

FROM HORSEMEN TO HERDSMEN:  
THE COMANCHE TRANSITION FROM  
THE PLAINS TO THE RESERVATION

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Throughout the early and mid-nineteenth century, the Great Plains became a battleground for conflicts between Native American tribes and Anglo-American settlers. By the late 1850s and early 1860s, encroachment from settlers had caused raids from the resident Great Plains tribes like the Comanches to increase in ferocity and severity, prompting the United States government to seek a peace agreement. In late October 1867, an effort by the United States government to move Anglo-American settlement further into the West and end hostilities with the Comanche, Kiowa, Apache, Cheyenne, and Arapaho tribes culminated in the Medicine Lodge Treaty.<sup>1</sup> Article I of the treaty stated that, “the government of the United States desires peace, and its honor is here pledged to keep it. The Indians desire peace, and they now pledge their honor to maintain it.”<sup>2</sup> However, more than one-third of the Comanches refused to sign the treaty.<sup>3</sup> The United States government failed to realize that the Comanche bands that had signed the treaty were not representative of the entire Comanche

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tribe. So, when several non-signing bands did not relocate to the reservation, the United States pinned the blame on the Comanches and used the Comanches' "refusal" to move to the reservation as justification to wage a war that would come to be known as the Red River War.

The great catastrophe that befell the Comanche nation, plunging from their unparalleled dominance on the horse to a life on the enclosed reservation, can be attributed to the loss of the buffalo and limitations of Comanche warfare in the face of increasing Anglo-American military advancement spawned by the Industrial Revolution and the American Civil War. With respect to these two reasons, how were the seemingly inexhaustible buffalo reduced to a meager size in the matter of a decade? How did this affect the culture and lifestyle of the Comanches? To what extent can their response of adapting to the cattle industry on the reservation be a testament to the perseverance and strength of the Comanche nation? In this essay, I will explore the two reasons that the Comanches were forced from their lands towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century: the slaughter of the buffalo and increasingly powerful Anglo-American warfare. Additionally, I will discuss the events and tribal policies that led to many Comanches becoming small herd cattlemen on the reservation.

### On the Plains: How The Comanches Were Forced From Their Traditional Lands

The incessant buffalo slaughter that occurred on the Great Plains during the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century handicapped the Comanches, since their cultural and military strength depended on the buffalo. The buffalo defined gender roles and social customs. The job of the Comanche man was to go to war or to hunt buffalo while the job of the Comanche woman was to tan hides, weave tipis, and make clothes, all by-products of buffalo. Buffalo provided the Comanche with nearly everything: food, clothing, blankets, cloths, tents, shields, weapons, ropes, bowstrings, and even ornaments.<sup>4</sup>

For the Comanches, the use of the buffalo was pragmatic on the Great Plains due to its abundance. The buffalo provided the necessary protection and nourishment to help the Comanches deal with the harsh Plains climate. From 1869 to 1873, Colonel Richard Irving Dodge, who spent thirty-three years fighting the American Indians, noted that at the peak of the buffalo population, “the whole vast landscape appeared a mass of buffalo. Of their number it was impossible to form even a conjecture.”<sup>5</sup> The Texas Historical Commission estimates the number at fifty million.<sup>6</sup>

The Comanche system and way of life relied on the buffalo, and a loss of the buffalo meant a loss of basic necessities. Many buffalo products were even traded for manufactured goods such as guns and ammunition. Every October, the Comanches prepared for the “Great Fall Hunt” with the purpose of gathering supplies for the upcoming winter. Runners were sent to establish a suitable location for the hunting-camp, and once selected, the entire village moved in.<sup>7</sup> This camp would be the base of operations for at least one month each year. The Plains Indians truly believed that “however recklessly the white men might slaughter [the buffalo], they could never exterminate them.”<sup>8</sup>

Interest in the buffalo from East coast industrialists began in the late 1860s and early 1870s as tanners in Philadelphia had perfected a chemical process that turned buffalo hides into elastic machine belts.<sup>9</sup> Prior to that, danger from the Plains Indians and lack of a viable market had protected the buffalo.<sup>10</sup> Large buffalo robes were used for sleigh wraps and bedding, while smaller robes were used for overcoats.<sup>11</sup> These hides and robes brought \$3.75 each in the market.<sup>12</sup> By the time the buffalo business started to fully develop, roughly one hundred thousand hides and seven million pounds of buffalo tongues were being shipped from Dodge City each year.<sup>13</sup> Those numbers were low, however, because hide preservation was inefficient. One hide could be the product of five dead buffalo.<sup>14</sup> According to zoologist William Hornaday, who did extensive research on the anatomy and ecological relationships of the buffalo during the 1870s and 1880s for the Smithsonian Museum, less than one-third of the number of buffalo killed were

utilized; the other two-thirds were eaten fresh or wasted.<sup>15</sup> It was essentially the “Anglo-American business ethic that destroyed the buffalo;” the hunger for profits and the concept of the American Dream on the rugged frontier drove the slaughter.<sup>16</sup> Three groups emerged that profited from the buffalo industry. First, the buffalo hunters, typically young, single, rowdy men, sold hides directly to companies that specialized in buying and selling hides, and consumers. Second, investors or owners of buffalo hide speculation companies were able to either increase the efficiency of their factories by using buffalo hides for machine belts, or they would buy cheap hides to sell for profit. Finally, consumers benefitted from the lower prices that were a result of the increased factory efficiency. Consumers also had a selection of utilitarian buffalo products, including overcoats, ropes, and bedding. The economic opportunity from the buffalo was unfathomable. Hornaday estimated that 500,000 killed buffalo introduced to the United States economy would add \$2,500,000 in wealth to the United States.<sup>17</sup>

The speed with which the buffalo were killed uprooted Comanche beliefs and surprised Anglo-American consumers. Several factors aided in the quickness of the slaughter. First, the development of an extensive cross-country railroad system opened up the Eastern markets to buffalo hunters. In 1869, the Union Pacific and Central Pacific railroads met, forming the Transcontinental Railroad. When the buffalo industry picked up just a few years later, the growing railroad system provided a way for hunters to transport buffalo robes and hides to market quickly. The railroad companies also had an aversion to the buffalo after stampeding herds had derailed many trains. Conductors soon recognized the danger of the buffalo, and trains were often slowed down or even stopped to allow them to pass.<sup>18</sup>

Advances in weaponry, a direct result of the Industrial Revolution, facilitated a rapid decimation of the buffalo population. The .50 caliber Sharps rifle fired a 600-grain bullet driven by 125 grains of black powder.<sup>19</sup> The rifle could kill a 2,000-pound buffalo at a distance of over half a mile.<sup>20</sup> Hunters such as William Cody, Wylie Poe, and Brick Bond demonstrated the ease with which

the buffalo could be killed. Cody, nicknamed “Buffalo Bill,” killed 4,280 buffalo over seven months.<sup>21</sup> Poe once killed 90 buffalo without moving from his shooting spot, and Bond typically killed 250 buffalo in a single day.<sup>22</sup> The Comanches witnessed their source of livelihood quickly vanishing. To counterbalance the loss of the buffalo, Comanches began to engage in more raids to obtain basic necessities. This aggravated the United States government and settlers who wished to expand west without obstruction. The government failed to realize that it was actually the success of the buffalo industry that had caused the Comanche backlash on the frontier.

The destruction took less than a decade, and by October 1874, Colonel Dodge noted that, “a few buffalo were encountered, but there seemed to be more hunters than buffalo.”<sup>23</sup> A memorandum from Messrs. J & A. Boskowitz, a buffalo hide speculation company, shows the speed with which the buffalo industry grew and collapsed. In 1876, the company purchased 31,838 buffalo robes for \$39,620.<sup>24</sup> As the industry grew, by 1878, the company purchased 41,268 buffalo robes for \$150,500.<sup>25</sup> By 1880, the buffalo supply had begun to fall while demand was still high. As a result, the company purchased only 34,901 robes for \$176,200.<sup>26</sup> Finally, by 1883, the company purchased 5,690 robes for \$29,770, and in 1884, the company purchased no robes.<sup>27</sup> This sharp decline indicates the ultimate depletion of the buffalo population and the direct effect on the Comanche lifestyle.

Law protected the Plains Indians and the buffalo, but the Indian Bureau made only a half-hearted attempt to keep the buffalo hunters out of the Great Plains.<sup>28</sup> The loss of the buffalo took away the food, shelter, and morale of the Comanches, who by July of 1875 had opted to relocate to the Kiowa-Comanche Reservation.<sup>29</sup> Estimates of the total number of buffalo killed during the entire span starting in the 1860s range from five million<sup>30</sup> to upwards of forty million.<sup>31</sup> Dodge wrote that “with [the buffalo], [the Plains Indian] is rich and happy, without it he is poor as poverty itself, and constantly on the verge of starvation.”<sup>32</sup> The loss of the buffalo, coupled with defeats on the battlefield, drove the

Comanches to a hopeless state, left with no way to resume their original way of life.

With the pre-1860s buffalo numbers, Comanches frequently and successfully engaged in battles as they had sufficient food and weaponry. Without the buffalo, however, Comanches were forced to shift to a survival-oriented mentality. Regardless, Comanche society was centered around war and had been for over a century. To stay successful on the Great Plains, tribes had to simply win battles. When the Comanches acquired the horse from the Spanish in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, their transformation from an obscure tribe to one of astounding dominance ensued. The introduction of the horse revolutionized Comanche warfare and society; the horse became their currency, war vehicle, and hunting vehicle. With the horse, Comanche raids were fiercer and quicker. Despite this, there were several limitations of Comanche warfare when compared to the newer technology and size of the United States. First, the warrior population was small. The highest estimate of the warrior population, given by the Mexican government, was 8,000.<sup>33</sup> The U.S. government estimated that there were around 5,400 Comanche warriors.<sup>34</sup> George Catlin, an American painter who spent many years constructing Plains Indian portraits, estimated the warrior population at around 7,000 and a total population between 30,000 and 40,000.<sup>35</sup> To highlight the weakness that this presented, the population of the United States from the 1850 census was over 23,000,000.<sup>36</sup>

Comanches had guns, but a Comanche warrior typically did not use guns until the age of twenty-five. Even then, Comanches favored the bow and arrow over the gun.<sup>37</sup> As primarily short-distance weapons, however, arrows lost their penetrative power shortly after being released. When the Comanches had guns, they were of various types from different trades with no uniformity of make or caliber.<sup>38</sup> Colonel Dodge described this as, “a fortunate circumstance for his enemies, but extremely annoying to the Indian.”<sup>39</sup> Though obtaining powder and lead from Comanchero traders was easy, the warriors had to hammer the lead into spherical form, often reloading shells forty to fifty times.<sup>40</sup> The practice

of re-using bullets and shells inherently decreased the efficiency of the gun, explaining why the Comanches remained loyal to the bow and arrow. Furthermore, it was tedious and difficult to reload guns on horseback, restricting Comanche use of the gun to either the opening volley or hand-to-hand combat.

Though these limitations were negligible against other Native American tribes, United States soldiers and frontiersmen had learned through experience and failure how to gain an upper hand in the chaos of typical Plains warfare. These soldiers and frontiersmen did not always have success in battle, however. During the 1830s, Texas Rangers, the semi-organized group of frontiersmen that protected Anglo-American expansion, were often outmaneuvered and outsmarted by Comanche bands. With the Rangers fighting only on foot, the Comanches easily won battle after battle.

It was not until the Industrial Revolution of the mid and late 19<sup>th</sup> century, which provided Texas Rangers with more advanced weaponry, that the tide slowly started to turn. In 1847, Samuel Walker and Samuel Colt drastically changed warfare with the Comanches through the invention of the Colt Walker revolver. The gun had a large, nine-inch barrel, held .44-caliber bullets, and was “as deadly as a rifle up to a hundred yards.”<sup>41</sup> Rangers learned to shoot the new guns quickly and on horseback. Since Comanche gun use was restricted by the many difficulties of reloading and a lack of uniformity, Rangers had a significant weaponry advantage. Comanche losses were oftentimes not strategic failures but rather due to disadvantages in weaponry.

In addition to the sheer power behind the new revolver, Walker and Colt also included a mechanism that quickly loaded six lead balls into the barrel. Nelson Lee, who was captured by the Comanches for three years, explained the power of the new revolver:

[The Comanches] were two hundred in number, and fought well and bravely, but our revolvers, fatal as they were astonishing, put them speedily to flight.<sup>42</sup>

The fight that Lee described came to be known as the Battle of Walker's Creek. It was one of the first times that the Comanches directly witnessed the full force of the Colt Walker revolver. Captain John Coffee Hays and his company of fourteen volunteers successfully repelled two attacks from a Comanche raiding party. The raiding party's numbers were estimated between forty to upwards of two hundred men.<sup>43</sup> After an hour of fighting, one Ranger was killed with four others wounded while from twenty to fifty Comanches were killed, including their leader Yellow Wolf.<sup>44</sup> This fight displayed the advantage that came with the Rangers' Colt Walker revolvers.

When the Comanches fought in the Red River War, they again had a significant firepower disadvantage. The Plains Indians used a seven-shot .50-caliber Spencer repeating rifle while the United States Army used single shot .45-caliber Springfield rifles and carbines. Although this seemed like a mismatch, the 800-yard range of the Army's Springfield offset the 400-yard range of the Plains Indian Spencer, preventing Indian hit and run tactics.<sup>45</sup> The Army basically "picked off" Plains Indians and prevented them from prompting a close-range fight, where the Indians would have had an advantage with the Spencer.<sup>46</sup> The army also employed a use of artillery such as the mountain howitzer. Although its use was limited on the rough terrain, it had a "debilitating psychological effect" on the Plains Indians who were involved.<sup>47</sup> In 1864, during the First Battle of Adobe Walls, Kit Carson employed two mountain howitzers against twelve to fourteen hundred Comanches.<sup>48</sup> Alvin Lynn, a historian on the First Battle of Adobe Walls, wrote:

The Indians, not familiar with the big guns, stood high in their stirrups and pondered the firing. As the shells began to explode around them, they headed their mounts, in a dead run, toward their villages down river. By the time the artillerymen fired another volley, the Indians were totally out of range of the cannons.<sup>49</sup>

Moreover, the fundamental battle mentality of a Comanche warrior was conservative. The Comanches rarely pushed an advantage due to their fear of losing large numbers. Colonel Dodge explained that, "the population being small, the life of each skilled warrior is of serious importance to the whole tribe."<sup>50</sup> Nelson Lee witnessed

an engagement between a band of Comanches and a band of Apaches. He observed, "The Apaches at length gave way, disappearing beyond the ridge. Instead of pursuing their advantage, however, the Comanches hastily gathered up their dead and retreated towards the mountains we had crossed."<sup>51</sup> A similar event occurred in 1838. On August 10, two hundred Comanches in Arroyo Seco attacked Henry W. Karnes, a citizen of San Antonio, and his group of twenty-one volunteers. The Comanches had a patent advantage and ten to one odds but retreated after losing just over twenty of their warriors.<sup>52</sup>

Thus, when the United States government waged its war against the Comanches from 1874 to 1875, the Comanches were already indisposed. This war, known as the Red River War, pitted 3,000 United States soldiers against a meager 700 Plains Indian soldiers.<sup>53</sup> The final blow came at the Battle of Palo Duro Canyon on September 28, 1874. Colonel Ranald S. Mackenzie led his Fourth United States Cavalry, the Tenth Infantry, and the Eleventh Infantry down a steep 1,000-foot bluff in the middle of the night into a camp comprised of Cheyennes, Kiowas, and Comanches.<sup>54</sup> Only three warriors were killed, but Mackenzie's troops burned the village and captured over one thousand Indian horses. Inspired by William T. Sherman's "March to the Sea," this total warfare method attempted to damage the resources and economic strength of the Comanches.<sup>55</sup> Mackenzie gave some of the horses to his officers and subsequently ordered the rest to be shot.<sup>56</sup> Most of the Indians who had escaped then straggled the long trek to the Kiowa-Comanche Reservation, beaten and disheartened. It was a combination of losing the buffalo and losing key battles that forced the Comanche onto the reservation.

On June 2, 1875, Quanah Parker and his Kwahadi band, the last major band that would relocate to the reservation, rode into Fort Sill waving the peace flag.<sup>57</sup> Quanah did not surrender, but he voluntarily moved his band to the reservation after witnessing the destruction of his fellow Comanches, a move ending a two-hundred-year-long run of absolute dominance by the Comanches on the Great Plains.

### On the Reservation: The Comanches and the Cattlemen

On the Kiowa-Comanche Reservation, the Comanches, who had always freely roamed the Great Plains, were now forced into a sedentary lifestyle. Living on the reservation, they were surrounded by a booming cattle business. The buffalo were nearly gone and the plains were wide open. I will discuss the events, tribal policies, and outcomes of the relationship between the Comanches and the cattle industry as well as the extent to which the Comanches became cattlemen in order to show the perseverance of the Comanche nation in the face of being displaced from their traditional lands.

Once on the reservation, Colonel Mackenzie wanted to introduce livestock to the Comanches to encourage them to give up the practice of roaming after the buffalo. In the summer of 1875, he purchased \$22,000 worth of purebred sheep and goats, which the Comanches had no taste for.<sup>58</sup> Mackenzie, however, also gave the Comanches cattle. They appreciated the cattle, but they were never able to fully become cattlemen in the early years on the reservation because starvation forced them to kill the few cattle that they had. The Indian agent was allowed a paltry sum of \$3.00 per month to feed each Native American on the reservation, supplemented with any buffalo that were killed. The buffalo were near extinction, which left most of the Comanches heavily dependent upon the small beef rations that the agency gave to them.<sup>59</sup>

Starting as early as the 1690s with Spanish missionaries in northern Texas, the cattle business had turned into a multi-million dollar industry.<sup>60</sup> Cattle in the Texas region, worth \$3 or \$4, brought \$30 or \$40 apiece in northern markets.<sup>61</sup> As the buffalo population dwindled, cattle outfitters replaced the buffalo hide industry with the beef industry using the extensive railroad network. Cattle tycoons such as Charles Goodnight, who owned more than 100,000 cattle on 1.335 million acres, secured enormous wealth.<sup>62</sup> Supersized ranches dominated the lands that had once belonged to the Comanches and the buffalo. One such ranch, named XIT, had herds ranging in size from 125,000 to 150,000 cattle on more than 3 million acres.<sup>63</sup>

The cattlemen and Comanches collided when John Lytle, a former Confederate soldier who began ranching and trail driving on his own, developed the Western Trail for cattle drives to the Dodge City, Kansas shipping point in 1871.<sup>64</sup> Lytle was forced out of necessity to develop this trail as cattle drivers going to Abilene, Kansas on the more eastern Chisholm Trail had met resistance from farmers in Arkansas, Missouri, and eastern Kansas.<sup>65</sup> Cattle drives to Dodge City were highly profitable as the westward expanding Kansas-Pacific Railroad opened eastern markets to the cattle drivers.<sup>66</sup> The reservation where the Comanches, Kiowa, and Kiowa-Apaches resided sat between Greer County to the west and the Chickasaw Reservation to the east. The Western Trail ran directly through the western part of the Comanche, Kiowa, and Kiowa-Apache reservation. It started northwest of San Antonio, and then it passed through Fort Griffin, which was about one hundred miles west of the Fort Worth stockyards. From there, the trail moved north to Doan's Crossing, named after an entrepreneurial couple who maximized profits from passing cowboys.<sup>67</sup> After Doan's, which had turned into a supply center and gathering place for both cowboys and Plains Indians, the cattle crossed the Red River and entered Comanche lands.<sup>68</sup> By 1879, Doan said that, "One hundred thousand cattle passed over the trail by the little store."<sup>69</sup>

The cattlemen saw the western Plains Indian reservation lands as an opportunity to allow the cattle to recoup from a difficult drive after the Red River, and hold there until prices increased in Dodge City, and "fatten" the cows to bring more money at market.<sup>70</sup> This method worked because the reservation Indians rarely ventured into the western part of their lands. They were tied to the agency in the east because they could no longer hunt the buffalo and had become dependent upon government rations to keep themselves from starvation.<sup>71</sup> The cattle problem began to increase, and by 1876, "Fort Sill's adjutant reported that five herds were traversing the west end of the reservation."<sup>72</sup> An agent was sent to have the cattle removed in 1877, but the policy was corrupt and ineffective. The policy stated that if the cattle were driven onto the reservation to graze, a penalty of one dollar per head was incurred; however, if the cattle incidentally grazed while

being driven through the reservation, no penalty was incurred. So, cattlemen easily bypassed the penalty by decreasing their rate of travel across the reservation.<sup>73</sup>

In 1881, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs attempted to fix the cattle problem by establishing a distinct trail across the reservation that led to Dodge City as well as requiring that cattle move at least 10 miles per day through the reservation. The Commissioner directed soldiers and police to enforce the mandate.<sup>74</sup> The small Indian police and Fort Sill soldier force, however, was unable to control all of the illegal grazing. The army officers “had to exercise a great deal of tact and diplomacy.”<sup>75</sup> They were ordered to respect the rights of the cattlemen, Indians, and beef contractors, which often meant that the cattlemen would pay the insignificant fine and continue to drive across the Indian reservation lands.<sup>76</sup> The western border of the reservation extended for about one hundred miles, and in his 1885 Annual Report, Indian Agent P.B. Hunt argued that, “it would have required an army to keep [the cattlemen] off.”<sup>77</sup>

Starting in the late 1870s, tribal politics regarding the cattlemen split the Native American population on the reservation into pro-leasing and anti-leasing factions.<sup>78</sup> The pro-leasing faction was typically comprised of Comanches, who were further west than the Kiowa and Kiowa-Apache and thus had more of a vested interest.<sup>79</sup> They argued that game on the reservation had declined due to hunting by both Anglo-American settlers and Plains Indian tribes, so it was vital that a new means of subsistence be secured. They also argued that over two million acres were available, and thirty-five cattle companies were lined up to enter into leasing agreements.<sup>80</sup> Many government officials shared the same view, including the Indian Agent Hunt who stated, “There are thousands of acres of excellent grass going to waste.”<sup>81</sup> On the other hand, the anti-leasing faction was comprised primarily of the more eastern Kiowa, Kiowa-Apache, and a section of Comanches. The anti-leasing faction members typically did not directly benefit from any leasing deal or thought them to be detrimental to the

future of the Indians. William T. Hagan, a Comanche historian, stated that:

[The anti-leasing faction] felt that their future as farmers and stockmen would be endangered by turning over half of the reservation to the white men. Not only would it restrict the area open to the Indians, but the income from the lease...would encourage gambling among their young men and distract them from opening farms and caring for their own livestock.<sup>82</sup>

Though the motives behind each faction seem coincidentally spatial, the leaders of the anti-leasing faction, Tabananaka and White Wolf, were actually Comanches.<sup>83</sup> Before any serious tribal or governmental action was taken, Comanches would take bribes from passing or grazing herds in the form of steers. Hagan writes, "The trail boss usually complied, accepting this levy as simply a cost of using the trail across the reservation."<sup>84</sup>

The first informal leasing talks occurred in 1879 and 1880 with Quanah Parker, Principal Chief of the Comanches, representing the anti-leasing faction.<sup>85</sup> By 1881, however, drought caused Comanche vegetables, such as corn, beans, and melons, to fail.<sup>86</sup> Coupled with insufficient government rations, the Plains Indians were starving. This prompted Indian Agent Hunt to seek a better, strictly unofficial deal with the cattlemen. He allowed them to graze on reservation lands if they would give a certain amount of beef to the Indians.<sup>87</sup> For a short period of time, the Plains Indians had more food. Agent Hunt realized that farming would not be practical as the Kiowa-Comanche reserve had a climate that was not conducive to agriculture. So, he encouraged them to start cattle herds of their own.<sup>88</sup>

During the next four years, Quanah realized the potential for himself and others in the cattle market, and by 1884, he had emerged as the leader of the pro-leasing faction. The anti-leasing faction rebuked Quanah, saying that he had sold out to the cattlemen. However, when a cattle driver named Julian Gunter encountered Quanah's group of Indians on the reservation, Quanah sternly told him, "Your government gave this land to the Indian to be his hunting ground. But you go through and scare the game and your cattle eat the grass so the buffalo leaves and the Indian

starves.”<sup>89</sup> Quanah’s conversion to the pro-leasing faction was not a matter of personal benefit, but rather one of practicality.

In mid-November of 1884, an “agreement” had been reached in the tribe that favored leasing. Special Agent Folsom conducted his own poll, however, and found an anti-leasing majority of 402 to 290.<sup>90</sup> So, Folsom was surprised when on December 23, 404 Comanches, Kiowas, and Kiowa-Apaches signed the lease agreement. Despite the questionable voting turnout, Agent Hunt quickly endorsed the lease.<sup>91</sup> In February of 1885, a delegation of Indians went to Washington to secure federal approval to lease grazing lands to the cattlemen. President Chester A. Arthur refused to make any decisions and advised the Indians to make their own agreements with the cattlemen.<sup>92</sup> The Indians thus made arrangements with several large cattle firms, and the first “grass payments” were made in the summer of 1885.<sup>93</sup> The semiannual “grass payments” amounted to \$9.50 to each member of the Comanche, Kiowa, and Kiowa-Apache tribes.<sup>94</sup>

In February 1892, the Indian delegation went to Washington again. This time, it was decided that the Indian Agent had the authority to submit one-year contracts for approval. Starting on September 1, 1892, six leases, totaling 250,580 acres would be leased to the approved cattle outfitters.<sup>95</sup> All the leases were made through the Anadarko office and sent to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in Washington for approval. By 1893, the Kiowa-Comanche reservation was leasing 1,304,958 acres to approved cattle outfitters.<sup>96</sup> Hagan writes:

The cattlemen’s “grass payments” to the Comanches and associated tribes had reached \$232,000 by 1900...some of the Comanches had opened farms and most of them owned cattle, a few holding herds that ran into the hundreds. Hunger was no longer the problem that it had been throughout most of the 1880s.<sup>97</sup>

Though some Kiowa and Kiowa-Apaches still opposed leasing, the overall effect of leasing was that it put the Plains Indians on their own two feet. The “grass payments” provided the Comanches with enough money to buy cattle of their own. The Comanches would never become big cattlemen in the Great Plain’s context of owning hundreds of thousands of cattle, but they owned enough to sur-

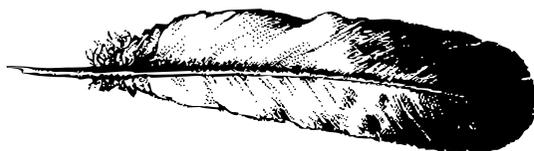
vive on the reservations without the buffalo and without sufficient support from the federal government. No exact number has been calculated for the Comanches, but when the Kiowa-Apache sold their herd of cattle, it brought over \$300,000.<sup>98</sup>

The leasing agreements would come to a close with the Jerome Agreement. Pressure from land-hungry “boomers” to open the Kiowa-Comanche reservation prompted the October 6, 1892, agreement between the Comanche, Kiowa, and Kiowa-Apache tribes and the United States.<sup>99</sup> The agreement stated that:

Each Indian man, woman, and child is to secure 160 acres of land by allotment. Church, agency, school, military, or other public land cannot be claimed by an individual...The allotments are to be held in trust for twenty-five years, after which they are to be conveyed in fee simple to the holder.<sup>100</sup>

The agreement also set aside four tracts of land that would belong collectively to the Indians. The “Big Pasture” with 414,720 acres out of the total 551,680 acres was by far the largest.<sup>101</sup> The Comanches, Kiowa, and Kiowa-Apache used this communal landholding for the open-range cattle business. Until the opening of the pasture in 1906, the Indians continued to lease the land to cattle outfitters.<sup>102</sup>

On June 6, 1900, Congress passed the Jerome Agreement, turning it into law. On July 4, 1901, President McKinley issued Presidential Proclamation 460,<sup>103</sup> ordering the execution of the agreement.<sup>104</sup> Each family was placed on a small plot of land, once again removed from their homes, and expected to learn the trade of farming and ranching. The Comanches transformed to the best of their abilities. The Comanches had lost their homes, fallen from horseback dominance on the Great Plains, moved to an enclosed reservation, and sought new lives in the cattle industry. And thus, over the course of half a century, the Comanches had finished their transition—from horsemen to herdsmen.



## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Kim Gant, *Medicine Lodge Peace Treaty* (2011), accessed November 23, 2014, <https://www.kshs.org/kansapedia/medicine-lodge-peace-treaty/16709>.

<sup>2</sup> Compiled and edited by Charles J. Kappler, *Treaty With The Kiowa and Comanche, 1867* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904), accessed December 21, 2014, <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/kappler/Vol2/treaties/kio0977.htm>.

<sup>3</sup> Bill Neeley, *The Last Comanche Chief: The Life and Times of Quanah Parker* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, 1995), 102.

<sup>4</sup> William T. Hornaday, *The Extermination of the American Bison* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1889), 259, EPUB.

<sup>5</sup> Colonel Richard Irving Dodge, *Our Wild Indians: Thirty-Three Years' Personal Experience Among the Red Men of the Great West* (Williamstown, MA: Corner House Publishers, 1978), 283.

<sup>6</sup> Texas Historical Commission, *Red River War of 1874-1875: Clash of Culture in the Texas Panhandle* (Austin: Texas Historical Commission), 6.

<sup>7</sup> Dodge, p. 287.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 287.

<sup>9</sup> Pekka Hämäläinen, *Comanche Empire* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 336.

<sup>10</sup> Dodge, p. 293.

<sup>11</sup> Hornaday, p. 283.

<sup>12</sup> T.R. Fehrenbach, *Comanches: The History of a People* (New York, NY: Anchor Books, 1974), 522.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 522.

<sup>14</sup> Dodge, p. 293.

<sup>15</sup> Hornaday, p. 254.

<sup>16</sup> Fehrenbach, p. 522.

<sup>17</sup> Hornaday, p. 250.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76.

<sup>19</sup> Fehrenbach, p. 523.

<sup>20</sup> S.C. Gwynne, *Empire of the Summer Moon* (New York, NY: Scribner, 2010), 270.

<sup>21</sup> Fehrenbach, p. 522.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 523.

<sup>23</sup> Dodge, p. 295.

<sup>24</sup> Hornaday, pp. 264-265.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

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

- <sup>27</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>28</sup> Dodge, p. 296.
- <sup>29</sup> J. Evetts Haley, "The Last Great Chief," *The Shamrock*, Spring 1957.
- <sup>30</sup> Dodge, p. 295.
- <sup>31</sup> Texas Historical Commission, p. 6.
- <sup>32</sup> Dodge, p. 282.
- <sup>33</sup> Ernest Wallace and E. Adamson Hoebel, *The Comanches: Lords of the South Plains* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1986), 31.
- <sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 31.
- <sup>35</sup> Neeley, p. 33.
- <sup>36</sup> U.S. Census, "Pop Culture: 1850," U.S. Census, accessed September 19, 2014, [https://www.census.gov/history/www/through\\_the\\_decades/fast\\_facts/1850\\_fast\\_facts.html](https://www.census.gov/history/www/through_the_decades/fast_facts/1850_fast_facts.html).
- <sup>37</sup> Dodge, p. 416.
- <sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 423.
- <sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 423.
- <sup>40</sup> Ibid., pp. 423, 450.
- <sup>41</sup> Gwynne, p. 150.
- <sup>42</sup> Nelson Lee, *Three Years Among the Comanches: The Narrative of Nelson Lee, the Texas Ranger* (Santa Barbara, CA: The Narrative Press, 2001), 23.
- <sup>43</sup> Thomas W. Cutrer, "Battle of Walker's Creek," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed March 17, 2015, <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/btw02>.
- <sup>44</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>45</sup> Texas Historical Commission, p. 14.
- <sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 14.
- <sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 14.
- <sup>48</sup> Alvin R. Lynn, *Kit Carson and the First Battle of Adobe Walls* (Lubbock, TX: Texas Tech University Press, 2014), 71.
- <sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 71.
- <sup>50</sup> Dodge, p. 436.
- <sup>51</sup> Lee, p. 142.
- <sup>52</sup> John Henry Brown, *Indian Wars and Pioneers of Texas* (Austin, TX: L.E. Daniell, 1880), 50-51.
- <sup>53</sup> Texas Historical Commission, p. 3.
- <sup>54</sup> Thomas F. Schilz, "Battle of Palo Duro Canyon," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed March 17, 2015, <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/btp03>.
- <sup>55</sup> Hämäläinen, p. 333.
- <sup>56</sup> Gwynne, p. 282.

- <sup>57</sup> Haley.
- <sup>58</sup> Colonel W.S. Nye, *Carbine and Lance: The Story of Old Fort Sill* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1969), 250.
- <sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 250.
- <sup>60</sup> Bill O'Neal, *West Texas Cattle Kingdom* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2013), 14.
- <sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.
- <sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.
- <sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.
- <sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.
- <sup>65</sup> Neeley, p. 182.
- <sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 182.
- <sup>67</sup> O'Neal, p. 28.
- <sup>68</sup> Neeley, p. 183.
- <sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 183.
- <sup>70</sup> William T. Hagan, *Quanah Parker, Comanche Chief* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), 28.
- <sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 28-29.
- <sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.
- <sup>73</sup> Wallace and Hoebel, p. 346.
- <sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 346.
- <sup>75</sup> Colonel W.S. Nye, p. 257.
- <sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 257.
- <sup>77</sup> Wallace and Hoebel, p. 347.
- <sup>78</sup> Hagan, p. 28.
- <sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.
- <sup>80</sup> Gwynne, p. 298.
- <sup>81</sup> Hagan, p. 29.
- <sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.
- <sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.
- <sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.
- <sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.
- <sup>86</sup> W. E. S. Dickerson, "Comanche Indian Reservation," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed February 23, 2015, <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/bpc10>.
- <sup>87</sup> Colonel W.S. Nye, p. 257.
- <sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 258.
- <sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 297.
- <sup>90</sup> Hagan, p. 36.
- <sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.
- <sup>92</sup> Colonel W.S. Nye, pp. 258-259.
- <sup>93</sup> Wallace and Hoebel, p. 348.

<sup>94</sup> Bill Neeley, *Quanah Parker and His People* (Slaton: Brazos Press, 1986), 144.

<sup>95</sup> Wallace and Hoebel, p. 348.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 349.

<sup>97</sup> William T. Hagan, *United States-Comanche Relations*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press: 1976), 154; quoted in Bill Neeley, *Quanah Parker and His People*, (Slaton, TX: Brazos Press, 1986), 145.

<sup>98</sup> Colonel W.S. Nye, p. 298.

<sup>99</sup> Wallace and Hoebel, p. 349.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 349.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 350.

<sup>102</sup> Richard Mize, "Big Pasture," *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, accessed March 18, 2015, <http://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry.php?entry=BI003>.

<sup>103</sup> Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, "The American Presidency Project," *University of California Santa-Barbara*, accessed March 19, 2015, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu>.

<sup>104</sup> Wallace and Hoebel, p. 351.

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“The Secret Victory”

Richard Bernstein, *Dictatorship of Virtue*,  
New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994, pp. 223-227

If the space invader has become the hero and the earthling the villain, similar inversions have taken place in at least one other cinematic prototype—the cowboy-and-Indian adventure, the classic in this case being Kevin Costner’s *Dances With Wolves* of 1990. Never mind that Costner uses a historical event that never happened (the defection of a Civil War cavalry officer to the Indians) and transforms the warlike, scalp-taking, torturing, predatory, patriarchal, male-chauvinistic Sioux Indians into a group that might have founded the Ethical Culture Society. *Dances With Wolves* replaces one myth, that of the brave settler and the savage Indian, with another—the morally advanced friend-of-the-earth Indian (“Never have I seen a people more devoted to family,” the cavalry defector says with reverence) and the malodorous, foulmouthed, bellicose white man.

The desire to put the Indian on a pedestal of superior moral awareness defeats even simple truth. In 1991 two American Indians were the subjects of best-selling books. They became icons of the New Consciousness, and they continued to be so even after it was discovered in both cases that their most admirable qualities had been invented for them by white men. One of them, Chief Seattle, became identified with a statement reproduced on posters in practically every multicultural school in America, the statement about “The earth is our mother” and “I have seen a thousand rotting buffalos on the prairie, left by the white man who shot them from a passing train.” These quotes reappear every year on Earth Day and form the centerpiece of *Brother Eagle, Sister Sky: A Message from Chief Seattle*, which sold 280,000 copies in its first six months in print. The problem is that Chief Seattle’s ecological views were invented by a screenwriter named Ted Perry for a 1972 film about environmentalism. Very little is actually known about Chief Seattle himself because he left scant written record of himself, but it is known that he spent his entire life in the Pacific Northwest and never saw buffalo or the prairie.

*The Education of Little Tree* and the cult that grew up around him brings into even sharper relief our collective search for new heroes of virtue. *Little Tree*, which was on top of the *New York Times* paperback best-seller list for thirty weeks in 1991, won the Abby Award from the American Booksellers Association, and drew twenty-seven film offers, is supposedly about Native American Forrest Carter’s heartwarming Cherokee upbringing, in which white people are depicted as fools and ignoramuses. The evidence is that, in fact, the book was written in the late 1970s as a kind of gag by a certain Asa Carter, a former speechwriter for Alabama’s governor George Wallace, a member of the anti-integrationist White Citizens’ Council and a founder in 1957 of the Ku Klux Klan of the Confederacy. Even after it was revealed that Carter was no Cherokee but actually a white supremacist, the book remained a *Times* bestseller. A new printing of one hundred thousand copies was ordered by the publisher.