

# Uncle Sam Honors Cynthia Parker's Son

Grave of a Captive Maiden's Peace-Loving Son Will Be Marked by Congress—Quannah Parker Adds More Laurels to the Family Name—New Light on Cynthia Ann's Later Life and What Happened to Her Grandchildren.

By R. C. Crane.

THE story of Cynthia Ann Parker has assumed something of importance in the annals of Texas. It had much to do with the selection of a Governor Texas some thirty-odd years ago, and for many years it has had a thrill for young students of Texas history such as few history stories have had. It had its beginning in the most critical days of the young Texas Republic, May 19, 1836 before the smoke had cleared from the battle of San Jacinto where General Houston with a handful of Texas patriots routed over twice as many Mexicans under General Santa Anna and thereby insured Texas independence.

A little band of hardy pioneers had pushed far out into the wilderness and on the Navasota River about three miles from the present city of Groesbeck in Limarson County had established a settlement around what was called Fort Parker, named after one of the leading families in the movement. Cynthia Ann Parker, a girl of 17 years, and the daughter of one of the settlers for whom the fort was named, was living there with her parents.

On this May 19 perhaps one-half of the scant 50,000 total population of Texas at that time was in a state of ferment and away from their homes on account of the Mexican invasion from beyond the Rio Grande.

The Usual Raid.  
True, Goliad and the Alamo had fallen. Fannin, Travis, Crockett and their patriot brethren had been slain. Santa Anna had been won at San Jacinto. Santa Anna was a prisoner in the hands of General Houston. But Mexican troops were still in Texas, retreating gradually, and the Texas forces were compelled to rest on their heels ready to meet a new invasion.

Many of the able-bodied men were in the Texas army, as well as volunteers from many of the States, and three-fourths of the men of Texas was then practically unknown and roamed over at will by hostile wild Indians.

Perhaps the Mexicans incited these Indians to make trouble for the Texas settlers as an aid to their own termination of the American population in Texas.

Only twenty-two counties in Texas at that time had sufficient population to justify recognition for county government, and these lay on or within 150 miles of the Gulf Coast.

Among these, the Comanches, while some of the few men living at the fort were out tending their crops, three attacked Fort Parker, killed five of the settlers, badly wounded a sixth, and carried away five prisoners, including Cynthia Ann Parker and Mrs. Plummer. Parents of three of the settlers made their escape. Eighteen of these, including two children from 1 to 12 years of age, under the leadership of J. W. Parker, uncle of Cynthia Ann and father of Mrs. Plummer, made their way to the settlements in the south, wandering for five days with nothing to eat except two skunks and two small terrapins.

Parker said: "They were in the howling wilderness, barefooted and bare-headed—a savage and relentless foe on the one hand, and on the other a trackless and uninhabited country, literally covered with venomous reptiles and ravenous beasts—their means of procuring it—their fathers, mothers and children having all, except those comprising the little company, just fallen prey, as they supposed, to savage barbarity—and fearfully expecting at every step to share the same horrible fate. Thus they wandered toward the settlements for ninety miles, suffering untold tortures, both physical and mental."

A Forgotten Captive.  
But Cynthia Ann Parker, Mrs. Plummer and the other three were carried away captives and prisoners by the Indians; and J. W. Parker traveled far and wide and exhausted his every resource in efforts to rescue the captives.

Mrs. Plummer, after several years of slavery among the Indians, was finally rescued by the friendly Delaware Indians and restored to her people. After her rescue she wrote and published an account of her trials and hardships, in which she described being carried as far away as the Columbia River. But she knew nothing of the fate of Cynthia Ann Parker, who was completely lost to her people and to civilization until December, 1850.

In the meantime, in 1834, all Indians in Northwest Texas, including a branch of the Comanches, were located on reservations in Stephens and Young Counties, where they remained under fairly satisfactory circumstances until 1850.

In this year twelve men from Krath County (whose names and the circumstances of the incident are given in full in the United States War Department reports for the year) had been out to the west and beyond the reservations, on a hunting expedition. In passing one of the reservations these hunters discovered some reservation Indians, with their families, off the reservation, quietly fishing and killing around in the shade of the trees—men, women and children asleep. They quietly made sure that they were in good shooting distance of the sleeping Indians, and then deliberately fired into them, killing several men, women and children. And then they quickened their gait toward their horses, telling the settlers as they passed that they had "started hell" and the settlers could finish the job.

Warfare between whites and the Indians quickly broke out. And it became necessary for the Indians to be removed to Indian Territory. The father of Mrs. L. S. Ross was officially connected with the reservations, and it chanced that the son was at home with his father from school one day. When Captain Ross carried her to Fort Worth people came from great distances to see her.

She Longed for Her Life.  
Her relatives were soon found and she was turned over to them. But Texas history tells us that she never became reconciled to the ways of civ-



A picture of Cynthia Ann Parker made in December, 1850, on the occasion of her return to Fort Worth.

ization that Prairie Flower soon withered and died, and that Cynthia Ann Parker died in about two years. So far as the record shows it appears never to have occurred to her relatives that, after all, Cynthia Ann Parker, as a grown woman, might have had the right to determine for herself whether she would take on the hardships of civilization and remain with her relatives or return to her Indian boys and the life which she knew best. And thus Cynthia Ann Parker, yearning for her boys and the wild life which she had grown to love, passed over the river at the time when Mrs. Plummer was at great odds with each other. With war, reconstruction and the passing of time, Cynthia Ann Parker and her story were almost



White L. Parker, oldest living grandson of Cynthia Ann, wears his father's war bonnet for this picture taken in Sweetwater, where he worked for a period as a boilermaker.

forgot, but were revived when Sul Ross ran for Governor of Texas.

Then a Chief of the Comanche Indians became known in Texas, and over the Nation, because he preferred the walks of peace rather than the terrors of war.

He visited Texas; he hunted in Texas by invitation of big Texas gentlemen; he became a familiar figure in Texas, following the walks of peace and cementing the bonds of friendship between the whites and the Indians. It became known that he was one of those sons for whom Cynthia Ann Parker died pining for whom she had wept. His name was Quannah Parker, the oldest of her two boys. A West Texas town has been named for him and takes pride in the fact.

Cynthia Ann Parker was not permitted to return to her sons and her wild life, but one of the last things that Quannah Parker did after a long life was to come to Texas, with the approval of the great Government of the United States, and remove the remains of his mother and carry them to Oklahoma, there to reinter them in the shadow of the little Memorial park mission church which had played an important part in his life

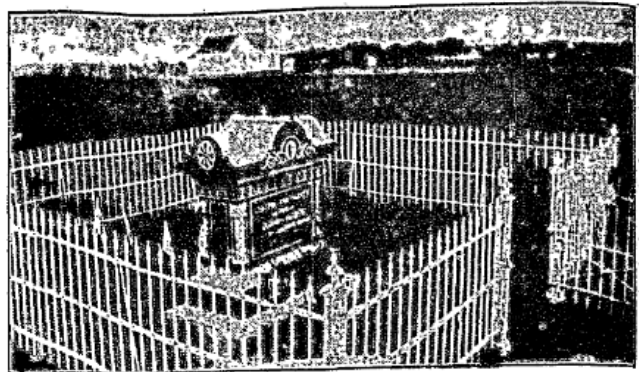
and in the life of his people—a few miles northwest of Indiana. And there, a few months later, Quannah Parker joined his mother and was laid to rest by her side. They could not be reunited in life, but were after death.

And now comes the third generation. Quannah Parker had sixteen children. He remembered his mother to be one of his daughters after her—Cynthia Ann Parker. Several of his children are now dead. Several others married and are reputable American citizens.

A Final Memorial.  
The Comanche reservation is a thing of the past, and Quannah's people have taken on the ways of the white man. His oldest son (living), White L. Parker, is a boilermaker by trade, but has been for over two years in Phoenix, Ariz., as a missionary. He received more than the average education at the Indian school, Corralito; he is a man past 40, has a distinct resemblance to his grandmother, Cynthia Ann Parker, and but for the disruption of tribal government among the Indians by an act of Congress he would probably today be the hereditary chief of the Comanche Indians.

He married into an excellent Florida family and lived in his own home at Lawton, Ok. His oldest daughter, a bright girl of 11, graduated from the Lawton High School in 1928. Another son of Quannah, Baldwin Parker, grew up the tribal customs of his past by heading bands of Comanches in putting on shows at fairs and other gatherings.

But what about the life of Quannah Parker, late chief of the Comanche Indians? Congress has only recently



Grave and Monument of Cynthia Ann Parker, Mother of Quannah Parker, Chief of the Comanches.

ordered the erection of a suitable monument over his remains as a Nation's tribute to an Indian's contribution to peace and good understanding between the white man and the red man. And his son is on the committee appointed to select and supervise the erection of this monument. The shadows of that monument will fall across and protect the earthly resting place of mother and son.

## Quantity Production, 1812

Thomas Jefferson, at the time (1813) American Envoy to the court of Louis XVI, wrote from Paris to John Jay, then Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs:

"An improvement is made here in the construction of muskets, which it may be interesting to Congress to know, should they at any time propose to procure any. It consists in the making every part of them as exactly alike that what belongs to any one may be used for every other."

Written 145 years ago, that letter contained America's first hint at standardization. An obscure French mechanic named Le Blanc was conducting the experiment.

Jefferson went on to say: "He effects it with tools of his own contrivance, which at the same time simplify the work so that he thinks he should be able to furnish the musket two lives cheaper than the common price."

Special tools, quicker work, lower cost, reduced prices! There—revealed for the first time—lay the magic formula by which our vast industrial powers of today have been created!

Jefferson urged Le Blanc to emigrate to America. The Frenchman

declined, left Paris, and visited thereafter from record.

But his experiment endeavored without him. Returning home to become Secretary of State, Jefferson promoted Le Blanc's idea here. When our War of 1812 was declared, Eli Whitney and Simon North announced their readiness to supply American troops with standardized muskets built on the interchangeable plan.

They carried out the project with great success in spite of opposition and ridicule. After that the new industrial system was firmly established.

So our fabulous age of quantity production actually dates from the manufacture of muskets for the War of 1812—Lebanon Hammond in New American Review.

## Aim of Instruction

The aim and office of instruction, say many people, is to make a man a good citizen, or a good Christian, or a gentleman, or it is to fit him to get on in the world, or it is to enable him to do his duty in that walk of life to which he is called. It is none of these, and the modern spirit more and more discerns it to be none of these. These are at best secondary and indirect aims of instruction; its prime direct aim is to enable a man to know himself and the world.

—Matthew Arnold.



One of the occasional visits to Dallas and Fort Worth furnished the opportunity for this picture of Quannah Parker.