

**CYNTHIA  
ANN  
PARKER  
1827-1871**



**WHITE  
WOMAN IN  
COMANCHE  
WORLD**

The story of Cynthia Ann Parker is one of the most heartbreaking stories of the nineteenth century. It provides an example of how the conflict between the United States and the natives of North America affected both sides.

Cynthia was born in October 1827 in Crawford County, Illinois. By 1833 the Parker family and its extended clan established fortified blockhouses and central citadel – later called Fort Parker – on the headwaters of the Navasota River, about forty miles east of Waco.

On May 19, 1836, hundreds of Comanches and Kiowas approached the fort on horseback. Benjamin Parker went out to talk to them, while someone ran to the fields to notify the other men. When he told the Indians they had no beef, the natives clubbed and scalped him as the others watched helplessly through the stockade portholes.

Comanches were known for kidnapping their enemy's women and children. After the Fort Parker massacre, most of the captives were eventually returned for ransom, but nine-year-old Cynthia remained with the Comanches. Her life was rough at first, abused and treated as a slave until she was adopted by a couple, who raised her as their own daughter. She quickly adapted to the Comanche way of life, forgetting memories of her white life.

Cynthia was spotted with the Comanches a few times. Some attempted to pay ransom to return her to white society – but she refused. In an 1845 raid, Comanche warrior Peta Nocona revealed she was his wife and the mother of his children– sons Quanah and Pecos and daughter Topsannah.

In December, 1860, Texas Rangers pursued Nocona and Cynthia. As they neared, she held her infant daughter over her head, allowing Nocona to escape. When the Rangers wondered later at Camp Cooper if she was Cynthia Parker, she poked her finger in her chest and said "Me Cincee Ann". Her uncle Colonel Isaac Parker was summoned and positively identified her.

She lived at his home near Birdville, Texas, but was often locked in her room to keep her from running away. Her family never understood she considered herself more Comanche than white. In 1863 Cynthia learned Nocona was dead and Pecos had died of smallpox. Topsannah's death from influenza in 1864 was the final blow for Cynthia. Often refusing to speak, she eventually starved herself to death in 1871 at age 43.

When Quanah surrendered in 1875, he finally learned Cynthia had died. Finally, in December 1910, he got permission to move her remains near Cache, Oklahoma on Comanche lands. When he died two months later at age 64, he was buried next to her.

The relations between the whites and natives will be forever tarnished by Cynthia Ann Parker's story. The event that destroyed her life was not the 1836 Fort Parker raid but her 1860 rescue. It separated her forever from her beloved sons, and left her in a culture where she was more a true captive than she had ever been with the Comanches.