Comanche were livid following these events. They considered their ambassadors immune from acts of war, and were outraged that they were attacked and killed or captured.<sup>39</sup> On August 1, one thousand Comanche left the Balcones Escarpment under the leadership of Potsanaquahip (Buffalo Hump) traveled in the direction of the towns and settlements strung out along the rivers and creeks toward the coastal bend of Texas. Traveling with the warriors were their families. As they moved further south they traveled by night.<sup>40</sup> One thousand Comanche passed almost completely unnoticed through territory that contained many homesteads and settlements.<sup>41</sup>

The Comanche stopped at Victoria, Texas, and, on August 6, 1840, were seen on the edge of town. The Comanche attacked and killed a number of people, and the Texans fled to rooftops and opened rifle fire. The Comanche surrounded the town, captured over fifteen hundred horses and mules and generally made mischief, but made no effort to take the town and kill its citizens. The residents of Victoria had time to build barricades and the Comanche were discouraged by the rifle fire. They left the Victoria and headed south. On August 8, they arrived at Linnville, Texas. The Comanche were able to surround the town. They also burned and looted several stores, warehouses, and homes in Linnville, which was an important shipping center; the merchandise was destined for San Antonio and the Mexican trade. The Indians removed all they could carry from the warehouses and then set the warehouses on fire. According to John J. Linn, "the Indians made free with, and went dashing about the blazing village, amid their screeching squaws and 'little Injuns,' like

demons in a drunken saturnalia, with Robinson's [a local merchant ] hats on their heads and Robinson's umbrellas bobbing about on every side like tipsy young balloons."<sup>42</sup> The attack resulted in the virtual destruction of Linnville, Texas.

According to Gary Clayton Anderson, the Comanche had attacked Victoria and Linnville because of the need to avenge the men lost at the Council House Fight. Knowing that they were outgunned and needed weaponry to face the Texans' munitions, the Comanche raided Victoria and Linnville to access the Texan stockpiles.<sup>43</sup> The Comanche escaped from the area with a large number of horses, mules, and a few captives. This huge train, packed with stolen goods and tepees and containing women and children moving slowly across the wide open prairie was not easily missed. Nor was it an opportunity to be squandered. As they approached the Hill Country, awaiting Buffalo Hump and his massive convoy were an assortment of two hundred men who had gathered spontaneously from the towns of Gonzales, Lavaca, Victoria, Cuero and Texana.<sup>44</sup> The Texans spurred forward and crashed into the Comanche, killing fifteen of them. They caused the herd of horses to stampede, which then slammed into the pack horses, many of whom were carrying heavy loads of iron and were bogged down on muddy ground. What ensued was a fight between retreating Comanches and advancing Texans that struggled on over fifteen miles of ground. The Comanche stopped long enough to kill their captives. Ultimately, the Comanche lost most of the loot they had gotten from their raids on Victoria and Linnville, including the horses and mules.

Two months later, Col. John Moore led a squad of volunteers for a punitive expedition against the Comanche. By mid-October, his squad of Texans had gone further west than any Texans had gone before, some three hundred miles west of Austin. There they found a Comanche camp of some sixty lodges. Some accounts say that this was Buffalo Hump's camp.<sup>45</sup> The soldiers camped a few miles away and they attacked at dawn. In this battle, there was no mercy given to women or children. According to Moore, he left "the bodies of men, women and children—wounded, dying and dead on every hand."<sup>46</sup> He claimed to have killed one hundred thirty people in about half an hour. He took thirty-four prisoners and destroyed the village by fire.<sup>47</sup> Moore believed that he had avenged Linnville and Victoria. He may have, but the final war had just begun.

The most famous captive of the era was certainly Cynthia Ann Parker. She was captured by the Comanche at the age of nine, and she was treated as a full family member of the Comanche. Cynthia Ann Parker later became the wife of Peta Nocona and the mother of Quanah Parker. As such, she was helplessly thrown into the middle of a social and cultural disaster of epic proportions.

The Comanche's abilities with bow and arrow were legendary. What they could not battle was the white man's diseases. The Penateka Comanche were hit harder than any other band or tribe on the

plain.<sup>48</sup> No one knows how many thousands of Comanches died in the cholera epidemic of 1849, but what started as a gradual disintegration now looked like dissolution.<sup>49</sup> Ketumseh, a Penateka chief, said: "Over this vast country, where for centuries our ancestors roamed in undisputed possession, free and happy, what have we left? The game, our main dependence, is killed and driven off, and we are forced into the most sterile and barren portions of it to starve. We see nothing but extermination left before us, and we await the result with stolid indifference. Give us a country we can call our own, where we may bury our people in quiet."<sup>50</sup>

It appeared that things were growing worse for the Comanche, but the Comanche would not stop raiding the white settlements. Peta Nocona, along with his son Quanah, performed a series of sweeping, devastating raids into the counties between present-day Fort Worth and Wichita Falls, Texas. His war party swung west of Mesquiteville, and rode hard into the line of settlements, killing everyone they saw. They rode across open country in torrential rain and arrived at a place called Stagg Prairie, on the western edge of Parker County.<sup>51</sup> There they attacked the home of Ezra Sherman, raping, scalping, and killing his wife, Martha. Her death was neither senseless nor random. She was as much a victim of colliding political and social forces as she was of the arrows and knives of the raiders. Her death was a consequence of the unprecedented invasion of Comancheria by white settlers that had taken place at the end of the 1850s. She and her husband settled in the long-grass prairie beyond the Cross Timbers in northern Texas. This land was ancient buffalo ground that the Comanches had been fighting for since the early eighteenth century. Martha Sherman and her husband were part of that brazenly aggressive move into Comanche territory.

There was little evidence that anyone in the Office of Indian Affairs in Washington D.C. had the remotest idea of what to do. The only thing that the U.S. government could think to do to solve the Comanche situation was to put four hundred starving Penateka Comanche onto a reservation on the Brazos River in 1855. The Penateka, decimated by waves of diseases, were hunting lands emptied of game and were literally starving to death; the Penatekas who did not go to the reservation were simply being overrun by the new settlers. The reaction of Sanaco, one of the chiefs who came to the reservation, sums up the bitter resignation of the Penatekas: "You come into our country and select a small patch of ground, around which you run a line, and tell us the President will make us a present of this to live on, when everybody knows that the whole of this entire country, from the Red River to the Colorado, is ours, and always had been from time immemorial. I suppose, however, if the President tells us to confine ourselves to these narrow limits, we shall be forced to do so."<sup>52</sup>

In January 1858, Texas staggered from a fresh wave of Comanche attacks in Erath, Brown and Comanche counties. That was when the



Texans had had enough. The Texans would take matters into their own hands, and one hundred men were recruited for six-month terms of service. Rip Ford would command them. Ford and his men were to simply launch themselves north of the Red River, penetrate deep into Comanche territory, and strike an offensive blow. Texas Governor Hardin Runnels told the men, "Follow any and all trails of hostile or suspected hostile Indians you may discover, and if possible, overtake and chastise them, if unfriendly."<sup>53</sup> With these words, Governor Runnel was calling for open war against Indians, in direct defiance of federal policy.

In November of 1860, men from Weatherford went searching for Comanches. They traveled approximately 120 miles when they found a camp with a large number of Indians. When the men attacked, they found that most of the occupants of the camp were women. According to Charles Goodnight, the Rangers spared most, but not all, of the women. The federal troops killed everyone they encountered.<sup>54</sup> In a brief running fight, Lieutenant Sul Ross and Lieutenant Tom Kelliheir pursued the last three Indians on two horses. After a while, they caught up with a single Indian. Ross was about to shoot when the Comanche, who was carrying a small child, either opened her robe to show her breasts or cried, "Americano!" Depending on which version you believe, either one caused Ross not to shoot. Instead, he told Kelleheir to stay with her while Ross took off after the other two riders. He shot one who also turned out to be a woman. The other one turned out to be the chief, and he fired arrows at Ross. Ross shot him. The chief was later identified as Peta Nocona, Cynthia Ann Parker's husband and Quanah Parker's father.<sup>55</sup>

When Ross rode back, he saw that the woman was filthy. He also noted that she had blue eyes. She was then taken back to where Peta Nocona was lying, and she wept and wailed over his body. The soldiers did not let her stay there. They brought her back to the main battlefield and questioned her. She told Ross that she remembered that her father had been killed in a battle long ago and that she and her brother had been captured. That convinced Ross that she might be the long-lost Cynthia Ann Parker. With that, she stopped talking. They took her back to Fort Cooper, and she was delivered to the care of the captain's wife. A Ranger named A.B. Mason stayed with Cynthia Ann for a while, and later wrote a version of what Cynthia Ann told officials at Fort Cooper. His version was published in the February 5, 1861, issue of the Galveston Civilian. In this piece, Cynthia Ann said that she remembered as a child living in a house with a picket fence all around. One day some Indians came to the house and when her father went out to talk to them they killed him. She remembered that her mother and her four children were taken captive, but that her mother and two of the children were retaken by a white man. She said she lived with the Indians north of Santa Fe, and she has three children.<sup>56</sup>

Cynthia Ann was returned to her family and back at last in civilization. According to Gwynne, the real tragedy occurred not when Cynthia Ann was first captured by the Comanche, but when she was "rescued" from the Comanche and taken to a culture that she remembered nothing about.<sup>57</sup> To the white people at the time, this was an entirely satisfactory ending to the great epic tale. Cynthia Ann was returned to her family and back at last in civilization.<sup>58</sup>

There were some interesting sequels to the battle as well, with enormous implications to the future of the Comanche tribe. Quanah and his brother survived the battle. After the fight, Goodnight realized that two Indians had left on horseback. The young Ranger and ten scouts tracked them to a Comanche camp in the Panhandle. Although Goodnight never learned the identity of these two riders, they were almost certainly Quanah and his brother.<sup>59</sup>

Quanah Parker was born in 1848. His mother said that he did escape at the same time that she was captured. Quanah later quite forcefully denied that he had ever been there, or that his father had died there. In "the Case for Peta Nocona," Robert H Williams argues that Quanah Parker's later insistence that he and his father were out hunting during the attack was done by Quanah to protect his father's reputation. Quanah did not attempt to set the record straight until 1898, nearly 40 years after the event. He set the record straight when he was giving a speech in Dallas in 1910. He died shortly thereafter.<sup>60</sup>

Quanah was a remarkable man. He said he was born in Elk Creek, in what is now southwestern Oklahoma. But there is a Centennial marker on Cedar Lake south of Seminole, Texas, in Gaines County, that claims that site as Quanah's birth location.<sup>61</sup> For Quanah's first twelve years, he was the son of a powerful man, a war chief with many victories behind him. His father had many horses and was a talented hunter. The warriors and the band followed him as the war chief. According to Quanah, his father was so afraid that his white wife would be taken from him when traders came through the camp he often blackened her face with ashes and made her hide.<sup>62</sup> This might explain why there were very few sightings of Cynthia Ann Parker with the Comanche over the years.

Quanah grew up learning to ride horses, to catch horses, and to rope horses. He also learned to use weaponry young. His father would not have taught him. That was the task of the elderly men in the family, his grandfather or another elderly male. At six, he was given a bow and blunt arrows. As he got older, he began the hunt with real arrows, going out with other boys and shooting birds. The warriors of the Comanche did not know menial labor of any kind. They did not have to help to pack or unpack during moves, and the growing Comanche boys never fetched water or wood. Instead, they played: they wrestled, they swam, they raced their horses, and practiced in play the skills they would need in the future to save their lives.<sup>63</sup>

As he approached puberty, he was expected to strengthen his skills in hunting, particularly in archery, both on horseback and on foot. Comanches were known to be exceptional archers, both on horseback and on foot. He was expected to do no less.<sup>64</sup>

After the battle that killed his father, Quanah became an orphan in a culture that did not easily accommodate orphans. Quanah and his brother had no near relatives to care for them. Then his brother died and Quanah was totally alone. Later he said that he often had to beg for his food and he could scarcely get anyone to make or mend his clothes. "I at last learned that I was more cruelly treated than the other orphans on account of my white blood."<sup>65</sup>

Despite the hardships, Quanah became a full warrior when he was fifteen years old.<sup>66</sup> He was very intelligent and he was by nature aggressive and fearless. He also hated white men. According to his son, Baldwin Parker, "He wished to avenge the wrong. He understood, too, that white people were responsible for his mother's death."<sup>67</sup> Quanah Parker became a war chief at a very young age. His first raid was with the party that rode south through Oklahoma all the way to San Antonio. They stole thirty-eight horses and killed and scalped two white men. When they returned home with their herd of horses and the two scalps, a victory dance was held in their honor.<sup>68</sup>

On October 3, 1871, victorious Union soldiers decided to deal with the Comanche problem once and for all. Six hundred soldiers led by Ranald Slidell Mackenzie, along with their Tonkawa scouts, tracked the Comanche Quahadi tribe to the Llano Estacado. The Comanches were the target because no other tribe had ever caused so much havoc and death. No other tribe was even a close second. The Quahadis Comanches, led by Quanah Parker, had always shunned contact with whites. They never signed a treaty with whites. They were so fierce that even other Comanches feared them. An order was issued to the soldiers to go forward and kill Quahadis Comanches.<sup>69</sup>

For three days and over 40 miles the Union soldiers fought the Comanche. In the end at this time, neither the soldiers nor the Comanches won. But the soldiers had shown that they had the manpower and the weapons, and they were not going to stop. The ruin of the Comanche took four more years. Quanah Parker and Randal Slidell Mackenzie met in 1875, when the Quahadis Comanche finally surrendered and went to the reservation in southwestern Oklahoma.

The Council House Fight took place at the beginning of the westward expansion of the settlers. The fight was the first of many mistakes between the Comanche and the white men. But it was just one of many missteps on the blood-stained path that concluded inevitably some thirty-five years later with Quanah's capitulation to the white man's ways. Quanah embraced cattle ranching, gave speeches throughout the country, and even had dinner with Teddy Roosevelt, but the remainder of the Comanche nation remained in the reservation.<sup>70</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Paula Allen, "Old Council House saw start of 1840s chaos with Comanches," *San Antonio Express News*, June 10, 2007.

<sup>2</sup>David de La Vere, *The Texas Indians* (College Station: University of Texas A&M Press, 2004), p. 134.

<sup>3</sup>Thomas Kavanagh, *The Comanches: A History, 1706-1875* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), p. 352.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 121-126.

<sup>5</sup>James M. Daniel, "The Spanish Frontier in West Texas and Northern Mexico," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 71 (April 1968), 481-95.

<sup>6</sup>De La Vere, *The Texas Indians*, 142; James M. Daniel, "The Spanish Frontier in West Texas and Northern Mexico", *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 71 (April, 1968), 481-95; Jesus Frank de la Teja, *San Antonio de Bexar: A Community on New Spain's Northern Frontier*, 7, 15.

<sup>7</sup>Donald E. Chipman, *Spanish Texas, 1519-1821* (Austin: The University Of Texas Press, 1992) *Texas*, pp. 198-199.

<sup>8</sup>De la Teja, *San Antonio de Bexar*, pp. 13-14; William E. Dunn, "The Apache Mission on the San Saba: Its Founding and Failure," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 17 (April 1914), pp. 379-414.

<sup>9</sup>Joyde Schilz and Thomas F. Schilz. *Buffalo Hump and the Penateka Comanche*. El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1980), 6.

<sup>10</sup>Raul A. Ramos, *Beyond the Alamo: Forging Mexican Ethnicity in San Antonio: 1821 -1861*, (Chapel Hill: University Of North Carolina Press, 2008), p. 144.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup>Chipman, *Spanish Texas*, pp. 198-199.

<sup>13</sup>John C. Ewers, "The Influence of Epidemics On the Indian Populations and Cultures of Texas," *Plains Anthropologist* 18 (1973), p. 108.

<sup>14</sup>Arnoldo De León, "Mexican Texas," *Handbook of Texas Online* (<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/npm01>), accessed August 14, 2013. Published by the Texas State Historical Association.

<sup>15</sup>Schilz, *Buffalo Hump*, p. 7.

<sup>16</sup>Gregg Cantrell, *Stephen F. Austin: Empresario of Texas*, pp.136-137.

<sup>17</sup>Muckleroy, Anna, "The Indian Policy of the Republic of Texas," *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, April 1922, Vol. XXV, No. 4, [https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=F25IAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&output=reader&authuser=0&hl=en\\_US&pg=GBS.PA229](https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=F25IAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&output=reader&authuser=0&hl=en_US&pg=GBS.PA229), last accessed October 22, 2012.

<sup>18</sup>Lamar's First Message to Congress, December 21, 1838, *The Papers of Mirabeau B. Lamar*, Eds. , Charles A. Gulick, Jr., Katherine Elliot, and Harriet Smither, 6 vols., (Austin: Von Boeckmann-Jones, 1921-1937), Vol. 2, pp. 346-369.

<sup>19</sup>Lamar, *Papers*, Vol. 3, pp. 159-183.

<sup>20</sup>Donaly Brice, *The Great Comanche Raid: the Boldest Indian Attack of the Texas Republic* (Austin: Eakin Publishers, 1987), p. 13.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>22</sup>Brice, *The Great Comanche Raid*, p. 18.

<sup>23</sup>J. Love to M.B. Lamar. April 13, 1841, *Lamar Papers*, Vol. 3, pp.507-509.

<sup>24</sup>John H. Wilbarger, *Indian Depredations in Texas* (Austin: Hutchings Printing House, 1889), 22.

<sup>25</sup>Letter from R.A. Irion to Sam Houston, March 14, 1838, Winfrey and Day *The Texas Indian Papers, 1825-1843*, (Texas State Library: Austin, 1959), I: 42-45.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup>Carol A. Lipscomb, "Comanche Indians," *Handbook of Texas Online* (<http://www.tshaonline.org/articles/bmc72>), last accessed August 30, 2012. Published by Texas State Historical Association.

<sup>29</sup>Alice Gray Upchurch, "LOCKHART, MATILDA," *Handbook of Texas Online* (<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/flo02>), accessed August 12, 2012. Published by the Texas State Historical Association.

<sup>30</sup>Gregory Michno and Susan Michno, *A Fate Worse Than Death*, location 1643.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Gregory Michno and Susan Michno, *A Fate Worse Than Death*, location 1643.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Mary A. Maverick, eds. Rena Maverick Green and Maverick Fairchild Fisher, *The Memoirs Of Mary A. Maverick: A Journal of Early Texas* (San Antonio: Alamo Printing Company, 1921), 38.

<sup>36</sup> McLeod's Report to on the Council House Fight, March 20, 1840, <https://www.tsl.state.tx.us/exhibits/indian/war/mcleod-mar1840-1.html>; John Holmes Jenkins, ed., *Recollections of Early Texas: The Memoirs of John Holland Jenkins*. Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1958.

<sup>37</sup> Mildred P Mayhall, *Indian Wars of Texas* (Houston: Texian Press, 1965), 25.

<sup>38</sup> Maverick. *Memoirs*, 35.

<sup>39</sup> Gary Clayton Anderson, *The Conquest of Texas: The Ethnic Cleansing in the Promised Land* (Norman: The University of Oklahoma Press, 2005), 183.

<sup>40</sup> S.C. Gwynne, *Empire of the Summer Moon*, p. 93.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Linn, 341-342.

<sup>43</sup> Gary Clayton Anderson, *The Conquest of Texas: The Ethnic Cleansing In the Promised Land, 120-1875* (Norman: The University of Oklahoma Press, 2005), 185-186.

<sup>44</sup> John Henry Brown, *Indian Wars and Pioneers of Texas*, p. 81.

<sup>45</sup> Schilz and Schilz, 24.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 183-184.

<sup>48</sup> Ernest Wallace and E. Adamson Hoebel, *The Comanches: Lords of the South Plain (Civilization of the American Indians Series)*. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 169-170.

<sup>49</sup> Rupert N. Richardson, *The Comanche Barrier to the South Plains Settlement* (Glendale: Arthur H Clark Company, 1933), 78.

<sup>50</sup> Letter: Horace Capron to Robert Howard, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, September 30, 1852, letters received, M234, Roll 858, Texas Agency (cited in Schilz and Schilz, p. 38).

<sup>51</sup> J. Evetts Haley, *Charles Goodnight: Cowman and Plainsman* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1981), p. 49.

<sup>52</sup> Randolph Marcy, *The Prairie Traveler: The 1859 Handbook for Westbound Pioneers* (New York: Dover Publications, 2006), p. 218.

<sup>53</sup> John Salmon Ford, *Rip Ford's Texas*. ed. Stephen B. Oates (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1963), 224.

<sup>54</sup> Mike Cox, *The Texas Rangers: Wearing the Cinco Peso, 1821-1900* (New York: Forge Books, 2009), 169; Charles Goodnight. *Charles Goodnight's Indian Recollections* (Houston: Russell and Cockrell Printers, 1928), 22.

<sup>55</sup> Wilbarger, *Indian Depredations*, p. p. 58.

<sup>56</sup> *The Galveston Civilian*, February 5, 1861.

<sup>57</sup> S.C. Gwynne, *Empire of the Summer Moon, Quanah Parker And the Rise and Fall of the Comanches, The Most Powerful Indian Tribe In American History* (New York: Scribner, 2010), 181.

<sup>58</sup> Jo Ella Powell Exley, *Frontier Blood: The Saga of the Parker Family* (Centennial Series of the Association of Former Students, Texas A&M University) (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2008), 183-84, citing manuscript of J.A. Dickson.

<sup>59</sup> Lawrence T, Jones, "Cynthia Ann Parker and Pease Ross, The Forgotten Photographs," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, January 1991, p. 379.

<sup>60</sup> Robert H. Williams, "The Case for Peta Nocona," *Texans*, Vol. 10, 1972, p. 55.

<sup>61</sup> Chief Baldwin Parker, *Life of Quanah Parker, Comanche Chief*, through J. Evetts Haley, August 29, 1930, manuscript at Center for American History, University of Texas, Austin.; Brian C. Hosmer, "Parker, Quanah," *Handbook of Texas Online*, (<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fpa28>), last accessed October 12, 2012. Published by Texas State historical Association.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, p. 186.

<sup>63</sup> Ernest Wallace and E. Adamson Hoebel, *The Comanches*, p. 81.

<sup>64</sup> Wallace and Hoebel, p. 178.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, p. 183.

<sup>66</sup> "Quanah Parker in Adobe Walls Battle," *Borger News Herald*, date unknown, Panhandle Plains Historical Museum Archives.

<sup>67</sup> Chief Baldwin Parker, *Life of Quanah Parker, Comanche Chief*, through J. Evetts Haley, August 29, 1930, manuscript at Center for American History, University of Texas, Austin.

<sup>68</sup> Exley, *Frontier Blood*, p. 291.

<sup>69</sup> S.C. Gwynne, "The Last Days of the Comanche," *Texas Monthly*, May 2010, <http://www.texasmonthly.com/2010-05-01/feature4-2.php>, last accessed November 4, 2012.

<sup>70</sup> Steve Barnett, "Epoch of Comancheria," *San Antonio Express News*, August 22, 2010.

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