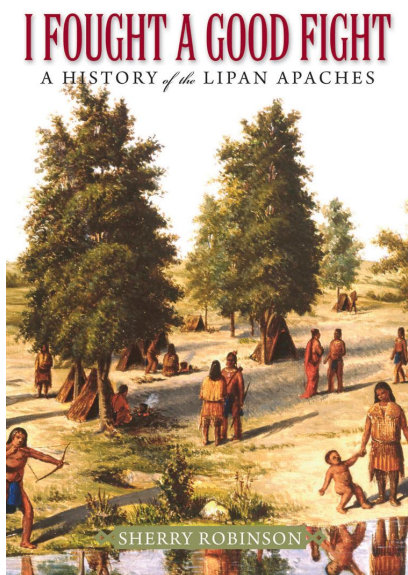


History Notebook by Jim Harris. Originally published in the Lovington Daily Leader, Lovington, New Mexico on September 17

Indians of West Texas and Eastern New Mexico

My writing of last week's History Notebook on the Lipan Apache Indians brought me to much more reading about the Native Americans of the American Southwest.

From Sherry Robinson's book "I Fought a Good Fight: A History of the Lipan Apaches," I found myself looking at any book on Indians I have in my possession in the Lea County Museum and in my home library.



This always seems to happen when my subject is Native Americans. I just can't stop thinking about what life for these people was like just a century or two ago.

So I picked up books of photographs, such as those of Edward Curtis. I examined books of paintings, such as those of George Catlin. I quickly reread one of the early 20th century folklore books of tales from the American Indians. I went back and thumbed through chapters of "The Comanches: Lords of the South Plains." And I went back and reread the chapters of

Larry McMurtry's "Lonesome Dove" that have to do with Blue Duck or other Indian characters in the novel and made-for-television movie.

I'm sure there are many reasons for my fascination with the subject of Indians, many of these pre-occupations with them I probably share with thousands of Americans. We have tended to romanticize the lives of early Native Americans. They were noble savages in many of our popular fictions and films.

The dominance of cowboy and Indian books and movies in my youth surely influences by inclination to continue reading about them.

Even my remembrances of radio and television western shows in the 1950s and 1960s continue to influence my reading desires, programs such as "The Lone Ranger" and "Wagon Train" in which Indians often figured in the plots.

So to get the subject out of my system, and of course, for the reader's information and curiosity, here are some of our area's Native American tribes discussed in two books, Paul Carlson's "The Plains Indians" and W.W. Newcomb's "The Indians of Texas: From Prehistoric to Modern Times."

In pre-horse times, that is, before the Spanish brought horses here in the 16th century, there were Querecho Apaches in the northern part of the Texas Panhandle and on the plains of northeastern New Mexico.

Below them south of present day Amarillo, lived the Tewa Apaches in the many canyons around Palo Duro Canyon.

At the extreme southern end of the plains in the Big Bend, several bands of Indians known as Jumanos lived along the Rio Grande and Concho River. They included the Caguates, Patarabueye, Abriache, and Conchos.

By three hundred years later, in the 19th century, the tribes of West Texas and Eastern New Mexico had changed dramatically. Kiowas and Kiowa Apaches made their temporary camps and more permanent settlements in the northern part of the Texas Panhandle.

Below them were bands known as Quahadis, Wanderers, and Penetekas.

Farther south, including in present day Lea and south all the way to the Big Bend, there were the Mescaleros and Upper Lipan Apaches. To the east and north of the Rio Grande, in what is now called the Texas Rio Gande Valley, there were the Lower Lipans who had on to the east of them the Tonkawas and Wichitas.

In the later years of the 19th century over most of Texas and the eastern half of New Mexico rode the Comanches who were such superior horsemen and warriors that they dominated every tribe in their path. If the Comanches had been able to amass more of the many bands containing their cousins and distant relatives, they would have given the Mexicans, Texans, and Americans a much harder time than they did.

The US Cavalry soldiers, for instance, were not necessarily better individual fighters, but they were under the command of seasoned military men who had disciplined men trained to defeat even an enemy who fought guerrilla warfare. In addition, in the final analysis, the Texan and US armies had an unlimited supply of soldiers while many of the Indian tribes,

including the Comanches, struggled to produce the next generation of warriors.



Quanah Parker was Comanche/Scots-Irish from the Comanche band Noconis meaning wanderers or travelers

The tenacity with which the Indians of the 19th century fought the American soldiers and the bravery with which they fought are other reasons several generations of the world's people have been curious about the Native Americans.

In addition, many Americans, including myself, trace some of their genetic heritage to various Indian tribes. As I have mentioned more than once in the History Notebook, on my mother's side of the family in Tennessee we had Cherokee relatives, more than one of my aunts and great aunts having facial features that would have fit comfortably in a photograph in front of a teepee.

My son Hawk is part Choctaw-Cherokee.

To conclude, I would be interested in knowing just how many Lea County residents are Native American or have some Indian blood in their family.

If you have time, send me a note or come by for a visit about your Indian family members and how they have influenced your thoughts about yourself and about your family.