

Quanah Parker

Last Comanche Chief



Quanah Parker, half white and half Indian, was considered to be the last Chief of the Comanche. He was born in 1845 and lived during the most significant period of American Indian history, the time when the white man settled the prairie states and forced the Indians to the reservations. With the skill and mind of the white man and the heart of the Indian, he served his people well. As their Chief on the open prairies of Texas, to the Blue Room at the White House, it was always the welfare of the Comanche that was uppermost in his mind.

The mother of Quanah Parker was captured by a band of Comanche at Fort Parker, Texas, located between Groesbeck and Mexia, on May 19, 1836. At the time she was 9 years old, and the daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Silas Parker, who had moved from Virginia to establish a Baptist Mission and school on the Texas frontier. In the early hours of that May morning, Comanche Indians made a raid on Fort Parker and rode off with Cynthia Ann Parker and her brother John as captives. Cynthia Ann lived with the Comanche for 23 years. She adopted the Indian life, worked as an Indian, and roamed the Texas and Oklahoma prairies in search of food. On many of these expeditions she and her young son Quanah camped at Cedar Lake in Gaines County. She was recaptured by the white man in 1860 at the age of 32, but never ceased to grieve for her Indian family, which is believed to have caused her early death.

It is reported by Gen. R. S. Mackenzie that, during his raids against the white man, Quanah Parker rode a coal black racing pony with all the fury and determination of a savage. He wore brass hoops in his ears and was naked to the waist, wearing a full length headdress of eagle feathers, leggings, moccasins and a breechcloth. A necklace of bear's claws hung around his neck, and his scalp-lock was carefully braided with otter fur and tied with bright red flannel. Bells jingled as he rode, followed by his warriors. This was Quanah the Chief of the Quahadas, or the Antelope eaters of the Comanche. It was this same Quanah Parker who spoke English well, wore a fine suit and shoes, a hat and tie, but kept his hair in long braids, and met with 3 different U.S. presidents to negotiate terms for the betterment of the American Indian on the reservation. The strong character of Quanah Parker was shown through the great love he had for his people and the grief he felt over the 51-year separation from and loss of his mother. After negotiating with the white man, he exhumed his mother's body and reburied her in 1910 at the Post Oak Cemetery near Cache, Oklahoma, where he also was buried the following year on February 23, 1911. Both bodies were later moved to Fort Sill, Oklahoma.

At the time of his death he was reputed to be the wealthiest Indian in the United States. His burial ceremony lasted for two days, and he was dressed in the buckskin suit of his younger days and the war bonnet that he had worn so proudly.

Quanah Parker Marker

Driving Directions

Head East on Lamesa Highway, then North on County Road 141 for 2 miles and turn right on County Road 102, which runs into County Road 143. Go 6 miles and at the "T" intersection (147 and 151), take 147 North and you'll come to it on the West side of the road.