

Article of Interest: January 1998

The following story was written by JOSEPH V. FARRAR, JR. in September of 1997. He has been on a quest to find out the connection of the famous Indian chief QUANAH PARKER and the FARRAR family. Mr. Farrar is the editor of the FARRAR FAMILY REUNION NEWSLETTER. In a past issue he has posed the question: "Who was Quanah?". We all may learn a little more about QUANAH by reading the following story.

SUCCESS AT FORT SILL

A little after midnight Monday, 8 September 1997, I departed Hardy, Arkansas winding my way west towards Lawton, Oklahoma on my Quanah quest. I had little information. I knew only that Quanah Parker was buried somewhere near Lawton; that his grave marker was the tallest monument in Oklahoma; that a pow-wow, or reunion, was held near Lawton every other year in his honor; that the Parkers, his mother's side, on the off years, held their reunion somewhere in Texas.

My map showed a US Army post, Ft. Sill, near Lawton. Knowing nothing of this post I knew not if it was still active or in closure due to the current congressional economies. But I determined that would be my destination, Plan A.

Arriving by mid-afternoon I discovered Ft. Sill was indeed still in the Department of Defense inventory; and very active. The Army artillery and missile training is headquartered here. It is a huge army reservation. I also learned, because it played such a prominent roll in the "Winning of the West", it is on the Registry of National Historic Places; so it will probably never be closed.

Upon entry onto the post I was directed to the Caisson Recreational Hall, headquarters for all recreational activities on post. I was seeking their FamCamp, their RV campground. The young man at the reception desk, for some reason, did not have this information so he consulted his boss in an inner office. The boss, Mr. Bruce Burgamy, civilian in charge of this office, immediately came out, introduced himself and assured me they did have a FamCamp. He immediately got on the phone, obtained a space and made reservation for two nights, as I requested. He then presented me with a map of the Post and gave explicit directions to the FamCamp. I then drove the mile and a half, away from the main part of the post, crossed a trickling stream, and there it was, a beautiful facility with large, spaced, spaces amongst large oaks, elms and hickorynut tress, and will full accommodations. Set up in minutes I strolled the grounds a little; it was all so quiet and peaceful.

After a full night of restful bliss I was up early the next morning and by a little after eight was back at the Rec Hall; and there was Bruce. After a "Good Morning" and a handshake he asked how he could help. I told him of my quest. He was very accommodation and provided me with desk space, a writing pad, a phone directory, and a phone. This while he was busily directing his staff and awaiting the momentary arrival of two busses of recently arrived female dependents to present an orientation program of recreational facilities available to them.

Getting right to work I called the Lawton Chamber of Commerce. The receptionist suggested I wanted either Anadorko or Apache. She gave the number for the Anadorko C of C but, since Apache did not have a C of C, gave the number for the City Clerk's office. I elected to call Apache first since it was closer and none of my information mentioned Anadorko. The lady that answered said, "Oh; you want to

speak with Henry Parker”... I almost dropped the phone! Dialing that number a lady answered. I told her my name and asked if this was the Henry Parker residence. It was. I asked if she was Mrs. Parker. She was. I then explained I had just arrived in the area and was on Ft. Sill and my quest. She then stated her husband was not in at that moment and started asking questions such as: Did I know where some of the Indian cemeteries were on Ft. Sill? Did I know about the Chief’s Knoll? Did I know about the old guardhouse, which is now part of the museum complex, and the Quanah room? My head was reeling! I had struck it rich! She started explaining some of these things then said her husband just came in. Henry Parker got on the phone. To my further amazement.... Henry Parker is a grandson of Quanah! We talked. Then, realizing I was on Ft. Sill, he said he and his wife were leaving for Lawton in a few minutes and offered to meet me and bring additional information. I jumped at the opportunity! Explaining where I was he said they’d be there within the hour.

There were tables and chairs aplenty in this reception area. I went in and told Bruce of my good fortune. He was happy for me and glad he was able to help. His girl Friday made a fresh pot of coffee in the kitchen area. All the previous early morning activities in this place were thinning out now. The place was almost empty.

Henry and his wife showed up right on schedule. I went out to greet them as they were walking in. They are fine people. We poured coffee and talked for an hour. They presented me with a copy of “The Two Lives of Quanah Parker”; a pictorial portfolio with captions of Quanah’s re-burial in the Chief’s Knoll in the Post Cemetery on Ft. Sill; a large color post card of Quanah in his full Indian regalia as a Comanche chief; and a brochure on Old Fort Parker. They will send a copy of the announcement for the Parker Reunion in Texas in 1998; also of the Pow-Wow in Oklahoma in 1999. We parted good friends and I have a standing invitation to park my rig at their home anytime I’m in the area.

I had just been visited by and spoke with Henry Parker grandson of the last Chief of the Comanche's! Truly amazing!

Immediately upon the Parker’s departure I thanked Bruce for all his help then went racing off to pay my rent. I had a lot to do the rest of the day. Still not knowing exactly where these places were, at the rental office I obtained directions to an indian cemetery where Geronimo is buried. After driving the five miles over back roads, still on Post, the neatly maintained and fenced cemetery with many white slabbed markers appeared. There wasn’t a living soul around. Entering through the walk-in gate I observed some of the markers. Many Indian army scouts, others, as well as wives and children are interred here. There are a few new graves, with flowers. Geronimo’s grave is in the center and most prominent. His marker is a three foot high pyramid of cemented stones. Some of his wives and children are buried on either side. It is obvious his grave is visited often. His people do not forget. There are many flowers and relics (gifts) all around, as well as prayer wheels and ribbons bedecking low hanging limbs of two trees overshadowing his grave.

Returning to the secluded, half hidden, rustic little building I had just left, I spoke with Rusty, the only person around, again. I wanted the Chief’s Knoll, the museum, and the old guardhouse. He broke out a more detailed map to show me where I wanted to go. Fortunately they were all in the same locality. Half way there I spotted a Burger King and stopped for a sandwich.

As it turns out, the old stone buildings of the original Ft. Sill Army Post, once permanent construction was authorized, are still in place, near the current Post Headquarters building, and are used as the Historical Museum complex. The old stone guardhouse, just a few steps away, which houses the Quanah Room, is part of this complex; as is the old corral, just a short drive away, which now houses the visitors

center and the gift shop. Just downhill away from the Post Headquarters is the huge Post Cemetery where the Chief's Knoll is located.

The Chief's Knoll, seen prominently from the entry gate, is the highest point in this cemetery. Here all the Chiefs who signed the Medicine Lodge Treaty of 1867, are buried. Quanah, of course, did not sign; he was only a young teenager at that time. But here Quanah, the last great Chief of the Comanches, was reburied with full military honors on Friday, 9 August 1957. His red granite monument stands tall.

In the old guardhouse, downstairs, are the cells where army and indian miscreants were jailed. The cell rooms are now used for historical displays. One houses displays and relics of the Comanches with Quanah prominent. It is known as the Quanah Room.

At the old corral, with time running out, I only bought two books on Quanah at the gift shop.

Back at camp I reviewed and consolidated my notes reveling in all the exciting happenings of the day; especially the high point of meeting Henry Parker and his vivacious wife.

After another good night's slumber I was on the road again heading for Crowell, Texas, at Henry Parkers suggestion, where another annual Quanah celebration is held. Crowell, a little country town of about a 1,000 population along a byway, was not impressive. Circling it's center I found it's only cafe. Entering, I was greeted by a few old liars sitting around the liar's table. I posed my question. They suggested the barber; he knew all about Quanah. After a good breakfast I followed their directions to the barber shop, two blocks away. Here, in an empty shop, I was greeted by the town barber, Ervy McGreger, full of, and anxious to share, Quanah information. Here I learned of the "Peace River Battle" and the recapture of Quanah's mother, Cynthia Ann Parker. It is this that is commemorated annually here in Crowell. Following directions I drove the ten miles to the battle site, now on private land, and took a picture of the granite marker. Then continued my westward ho.

What about Old Fort Parker? I didn't have time to backtrack and visit. I plan that for next Spring. I is here where the Quanah story starts. It is now a Texas State Historical Park. And here is the amazing part: It is located less than 20 miles NW of Farrar, Texas; about 40 miles east of Waco.

So now you know a little of part of my summer's excursion. I omitted much information on Quanah, but dropped a lot of hints, still hoping someone will accept the challenge of the poser two Newsletters back and will go for the prize.

Why are we interested in Quanah? Check with Ike and Mary Farrar in Flat Creek, TN.