"SORROW WHISPERS IN THE WINDS": THE REPUBLIC OF TEXAS'S COMMANCHE INDIAN POLICY, 1836-1846

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the University of North Texas in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

By

Carol A. Lipscomb, B.S.

Denton, Texas

December, 1994
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The Comanche Indians presented a major challenge to the Republic of Texas throughout its nine-year history. The presence of the Comanches greatly slowed the westward advancement of the Texas frontier, just as it had hindered the advancing frontiers of the Spaniards and Mexicans who colonized Texas before the creation of the Republic.

The Indian policy of the Republic of Texas was inconsistent. Changes in leadership brought drastic alterations in the policy pursued toward the Comanche nation. The author examines the Indian policy of the Republic, how the Comanches responded to that policy, and the impact of Texan-Comanche relations on both parties.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The quotation "Sorrow Whispers in the Winds" is taken from a letter written by Sam Houston to an Apache Chief in 1843. The author found this quotation very expressive both of the state of Texan-Indian relations and Houston's feelings about the nature of those relations.
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CHAPTER 1

BEFORE THE REPUBLIC: SPANISH AND MEXICAN RELATIONS WITH THE COMANCHE

The Comanche are scattered from the great Missuris [sic] River to the . . . frontier presidios of New Spain. They are a people so numerous and so haughty that when asked their number, they make no difficulty in comparing it to that of the stars.

Athanase de Mézières, 1770

When Texas won its independence from Mexico in 1836, the Comanches had been living on the plains of North and West Texas for almost a hundred years. That sizable nation of nomadic Plains people had an undeniable impact on the Republic of Texas throughout its nine-year history. The presence of the Comanches greatly slowed the westward advancement of the Texas frontier, just as it had hindered the advancing frontiers of the Spaniards and Mexicans who came before.

Establishing a policy to deal with the Comanche nation was a priority of the government of the Republic of Texas from its inception in 1836 to its annexation by the United States in 1846. The Indian policy of the Republic, however, was inconsistent. Changes in governmental leadership often brought drastic alterations in the policy pursued toward the Comanche nation. Similarly, the Comanche response to the
Republic's policies was also variable and unpredictable. Inconsistency on the part of the Comanches may be partially explained by their lack of centralized leadership, for the nation was made up of many autonomous bands that generally acted independently of each other. The band-organized structure of Comanche society coupled with the mercurial politics of the Texas Republic greatly complicated negotiations between the two entities. Texan-Comanche relations clearly demonstrated that when two distinct cultures collide, the process of ending conflicts, reaching understandings, and achieving peace is never easy.

The story of Texans and Comanches depends primarily on the first-hand accounts of observers, all of whom had European roots. It is therefore only natural that observations of the Comanches reflect a European cultural bias. Despite their Eurocentric viewpoints, the writings of these early observers are indispensable for the Comanches had no written language to preserve their own history. Given the nature of these sources, many of the observations are surprisingly objective, and some are even complimentary of the Comanches. These early accounts provide the only records of the Comanches apart from anthropological studies and memory ethnography (recollections passed down from generation to generation by word of mouth). It is evident from the writings of these early observers that the Comanches, too, had a strong cultural heritage, one that
they were unwilling to relinquish for the "civilization" of the European. But it must be remembered that the Comanche point of view can only be inferred from facts written by those outside that culture.

The Comanches, an offshoot of the Northern Shoshones, were originally a mountain tribe. As small bands of crudely equipped hunters and gatherers, they roamed the high country of what is now Colorado and Wyoming. Sometime during the late seventeenth century, the Comanches acquired horses, and that acquisition dramatically changed their culture. Their new mobility allowed them to leave their mountain home and move onto the plains of eastern Colorado and western Kansas and Nebraska where game was plentiful. In less than a century, according to anthropologist W. W. Newcomb, Jr., they became "a mounted, well-equipped, and powerful people."

Shortly after their arrival on the Great Plains, the Comanches began a southern migration. There is much speculation about why they moved south into Texas and New Mexico. Most likely, a combination of factors encouraged their migration. By moving south, the Comanches had greater access to the wild horse herds of the Southwest. Pressure by more powerful and better armed tribes to their north and east, principally the Blackfeet and Crows, also encouraged their migration. As the Comanches moved southward, they found the warmer climate and better land with its abundant
buffalo much to their liking. According to historian T. R. Fehrenbach, "the Comanches had found, and seized, a natural hunter's paradise for horse Amerindians." There is also some evidence that the Comanches, because of dependence on trade with the Wichitas, followed the southern migration of that tribe to the Red River. The Wichitas, who traded with the French, were able to provide the Comanches with coveted European goods, particularly firearms. Whatever the reasons for the Comanche trek southward, there is no doubt that their presence was felt in Texas.²

It was only after their arrival on the southern plains that the tribe came to be known as Comanches, a name derived from the Ute word Komántcia meaning "enemy," or, literally, "anyone who wants to fight me all the time." When the Spaniards in New Mexico first encountered the tribe early in the eighteenth century, they adopted the Ute name, and the Americans borrowed the name from the Spanish. Although the tribe came to be known historically as Comanches, they, like most Native Americans, called themselves "The People" (Nermernuh).³

The People did not enter Texas as a unified body. Instead, they moved south in numerous family groups or bands, and it must be remembered that they were never a consolidated tribe with organized leadership that could speak for the nation as a whole. As many as thirteen different bands of Comanches were identified during the
historic period, and, most probably, there were others that were never identified. But even the band structure was not rigid for bands coalesced and broke apart depending on the needs and goals of their members. New bands formed, existing bands changed their names, and some groups disappeared altogether. There were, however, five major bands that played important roles in Comanche history.

The southernmost band was called Penateka, or "Honey-Eaters." Their range extended from the Edwards Plateau to the headwaters of the central Texas rivers. North of Penateka country was the habitat of the band called Nokoni, or "Those Who Turn Back." The Nokoni roamed from the Cross Timbers region of North Texas to the mountains of New Mexico. Two smaller bands, the Tanima ("Liver-Eaters") and the Tenawa ("Those Who Stay Downstream"), shared the range of the Nokoni. The three bands are sometimes referred to collectively as Middle Comanches.

Still further north was the range of the Kotsoteka, or "Buffalo-Eaters." Their territory covered present-day western Oklahoma where they often camped along the Canadian River. The northernmost band was known as the Yamparika, or "Yap-Eaters." Their range extended north to the Arkansas River. The fifth major band roamed the high plains and canyons of the Llano Estacado. They were known as the Kwahadi ("Antelopes").
Spaniards, like the Comanches, were also relative newcomers to Texas. Their first attempt to settle the area came in the 1690s with the establishment of two missions for the Tejas Indians in East Texas. The purpose of Spanish settlement was to maintain Spain's hold on the province against threatened incursions by the French. Since they lacked the necessary manpower to hold the vast land, the Spanish attempted to civilize and Christianize the Indians with the intention of making them loyal subjects of the Spanish Crown. As Spanish settlement in Texas slowly advanced, conflict with the fiercely independent Comanches became inevitable.

The southern migration of the Comanches also made an impact on tribes already living in Texas. Apache bands were forced south by the onslaught of the Comanches and became their mortal enemies. The dispossessed tribes in turn pressured the Spanish settlements, forcing the Spanish to alter their existing Indian policy of missionization in order to deal with the armed and mounted Plains people. The experience of the Spanish and their Mexican successors in dealing with the Comanches set the stage for Texan-Comanche relations during the years of the Republic.

The first direct contact between Spanish officials in Texas and the Comanches came in 1743 when a small band, probably a scouting party, appeared in San Antonio seeking their enemies, the Lipan Apaches. No hostilities occurred,
but it was obvious that the Comanches believed that the Spanish were allied with their enemies, the Lipans. This belief was confirmed in 1757 when the Spanish established a mission and presidio for the Apaches on the San Saba River northwest of San Antonio.⁶

The Lipans had repeatedly expressed desires for peace and petitioned the priests at San Antonio to build a mission for them. Convinced of their sincerity, the friars obtained permission to build Mission Santa Cruz de San Sabá. Presidio San Luis de las Amarillas was built to guard the mission, although its position three miles upstream made that task more difficult. The Lipan Apaches had no intention of entering the mission. Instead, they used the mission and presidio to acquire gifts from the Spanish and to act as a barrier against Comanche aggression. This Apache ruse soon brought down the full measure of Comanche wrath on the San Sabá mission.⁷

On the morning of March 16, 1758, a force of some two thousand Comanches and their allies attacked the San Sabá mission. The Indians sacked and burned the mission and killed eight of its inhabitants, including two priests. Colonel Diego Ortiz Parrilla, commander of the San Sabá presidio, did not go to the aid of the mission. Because of the large numbers of Indians involved in the attack, Parrilla deemed it necessary to keep his fifty-nine soldiers
at the presidio to protect the women and children living there. 

The destruction of the mission sent waves of terror across the province and alerted officials at San Antonio to the unusually large number of “hostile Indians equipped with firearms and skilled in their use.” There was fear that the entire province would be lost if the Indians attacked San Antonio, and the captain of Presidio San Antonio de Béxar wrote to the viceroy requesting additional arms for his men.

Fear only grew as numerous reports of Comanche attacks on Apaches filtered into San Antonio. Then in March 1759 the Comanches attacked the San Sabá horse herd, killing twenty soldiers and stealing some seven hundred animals. The attack accelerated Spanish plans for a punitive expedition against the Comanches and their allied tribes, often referred to collectively as Norteños.

The Norteños played an important role in the history of European-Comanche relations in Texas, but just who were these people that the Spanish lumped together as the "Nations of the North"? The Norteños were comprised of a number of tribes of Caddoan language stock who occupied portions of north central Texas between the Red and Brazos Rivers. The principal tribe, the Taovayas, lived on the banks of the Red River near present-day Spanish Fort, Texas. The Wichita proper, a smaller tribe, lived near the
Taovayas. The Tawakonis and Iscani (later known as Wacos) resided on the upper Trinity and Brazos Rivers. All four tribes are classified as Wichita people because of language similarities.

Also included in the Norteno designation were the Kichais, a small, peaceful band who were also closely allied to their eastern neighbors, the Hasinai and Kadohadachos. Various other Tonkawan and Caddoan bands were sometimes included in the Norteno label, but the exact makeup of the group changed as often as tribal alliances shifted. The Nortenos' league with the Comanches created a force so large that it threatened the very existence of the Spanish settlements in Texas.11

Colonel Parrilla was named to lead the punitive expedition against the allied tribes that had destroyed Mission San Sabá. He warned Spanish officials that they were dealing with Indians that were "far superior to the Indians of other parts of these kingdoms." In mid-August 1759, after repeated delays, Parrilla's force of some five hundred men finally departed San Sabá and headed northeast.12

On October 7 Parrilla's army was attacked by a small force of mounted warriors. Pursuit of the attackers led the Spanish to a fortified Norteno village on the north bank of the Red River. The Norteños and their Comanche allies were armed with French muskets, and the fortification flew a
French flag. The Indians had a well-organized battle plan that succeeded in stopping the advance of the Spanish force. The battle continued until dusk when Parrilla withdrew his troops to a safe position and counted his losses, which included fifty-two men and two cannon. Parrilla decided to retreat, and the next morning the disheveled Spanish force began the return march to San Sabá. The punitive expedition had ended in failure.\textsuperscript{13}

The destruction of Mission San Sabá and the defeat of Parrilla's force led Spanish authorities to debate the merits of their policy for dealing with the armed and mounted Indians. Should the project to missionize the Apaches be continued, and, if so, what policy should be enacted toward the Comanches and Norteños? Of further concern was evidence that the northern tribes were being supplied by the French.

After lengthy debate, Spanish authorities decided to continue the policy of missionizing the Apaches, while, at the same time, attempting to make peace with the northern tribes. Spanish missionaries traveling among the Norteños were encouraged to believe that they could achieve peace with those tribes. Chief among those proponents was Fray José de Calahorra y Sáenz of the Nacogdoches mission.\textsuperscript{14}

Calahorra knew and respected the northern tribes and understood their enmity toward the Apaches. He considered the Norteños much more worthy of missionization than the
Apaches. The priest's reports and recommendations were essential to the viceroy's decision that no further campaigns would be launched against the Norteños. This policy, combined with the continued peace-making efforts of Calahorra, resulted in a tenuous peace between Spaniards and Norteños. The Comanches also joined in the peace-making. In 1762 they signed a treaty with the Spanish in which they agreed "not to persecute the Apaches who have been reduced to missions." 

The Comanches and Norteños, in the face of continued Apache aggression, found it impossible to keep the promised peace. The perfidious Apaches, feigning friendship with the Spanish, continued to attack both the Spanish and Comanches at every opportunity. Apache deceit coupled with changes on the international scene led Spanish authorities to reevaluate the existing Indian policy.

In 1762 Spain acquired the vast territory of Louisiana from France. Even before the acquisition of Louisiana, the northern frontier of New Spain had been a tremendous financial burden to the Spanish crown. In addition to the fiscal problems of maintaining the expansive frontier, Spanish authorities at the end of the French and Indian War had to deal with the ominous fact that Spain stood alone against England on the North American continent. In order to accurately assess the situation created by Spain's new acquisition, Charles III commissioned the Marqués de Rubí to
inspect all presidios situated along the entire northern frontier.

Rubí carried out his inspection between March 1766 and February 1768 and presented his findings in Mexico City on April 10, 1768. The Marqués suggested administrative changes for the frontier provinces of northern New Spain that ranged from California to Texas. He proposed the repositioning of certain presidios to reduce the cost of maintaining frontier outposts. His report contained numerous suggestions for Texas, including a proposed new Indian policy. Since the Apaches had continually proved untrustworthy and persisted in committing depredations, Rubí advocated a Spanish-Comanche alliance aimed at exterminating the Apaches. He argued that if the Apaches were removed, the Comanches would no longer travel south in search of their enemies, and Texas's two greatest Indian problems would be eliminated. Rubí's suggestion was precisely what Fray Calahorra had advocated since 1760, but more than a decade would pass before the policy favored by Calahorra was officially implemented. In the interim, hostilities among Spanish, Apaches, and Comanches continued. 17

The Spanish recognized French successes in maintaining peace with the tribes of the north. Spanish officials in Louisiana and Texas hoped to maintain the alliances made by the French with the Indians and thereby prevent English encroachment. They reasoned that these alliances could best
be maintained by employing French traders who had long held the confidence of the northern tribes.

The most notable of the Frenchmen to serve as a Spanish diplomat was Athanase de Mézières, Lieutenant Governor of Natchitoches. De Mézières's goal was to establish trade among the friendly nations, while cutting off trade to the "hostile" tribes. Once this economic boycott was in place, he would pressure the uncooperative tribes to make peace by offering rewards of trade, protection, and presents. To be successful, he must convince the Indians that Frenchmen and Spaniards had united under the leadership of the King of Spain.¹⁸

Licensed traders like De Mézières operated under strict rules and regulations established by the Spanish Crown. Their responsibilities were immense. In addition to carrying on trade, they were to act as peacemakers among the various tribes, encourage the Indians to work, and baptize any who were in danger of dying. They were also to gather any information that might be of interest to Spanish authorities. The traders were further empowered to expel unauthorized traders and confiscate any illicit trade goods. Although they were forbidden to supply goods to hostile Indians, they were to encourage such groups to accept peace in order to enjoy the benefits of Spanish trade. Regulations specifically forbade the traders from supplying the Indians with foreign merchandise, arms, or intoxicating
beverages. According to historian Elizabeth A. H. John, "The job demanded an extraordinary mixture of character, energy, ability, and courage."  

Under the stricture of laws governing traders, De Mézières began his work. In October 1770 he met with several Norteño chiefs at a Kadohadacho village on the Red River. The Comanches refused to attend the council and declared war on the tribes that did attend. Although skeptical of De Mézières's peace proposals, the Norteño leaders agreed to meet with him again in the spring. The Frenchman's patience and perseverance eventually won the confidence of the Norteños. Once peace and trade were established with the northern tribes, De Mézières secured their aid in making peace with the Comanches.  

While De Mézières negotiated with the Norteños, Comanches continued their depredations in the Béxar area. The pitiful conditions at San Antonio prompted the newly arrived governor of Texas, Juan María, Barón de Ripperdá, to write the viceroy of his fears that the settlement would soon be abandoned. After thoroughly reviewing the situation, Ripperdá concluded that a lasting peace with the northern tribes could only be obtained by radically altering the existing Indian policy.  

Ripperdá petitioned the viceroy to allow licensed traders to provide arms to the Indians. He argued that the Spanish must continue to supply the goods that had been
provided by the French, including guns and ammunition, in order to maintain peace and eliminate illicit trade between the Indians and the English. The viceroy refused Ripperdá's repeated appeals and insisted that the governor continue to enforce the royal regulations, which prohibited the sale of weapons to the Indians. The viceroy's decision hampered the efforts of both Ripperdá and De Mézières to establish a lasting peace with the northern tribes.

In early Spring of 1772, the Comanches began indicating an interest in peace. Some five hundred of them, primarily Ietans and Yamparikas, met with De Mézières in March at a Wichita village on the Brazos River, where the Spanish agent had his first opportunity to observe the Comanches. He noted that the nation was divided into bands, each ruled by a chief, and he doubted that any one chief could negotiate for the nation as a whole. The Frenchman reasoned, however, that practical considerations would induce the Comanches to seek peace with the Spaniards. He planned to persuade the Wichitas to withhold trade goods from the Comanches as long as they warred against the Spanish. The resulting economic boycott would force the Comanches to sue for peace, since they were dependent on European goods supplied by the Wichitas.

De Mézières's negotiations with the Norteños and Comanches were successful, and on June 10, 1772, he arrived in San Antonio accompanied by the chiefs of several tribes,
including the Comanches, and some seventy other men and women. A peace treaty was concluded between the visiting Indians and Spanish officials led by Governor Ripperdá. Chief Povea, the Comanche representative, specified that his acceptance of the treaty would bind only his own band, but he promised to encourage other Comanche leaders to seek peace also. Chief Povea honored his peace commitment from the summer of 1772 onward, but thirteen more years would pass before the rest of his nation sought peace with the Spanish.

Spanish officials in Texas continued to pursue a policy of peace toward both the Comanches and the Apaches. The policy, destined to be short-lived, dictated that the Spaniards wage only a defensive war to punish specific acts of aggression committed by the Indians. As a result of this policy, the province of Texas experienced some degree of relief from Indian depredations. Viceroy Antonio María de Bucareli y Ursúa repeatedly encouraged Ripperdá to continue the policy that was achieving some measure of success:

It is indispensable that your lordship [Ripperdá] dedicate yourself to putting into practice those measures conserving the peace with the Norteños and the Apaches without permitting that they be provoked in the slightest way which may oblige them to break the promise given, proceeding neutrally in the deep rooted enmities of both nations in order that we may never see the occasion of their reconciliation..."

In 1772 a major administrative change affected Indian policy in Texas. The New Regulations for Presidios were
issued as a result of the Rubí report and the findings of José de Gálvez, a visitor-general who recommended organizational changes on the northern frontier at approximately the same time that Rubí was inspecting the presidios. These regulations created the Interior Provinces, a new administrative region that included California, Chihuahua, Coahuila, New Mexico, Nuevo León, Nuevo Santander, Nueva Vizcaya, Sinoloa, Sonora, and Texas. The combined provinces would be governed by a commandant-inspector who reported directly to the viceroy. The officer selected for the post was Colonel Hugo O'Conor, an energetic and experienced administrator who had previously served as ad interim governor of Texas. Under O'Conor's leadership, Spanish officials in Texas continued to seek alliances with the Comanches and Nortenos, but policy toward the Apaches shifted direction. The New Regulations authorized an active and unceasing offensive war against the incorrigible Apaches.

In compliance with the New Regulations, the East Texas missions were closed in 1773, and the capital of the province was moved from Los Adaes to San Antonio. In addition, the settlers at Nacogdoches were required to move to San Antonio. The East Texas settlers were unhappy with conditions in Béxar and repeatedly petitioned the viceroy to allow them to return to Nacogdoches. Finally, in 1774 they were given permission to move halfway back. Some 350
people, led by Antonio Gil Ybarbo, chose to leave San Antonio. They founded the settlement of Nuestra Señora del Pilar de Bucareli on the Río de la Trinidad one hundred leagues northeast of San Antonio. The site of this new villa, however, would bring the settlers into frequent contact with the Comanches.  

Despite Spanish efforts to reinforce San Antonio, Comanche raids continued to plague the settlement. Horses and cattle were stolen, and the citizens' lives were constantly threatened. In an attempt to stop the depredations, J. Gaignard, a French trader from Natchitoches, traveled to the land of the Norteños to try to negotiate a peace with the Comanches. In February 1774 Gaignard arrived at the Taovayas village where he hoped to contact Comanche leaders. The trader finally met with success in July. He concluded a treaty with the Naytanes (also known as the Yamparikas) band of northern Comanches. The treaty, however, had little effect on stopping Comanche depredations in Texas, because it had not been signed by the Penatekas and Kotsotekas—bands that roamed nearer the vicinity of San Antonio.  

Conditions in the northern provinces continued to deteriorate despite the changes mandated by the New Regulations of 1772. By 1776 it was apparent that drastic reforms were needed on the northern frontier. In that year Charles III ordered the separation of the Interior Provinces
from the kingdom of New Spain. The region would be governed
by a commandant general who had civil, judicial, and
military authority and reported directly to the king.
Brigadier General Teodoro de Croix was appointed as the
first commandant general of the Interior Provinces. The
effectiveness of this new organization was hampered by the
fact that Croix was dependent on the viceroy of New Spain
for supplies and troops.  

Croix made a personal inspection of the provinces under
his command and noted the necessity of finding solutions to
the serious Indian problems that plagued the region. He
decided to embark on a general campaign against the Apaches
and to enlist the aid of the northern tribes in that
endeavor. Once again Spanish officials sought the council
of Athanase de Mézières. De Mézières opined that the
Comanches and their allies would be glad to wage a war of
extermination against the Apaches, since eliminating the
Apaches would free the Comanches to face their enemy on the
north, the Osages; and Spanish officials instructed him to
proceed north and make alliances with the Comanches and
Norteños. De Mézières left San Antonio in March 1778 and
traveled north to the villages of the Tawakonis and
Taovayas, but the Comanches refused to meet with him.
Rebuffed, De Mézières sent a message to the Comanches
warning them to stop their raids on Spanish settlements or
risk war with the Spanish and their Indian allies. He then returned to the village of Bucareli to await a reply.\textsuperscript{30}

In May thirty Comanche warriors led by Evea, the son of a head chief, appeared in the vicinity of Bucareli. Ybarbo and his militia promptly attacked the Indians without trying to ascertain the reason for their visit. Three Comanches were killed in the confrontation. Ybarbo claimed that the Indians were hostile and had been stealing horses from the settlers. De Mézières claimed the Comanches were there to see him and had come in peace. Domingo Cabello y Robles, the new governor of Texas, accepted Ybarbo's version of the incident.

The Comanches returned to Bucareli in October to avenge the deaths of their men, and they stole a large horse herd belonging to a wealthy settler. The local militia again pursued the Comanches but turned back when they learned of an ambush planned by the raiders. Rumors continued to reach Bucareli that the Comanches planned to destroy the settlement. Then in February 1779 a severe flood inundated the town. A few days later the Comanches attacked the temporary camp of the homeless settlers and stole the remaining thirty-eight horses that had been saved from the flood. The Spaniards had had enough. They abandoned Bucareli and moved east to the old Nacogdoches area.\textsuperscript{31}

De Mézières feared that a general war with the Comanches would break out as a result of the Bucareli
incident. He sent an Indian envoy to Comanchería to apologize for the mistaken attack and to reassert the Spaniards' desire for peace. The mission succeeded, and Chief Povea assured the envoy that his nation would not go to war over the incident. The Comanches also expressed their willingness to participate in a joint campaign against the Apaches.\textsuperscript{32}

The death of De Mézières on November 2, 1779, left Governor Cabello at a loss to maintain friendly relations with the northern tribes. Cabello's difficult position was compounded when he learned that Spain had declared war on Great Britain. Spain's involvement in the war for American independence would mean fewer troops and less money for the province of Texas. There was hardly enough money to support the government and the military, much less to purchase gifts and trade goods for the Indians. The northern tribes were already complaining that the Spanish had broken their pledge to provide traders.\textsuperscript{33}

In late 1779 and early 1780, the Comanches waged war on the Lipan Apaches. The Lipans suffered severe losses and were forced southward by the onslaught. As a result, Apache raids increased in South Texas. At the same time, Comanche attacks on Spanish settlements escalated. Commandant General Croix pressured Cabello to make peace with the Comanches, and he suggested that pacification of the Indians
be obtained by overlooking their raids and sending envoys with gifts to show them the benefits of peace.³⁴

Cabello followed Croix's directives, and a period of relative quiet existed from late 1781 until 1783. After almost two years of tranquility, the Comanches resumed their attacks on the Spanish settlements. The weakened condition of the province made retaliation all but impossible. In December 1784 the Comanches were bold enough to steal horses from San Antonio's presidial compound, as well as from the corrals of civilian settlers.³⁵

Spanish officials once again attempted to negotiate peace with the Comanches. In the summer of 1785, Pedro Vial and Francisco Xavier de Chaves were dispatched to the Comanche nation with gifts and proposals for peace. Their trip to the Comancherías was successful, and the pair returned to San Antonio on September 29, accompanied by three principal Comanche chiefs. The chiefs had been sent by the eastern Comanches to negotiate peace with the Spanish. Cabello wrote that "it was a cause of great marvelling [sic] to see people who had committed so many hostilities in these settlements enter them with the raised banner of the king of Spain, giving the greatest proof of their reconciliation and friendship."³⁶

In October Spanish officials, under Cabello's leadership, concluded a treaty with the Comanche delegates. The treaty committed both parties to treat each other as
brothers and friends whenever they met. Enemies of the Spanish would also be enemies of the Comanches. The Indians promised to seek approval from the governor of Texas before they campaigned against the Lipans and to report the results of their battles. They agreed to return all Spanish hostages and to stop the practice of kidnapping for ransom. The Comanches also pledged to admit no foreigners to their camps; rather, they would rely on Spanish traders to provide them with goods in exchange for buffalo hides. In return, the Spanish promised annual gifts to the Comanche leaders as a means of confirming their friendship.

The Spanish-Comanche Treaty of 1785 was honored by Comanche leaders, with only minor violations, until the end of the century. Such minor transgressions were inevitable in a society that allowed individuals so much autonomy. In 1799 Pedro de Nava, Commandant General of the Interior Provinces from 1790 until 1802, reported the following to the viceroy:

I am certain that since they celebrated peace with us [in 1785] they have committed nothing more than small petty thefts in Colonia [Nuevo Santander], in Texas, and in the vicinity of the Presidio of Rio Grande in Coahuila. . . . The chiefs and principal Indians of the Eastern Comanche Nation have repeatedly declared in San Antonio de Béxar that they will not break the peace with us because those individuals of their tribe who commit crimes are pursued and punished, nor will they break it because we demand that those who commit crimes be delivered to us.
The policy of conciliation and buying peace through the annual distribution of gifts had obviously achieved some degree of lasting peace with the Comanches.  

Although the policy of granting gifts and trade privileges remained in effect for the remainder of Spanish rule in Texas, it was often administered inconsistently because of the expense involved in procuring the necessary trade items. The Indians became restless and unfriendly when they did not receive the promised goods. They had come to rely on the European goods, not because they wished to emulate European culture, but because the goods made their indigenous way of life easier. When the Spanish failed to provide the needed items, the Comanches acquired them elsewhere. That option became less difficult in the later part of the eighteenth century as the number of Anglo-American traders in Texas increased. The Americans furnished the Comanches with arms and ammunition, as well as other goods, and provided a thriving market for Comanche horses. As a result, the Comanches became less dependent on Spanish trade.  

In 1800 Napoleon forced Spain to cede Louisiana back to France. He then sold that vast territory to the United States in 1803. The United States took charge at Natchitoches in April 1804, and the undefined border between Louisiana and Texas became an immediate point of contention. With the increased Anglo-American threat on Texas's eastern
border, Spanish authorities realized the importance of maintaining their Indian alliances. The relationship between the Spanish and Comanches, however, was severely tested by a series of incidents that occurred in the early years of the nineteenth century.

In 1801 the son of Yamparika Chief Blanco was killed by unidentified Spaniards, and the chief called for revenge. To even the score, Yamparikas killed the leader of a party of hunters from San Antonio in the spring of 1802. In 1803 Spanish soldiers caught and killed nine Taovayas horse thieves. The Taovayas, in turn, called on their Comanche allies to help them avenge the deaths. Such incidents make it apparent that abuses were perpetrated by both sides. However, when they occurred, both Spanish and Comanches, much to their credit, continued to exercise restraint; and the tenuous alliance remained intact.  

In the Spring of 1808, as a show of Spanish strength, Francisco Amangual led an expedition of two hundred men from San Antonio across the Comanchería to Santa Fe, visiting every Comanche band along the way. Amangual was successful in exacting promises of loyalty from the Indians. In a report written in 1809, Manual María de Salcedo y Quiroga, the newly appointed governor of Texas, wrote that all of the Indian nations "at present are peaceful and the worst they are wont to do is to steal mules and horses." However, Salcedo warned that the Spanish must provide trade goods "at
least equally in kind or more abundantly than the Anglo-
Americans do to maintain Comanche allegiance.\textsuperscript{41}

In 1810 Comanche raids once again accelerated. Some of
the principal chiefs, notably Cordero, Paruaquita, and
Yzazat, made every effort to maintain their alliance with
the Spanish, but they were unable to contain many renegade
bands who saw more advantage in raiding Spanish settlements
than in maintaining peace. Unhappy at Spain's failure to
provide promised trade goods, the malcontents stole horses
from the Spanish to trade to Anglo-Americans from the United
States for guns and ammunition.\textsuperscript{42}

In the fall and winter of 1810, conditions only
worsened as news of the Hidalgo Revolt in Mexico reached
Texas. The uprising, sparked in large measure by political
events in Europe, was the beginning of Mexico's struggle for
independence from Spain. Spanish authorities in Texas were
alarmed by news that Mexican revolutionaries were trying to
make alliances with the Comanches. In February 1811 rumors
circulated that the Comanches had been told that the
revolution was being fought to "liberate the Comanches from
Europeans."\textsuperscript{43}

Unexpectedly, in April 1812, a large party of Comanche
warriors led by Cordero, Paruaquita, Pisinape, and Yzazat
appeared at Béxar to protest the arrest of El Sordo, a chief
who was jailed in Coahuila. It is not known if the Indians
were motivated by the rumors of revolution, but Governor
Manual María de Salcedo took no chances. He met the Comanche force with 675 men and succeeded in dispersing them without a fight, but the incident caused Spanish-Comanche relations to further deteriorate.

In August the Augustus Magee-José Gutiérrez de Lara adventurers invaded Texas from Louisiana. The actions of that odd assortment of American filibusters and Spanish insurrectionists led to the capture and brutal execution of Salcedo and effectively destroyed Spanish authority in Texas. Few Comanches came to the aid of the royalists. The insurgents held San Antonio from April to August 1813, and there is no record of Comanche involvement with the revolutionaries during that period. However, when the royalists recaptured San Antonio in August, some of the ousted insurrectionists took refuge with anti-Spanish Comanche groups. Over the next seven years, the Indians and revolutionaries waged a war of attrition against Spanish authority. Antonio Martínez, the last Spanish governor of Texas, wrote on April 1, 1819, that "rarely a day passes that this capital is not attacked by the Indians, one time by Tahuacanos and another by Comanches or Lipanes, and these, with various evil Spaniards, disorganized or united, are attacking our fortifications almost every night, and I fear some catastrophe may occur since the greater part of the garrison is on foot."
During the final years of Spanish rule in Texas, authorities attempted to reestablish peace with the Comanches. Survival of the province depended on stopping or at least lessening Indian depredations, but the Spaniards negotiated from a position of abject weakness. Lacking manpower, arms, horses, and trade goods, Spanish attempts to reestablish peace with the Comanches were ineffective. At the same time, Anglo-Americans were entering Texas in ever increasing numbers, both to trade and to settle.\[46\]

In 1820 Moses Austin obtained permission from the Spanish government to bring colonists from the United States to settle in Texas. American traders supplied the Comanches with trade goods that the Spanish could not provide. A friendship born of mutual benefit developed between Comanches and Americans. Americans needed horses; Comanches needed European goods, particularly guns and ammunition. The trade worked to the detriment of the Spanish, as Comanches continually raided Spanish settlements for horses and mules to trade to the Americans. David G. Burnet, an American trader who lived among the Comanches for eighteen months in 1817 and 1818, estimated that during that time the Indians stole as many as ten thousand horses and mules annually from the Spaniards.\[47\]

When Mexico finally won independence from Spain in 1821, the new government attempted to continue the Spanish policy of pursuing peace with the Comanches, but, once
again, the government in Mexico City failed to allot the resources necessary to accomplish the job. The province of Texas was in a pitiable state, barely able to defend itself from Comanche aggression. In the words of historian Donald E. Chipman, "A non-Indian population in Texas of less than four thousand, largely vacant and dilapidated missions, two fixed presidios, three settlements, and two roads were the only 'memorials of Spain's imperial enterprises in this primeval kingdom.'"

The Republic of Mexico was established in 1823 after the short-lived empire of Augustín de Iturbide, but the government of the new republic was far from stable. The struggle between liberals and centralists occupied officials in the capital and left little time to worry about Indian raids on the Texas frontier. Government officials in Texas continued to pursue peace with the Comanches, but their early initiatives ended in failure when the government in Mexico City failed to provide money for the presents that were necessary to cement the peace. According to historian Rupert N. Richardson, the Comanches "learned to expect presents and regarded them as a reward for keeping the peace. . . ." Without presents, peace was an impossibility.

In 1824 Mexico adopted a new constitution and elected Guadalupe Victoria as the republic's first president. Under Victoria's leadership, Texas finally received money to
purchase gifts for the Indians. In October José Francisco Ruiz, a former royalist soldier turned revolutionary who had lived with the Comanches for several years, was appointed distributor of the presents. Ruiz accomplished a tenuous peace with several Comanche chiefs, but a significant number of the People were not inclined toward peace. They continued to take advantage of the weakened condition of the province by raiding and stealing. By 1825 a "state of war" again existed between Comanches and Mexicans.⁵⁰

On April 18, 1824, the Mexican government enacted a general colonization law that gave the states the authority to open up their territory to foreign immigration. The law was intended to encourage colonization that would not only populate the vast lands of the northern frontier, but would also act as a buffer against unfriendly Indians. Under the generous provisions of the new law, settlers from the United States poured into Texas. The era of American colonization in Texas had begun. Anglo-Americans soon far outnumbered the Mexicans, and by 1834 the American population was estimated to be between twenty and thirty thousand. As the Anglo-American population grew, relations between Americans and Comanches began to deteriorate. The amity that had developed through mutually beneficial trade quickly disintegrated when Americans began surveying land that Comanches deemed to be their traditional hunting ground. The growing American population also threatened Mexican
authority in Texas, and in 1830 the government passed a new law halting immigration from the United States. The law, which remained in effect for four years, slowed but did not stop the pace of immigration into Texas.\textsuperscript{51}

In the early 1830s, a new adversary threatened the Comanches. Tribes from the Eastern United States who fell victim to that nation's tragic Indian removal policy were relocated to the newly established Indian Territory. Scattered remnants of diverse tribes, attempting to escape both the advancing line of white settlement in the Eastern United States and the removal policy, spilled over into Texas. As these immigrant groups encroached on Comanche hunting grounds, conflict became inevitable.\textsuperscript{52}

In 1832 a Comanche rancheria was attacked by a band of Shawnees, an emigrant tribe often allied with the powerful Cherokees. Many Comanches, including the principal chief Yzazona, died in the attack. Since Mexican authorities lacked the manpower and resources to control the Comanches, the decision was made to encourage the Shawnees in their war with the Comanches. A similar policy had been used successfully by the Spanish some fifty years earlier, although, ironically, it was then the Comanches who were encouraged to make war on the Apaches. The new Mexican policy was implemented with varying degrees of enthusiasm until 1835 when General Martín Perfecto de Córs ordered its abandonment. Córs reinstituted the policy of giving presents
to the Comanches, but before he could enact the peace policy, revolution erupted in Texas.53

Texans declared their independence on March 2, 1836. What had begun as a protest against the centralist regime in Mexico City had developed into a full-blown movement for independence. While the Mexican army was busy fighting the rebellious Texans, the Comanches took advantage of the situation by increasing their raids, particularly from San Antonio south to the Rio Grande. The Texas army defeated the Mexicans in April at the battle of San Jacinto, but even though the Texans had claimed the land and established a republic, the Comanches and their allies were still in absolute control of much of the state. Once again, the Comanche nation would present a major challenge to the government of Texas.54


22. Antonio María de Bucareli y Ursúa to Barón de Ripperdá, December 9, 1772; Bucareli to Ripperdá, January 6, 1773; Bucareli to Ripperdá, March 1, 1773; Bucareli to Ripperdá, May 25, 1773, BATM, Reel 7.


25. Antonio María de Bucareli y Ursúa to Barón de Ripperdá, September 16, 1772; Bucareli to Ripperdá, December 9, 1772; Bucareli to Ripperdá, January 6, 1773, quotation, BATM, Reel 7.


31. Domingo Cabello y Robles to Teodoro de Croix, August 30, 1779; Cabello to Croix, August 31, 1779, BATM, Reel 11; Chipman, *Spanish Texas*, 187.


33. Domingo Cabello to Teodoro de Croix, June 29, 1779; Cabello to Croix, November 12, 1779, BATM, Reel 11; John, *Storms Brewed*, 524-537, 555-556.
34. Domingo Cabello to Teodoro de Croix, November 2, 1779; Cabello to Croix, November 9, 1780, BATM, Reel 11; Cabello to Croix, July 4, 1780; Cabello to Croix, July 10, 1780, BATM, Reel 12; Alfred B. Thomas, Teodoro de Croix and the Northern Frontier of New Spain (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1941), 74.

35. Domingo Cabello to Felipe de Neve, December 20, 1784, BATM, Reel 15; Thomas, Teodoro de Croix, 74-75; Odie Faulk, "Spanish Comanche Relations and the Treaty of 1785," Texana 2 (Spring 1964): 46-47.

36. John, Storms Brewed, 661-665; Domingo Cabello to José Antonio Rengel, October 3, 1785, quotation, BATM, Reel 15.


38. Ibid., 51-53.

39. Richardson, Comanche Barrier, 70-73.


43. Kavanagh, "Comanche Politics," 80; Pedro Aranda to José Menchaca, February 26, 1811, quotation, The Béxar Archives, 1717-1836, Microfilm Collection, University of North Texas, Reel 48. Hereafter cited as BAM.

44. John, "Nurturing the Peace," 364.


48. Faulk, "Comanche Invasion," 299; Chipman, Spanish Texas, 216, quotation.

49. Kavanagh, "Comanche Politics," 82-83; Richardson, Comanche Barrier, 75, quotation.

50. Lucas Alamán to José Antonio Saucedo, September 3, 1824, BAM, Reel 77; Francisco Ruiz to Gaspar Flores, October 18, 1824, BAM, Reel 78; Rafael González to José Antonio Saucedo and Antonio Elozúa, August 22, 1825, BAM, Reel 83; Kavanagh, "Comanche Politics," 84-85.


52. Wallace and Hoebel, The Comanches, 291.


CHAPTER 2

THE EARLY REPUBLIC AND SAM HOUSTON'S

FIRST ADMINISTRATION, 1835-1838

If the white men would draw a line
defining their claims and keep on
their side of it the red men would
not molest them.

Chief Muguara
Southern Comanche, 1837

If I could build a wall from the
Red river to the Rio Grande, so
high that no Indian could scale it,
the white people would go crazy
trying to devise means to get
beyond it.

Sam Houston, 1838

The Comanches presented a major challenge to the
fledgling government of the Republic of Texas. The Republic
consisted of scattered frontier settlements that advanced
north and west as the population of Texas exploded. In 1836
the Anglo population approached 35,000, and immigration from
the United States continued at a rapid pace throughout the
ten-year life of the Republic. Lieutenant James W. Abert, a
United States soldier who traveled the Santa Fe trail in
1846, remarked that, "The way from Fort Gibson was literally
lined with the wagons of emigrants to Texas, and from this
time until we arrived at St. Louis we continued daily to see
hundreds of them." Settlers moved up the Brazos and Colorado Rivers and carved out farms on land where Comanches traditionally hunted. The settlers, isolated and protected only by individual arms, were an easy target for the Comanches who resented the intrusion and coveted the Anglo-American's goods and their superior breed of horses. Protecting those settlers became a priority of the new government of the Republic of Texas.¹

Even while waging the war for independence from Mexico, Texas's revolutionary governments, three in total, were forced to deal with the serious Indian problems that plagued the settlers. The first government, known as the Permanent Council, governed for only three weeks. Organized on October 11, 1835, it consisted of the Committee of Public Safety in San Felipe, the main settlement of Austin's colony, which was joined by representatives from similar groups in other communities. The Council served Texas well in the early days of the revolution. Along with supplying the army, commissioning privateers, establishing a postal system, and performing other important organizational tasks, the Council formulated an Indian policy that became the foundation for later policies of the Republic.²

The first step taken by the Council to deal with Indian problems was the organization of a force of rangers to protect the frontier. A resolution, adopted on October 17, authorized Silas M. Parker to employ and oversee twenty-five
rangers to guard the frontier between the Trinity and Brazos Rivers; D. B. Fryar was to supervise twenty-five men who would range between the Brazos and Colorado Rivers; and Garrison Greenwood would command ten men whose job was to protect settlers on the east side of the Trinity River. On October 26, the Council voted to add an additional twenty-five men to Greenwood's company of ten. The two companies ranging between the Trinity and Colorado would rendezvous at the "Ouaco [Waco] village" on the Brazos. The Rangers on the east side of the Trinity would headquarter at Houston. Rangers were to be paid $1.25 per day, and each company would elect officers that were responsible for reporting to the above-named superintendents every fifteen days.²

In addition to providing protection for the frontier, the Council emphasized the importance of maintaining good relations with peaceful tribes settled in Texas, and it instructed the rangers not to harass any friendly Indians. The action of the Council established a two-pronged policy designed to guard the frontier against hostile tribes, while simultaneously promoting friendly relations with the peaceable tribes. The Permanent Council served until October 31, when it was replaced by the Consultation government.³

The Consultation, the second governmental body of the revolution, assembled at San Felipe on November 3, 1835, with fifty-five delegates representing twelve
municipalities. Branch T. Archer, a delegate from Brazoria, was elected president. The Consultation endorsed most of the work of the Permanent Council and, in addition, adopted a plan for the creation of an army. It elected Sam Houston commander in chief, and drew up a plan for a provisional government. The Consultation also expanded the provisions of the Indian policy adopted by the Council.

A resolution, introduced on November 6, called for extending the line of rangers from the Colorado River to settlements on the Guadalupe. The resolution was referred to committee, and on November 9, the committee submitted a report advising that ranger patrols be extended only as far as Cibolo Creek. It also recommended that twenty additional men be added to guard the territory between Cibolo Creek and the Colorado River with G. W. Davis as the unit's superintendent. That company would rendezvous "at a place known by the big spring or head of St. Marks'[San Marcos] River." The committee likewise recommended that ten additional men be added to the twenty-five already assigned to the frontier between the Brazos and Trinity Rivers. All recommendations of the committee were adopted by the Consultation.5

When the Consultation planned the organization of the provisional government, it included an article continuing ranger protection of the frontier. Specifically, the provision called for "a corps of rangers under the command
of a major, to consist of one hundred and fifty men, to be divided into three or more detachments, and which shall compose a battalion under the commander-in-chief, when in the field." Its work complete, the Consultation adjourned on November 14, to be replaced by the Provisional Government that it had created.6

The Provisional Government consisted of a governor, lieutenant governor, and a legislative body known as the General Council. Henry Smith, a representative from the Department of the Brazos, was elected governor, and James W. Robinson of Nacogdoches was chosen as lieutenant governor. On November 15, in his first message to the General Council, Smith made the following statement concerning protection of the frontier:

Provisions have already been made for the Organization of a corps of Rangers, and I conceive it highly important that you should place a bold energetic and enterprising commander at their head. This corps well managed, will prove a safeguard to our hitherto unprotected frontier inhabitants, and prevent the depredations of those savage hordes that infest our border. I conceive this very important at the moment, as it is known that the Mexican authorities have endeavored to engage them in a war with us.7

The General Council heeded the recommendations of Governor Smith. On November 21, John A. Wharton, a member of the Committee on Military Affairs, reported on plans for the reorganization of the corps of rangers. His committee recommended the immediate organization of a battalion of 168 men under the command of a major who reported to the
commander in chief of the army. The battalion would be divided into three companies, each with fifty-six men. Each company would also have one captain, one lieutenant, and one second lieutenant. According to Wharton, this reorganization was recommended in order to make the structure of the ranger corps comparable to that of the regular army. The plan was approved by the Council on November 24, and signed by the governor two days later.

On December 11, a resolution was introduced to establish a special company of ten men to range the vicinity of the headwaters of Cummings's and Rabb's Creeks (Waller County west to Lee County) whenever necessary for the protection of that part of the country. The Committee on Military Affairs rejected the proposition on the grounds that "the corps of rangers already created is sufficient for the protection of the country, which the said resolution contemplates."

In January 1836, in the midst of the revolution, Indian relations once again occupied the General Council. A letter from Lieutenant Colonel J. C. Neill, commander at San Antonio, informed the Council that a representative from the Comanche nation had arrived in San Antonio to report that his tribe was willing to suspend hostilities for twenty days for the purpose of making a treaty with the Texans. The Comanche suggested that each party send five commissioners
to Béxar for the purpose of concluding a treaty of "Amity
Commerce and Limits."¹⁰

Neill's letter was referred to the Committee on Land
and Indian Affairs chaired by John D. Clements. The
committee reported to the council that friendship with the
Comanches was "of the utmost importance to the interest and
safety of our citizens; and more especially to those
residing on the frontier." The situation was urgent, not
only because of continued Comanche attacks on settlers, but
also because rumors of General Martín Perfecto de Cós's
peace overtures to the Comanche had reached San Felipe, and
Texans feared a Mexican-Comanche alliance.¹¹

The Council appointed five commissioners to go to San
Antonio to meet with the Indians. It also appropriated $500
to cover the expenses of the treaty commission. Edward
Burleson, J. C. Neill, John W. Smith, Francisco Ruiz, and
Byrd Lockhart were elected commissioners. Despite the
preparations of the General Council, the peace mission never
materialized. Most probably, Texans were too preoccupied
with the Mexican invasion. Whatever the reason, the Texas
government missed a critical opportunity to establish good
relations with the Comanches. The consequences of its
failure to pursue peace would soon be felt on the
frontier.¹²

On January 10, an ongoing disagreement between Smith
and the Council over action to be taken against Mexico
culminated in the Council's removal of the governor from office. Lieutenant Governor Robinson was then inaugurated as acting governor. On January 29, a letter to the Provisional Government from Hugh Love suggested a new approach to the Indian problem. Love proposed that the government enlist friendly Indians in the service of the state to help protect the frontier from warring tribes. The government thought the policy worth pursuing, and Robinson instructed Love to proceed to Nacogdoches to work among the settled Indians for peace, and, if possible, to persuade them to help protect the frontier. It is not known if Love carried out the governor's instructions, for there is no further mention of his mission in the official record. Although the policy was probably not put into operation in 1836, a similar policy was initiated later in the Republic's history, possibly a result of Love's suggestion.13

On March 1, 1836, the Provisional Government was supplanted by a convention "with ample, unlimited, or plenary powers as to the form of government to be adopted." The delegates to the convention met at Washington on the Brazos, a new town about thirty-five miles upstream from San Felipe. After adopting a Declaration of Independence on March 2, the convention began preparing a constitution for the new republic. The completed document was adopted on March 16, and an ad interim government was elected to direct the Republic until the constitution could be ratified and a
regular government elected and inaugurated. The urgent work of the convention left little time to consider Indian affairs; however, a resolution was passed on March 3, authorizing Colonel James Benton and Lieutenant Griffin Bane to raise a regiment of rangers.¹⁴

Several days later news reached the convention that a large force of Indians had gathered just above the San Antonio road. In response to that information, the convention authorized "Captain Black and Captain Bennett" to raise a company of up to fifty volunteers and to proceed to the specified place to disperse the Indians. However, on March 10, delegates voted to reconsider the resolution, perhaps because they lacked sufficient proof of the assemblage.¹⁵

The convention adjourned on March 17, and the ad interim government, headed by President David G. Burnet, took control of the Republic of Texas. By then the fight for independence was in full swing, the Alamo had fallen, and settlers were fleeing the advancing Mexican army. The government fled with the people and relocated its headquarters at Harrisburg near Galveston Bay. It is no wonder that the government found little time to deal with the Indian problem, and although the Comanches did not ally with either side during the revolution, they did not fail to profit from the state of affairs. The Indians took
advantage of the chaotic situation in Texas by increasing their raids on frontier settlements.¹⁶

Throughout the fall of 1835 and into 1836, reports of Comanche attacks reached government officials. In December bands raided in the vicinity of Colonel Edward Burleson's camp near Gonzalez. In April they attacked settlers retreating from Doctor John Charles Beales's colony on Las Moras Creek, and a month later they attacked the Hibbons family near the Guadalupe River. But on May 19 a particularly cruel and destructive raid occurred at Parker's Fort, a settlement of some thirty-four persons near the Navasota River in present Limestone County.¹⁷

A large band of northern Comanches, along with some Kiowa, Wichita, and Caddo allies, attacked Parker's Fort. They killed five men, some of whom were tortured before they died, mutilated several women and left them for dead, and took two women and three children as captives. The extreme brutality of the raid along with the plight of the captives, all of whom were eventually ransomed to tell their stories, hardened Texan opinions against the Comanches. According to historian Rupert N. Richardson, the Comanche raid on Parker's Fort "added to the bitter hatred the frontier people had for all Indians." However, it should be noted that Parker's Fort was located almost fifty miles north and west of the old San Antonio-Nacogdoches Road, the edge of white settlement in 1836. Not only did the settlers
encroach on Indian land, they also built a blockhouse for protection—thus the name Parker's Fort. Their bold initiative invited attack, but there is also some evidence that the Comanche raid was in retaliation for equally vicious ranger attacks.18

Obviously, the ranger patrols operating during the ad interim government were not very effective in stopping Indian raids. There is very little information about the organization of rangers during that period, but most probably, there were too few men to cover the vast and sparsely populated frontier. Dudley G. Wooten, an early Texas historian, wrote that Governor Henry Smith appointed Captain Robert M. Coleman to organize a company of rangers and place detachments at various points along the Trinity, Brazos, Colorado, and Little Rivers. Coleman remained in the service of the rangers until he was dismissed by President Sam Houston in 1836.19

On March 19 President Burnet named M. B. Menard as Indian commissioner for all the tribes. Menard was authorized to draw up to $2,000 from the War Department to buy presents for the chiefs. The president instructed Menard "to avoid with great caution entering into any specific treaty relating to boundaries, that may compromit the interests of actual settlers." In refusing to establish boundary lines to delineate Indian land, Burnet set a
precedent that remained in effect throughout the life of the Republic.\textsuperscript{20}

The following October, Burnet, acting on a recommendation made by the Standing Committee on Indian Affairs, appointed an agent specifically to deal with the Comanches. Major A. LeGrand, regarded by some as an authority on the tribe, was commissioned to visit the northern bands and, if possible, negotiate a treaty. LeGrand traveled by way of Ft. Gibson to Comanchería where he met Chicony (Traveling Wolf), a principal chief who was camped with his people at the confluence of the Big and Little Washita Rivers. When LeGrand proposed that the Comanches negotiate peace with the Texans, Chicony replied:

So long as he continued to see the gradual approach of the whites and their habitations to the hunting grounds of the Camanches [sic], so long would he believe to be true what the Mexicans had told him, viz, that the ultimate intention of the white man was to deprive them of their country; and so long would he continue to be the enemy of the white race.

LeGrand's mission was not successful, and throughout the fall of 1836, Comanche raids continued to threaten settlements along the frontier.\textsuperscript{21}

Elections were held in September, and on October 22 the ad interim government resigned to be replaced by duly elected officials. Sam Houston was inaugurated as the first constitutionally elected president of the Republic. Texans had won their independence from Mexico in April, and the
government, no longer required to conduct wartime activities, was able to devote more attention to the protection of the frontier. Houston was thus in a position to make concerted efforts toward establishing peaceful relations with the Comanches.

Sam Houston was one of those uncommon individuals that historian Margaret Szasz called a "cultural broker," an intermediary who is able to bridge the divide between two distinct cultures. That cultural mobility is made possible by a thorough knowledge and understanding of each of the diverse cultures. A cultural broker often lives on the edge of change and conflict and responds to evolving and unstable circumstances with a determination to bring understanding to disparate peoples. Sam Houston was just such a person. As a young man, he had lived with the Cherokees, was adopted by the tribe, and later married a Cherokee woman. Houston also had some firsthand knowledge of the Comanches. In 1833, as an envoy of the United States government, Houston met with Comanche leaders at San Antonio to invite them to Ft. Gibson, where they might be persuaded to sign a treaty with the United States. He found them friendly and willing to negotiate; however, they failed to honor their pledge to visit Ft. Gibson. Houston's knowledge and understanding of Indian cultures caused him to view the Indian situation differently from the majority of Texans. As a result, his
proposed Indian policies often brought him into conflict with the Texas congress.\textsuperscript{22}

In his inaugural address, Houston set forth his policy for dealing with the Indians:

A subject of no small importance to our welfare, is the situation of an extensive frontier, bordered by Indians, and subject to their depredations. Treaties of peace and amity and the maintenance of good faith with the Indians, present themselves to my mind as the most rational ground on which to obtain their friendship. Abstain on our part from aggression, establish commerce with the different tribes, supply their useful and necessary wants, maintain even handed justice with them, and natural reason will teach them the utility of our friendship.\textsuperscript{23}

Although he advocated a policy of peace, friendship, and commerce with the Indians, Houston also recognized the importance of protecting the settlers. On December 5 he signed a bill that authorized the president of the republic to raise a battalion of 280 mounted riflemen to guard the frontier; and, in cases of extreme emergency, he could order out the militia. The president was also given authority to establish blockhouses, forts, and trading posts as he deemed necessary and to send agents among the Indians for the purpose of securing peace through treaties and gift-giving. Just two days before signing the frontier protection bill, Houston wrote to the Comanche chiefs telling them of his desire for peace and his intention to send emissaries with gifts to promote friendship and trade between Comanches and Texans. He reminded the Indians that "You have many things
to trade and to swap with us. You need many things that we can let you have cheaper than you have ever been able to get from the Mexicans. You can let us have horses, mules and buffalo robes in change for our paints, tobacco, blankets, and other things which will make you happy. Houston closed his letter by declaring, "I wish to have a smoothe [sic] path, that shall lead from your camp to my house, that we can meet each other and that it shall never become bloody."  

In the spring of 1837, Houston commissioned the Cherokee Chief Bowles to visit the Comanches. Bowles found those tribes nearest the Texas settlements to be quite friendly, but they warned the Cherokee not to attempt "to conciliate the great northern villages, for they hate the white man." Bowles ignored their advice and traveled on to the Comanche villages on the Brazos, Wichita, and Red Rivers. He found a total of sixteen camps that he referred to as "those who trade with Coffee." According to historian Grant Foreman, Holland Coffee was a well-established trader whose post was located on Walnut Bayou, a tributary of the Red River in present Love County, Oklahoma. During his stay at the camps of "those who trade with Coffee," Bowles observed war parties returning almost daily from Mexico with large herds of horses and mules and many women and children as prisoners. He reported that the treatment accorded him
by the northern tribes was insulting, and he proposed that
the Texans wage war against the contentious bands.25

A joint committee on Indian affairs reported to
congress in May that conditions on the frontier were
deplorable, with murders and depredations occurring almost
daily. The committee recommended that aggressive action be
taken against the hostile Indians. As a result of the
committee’s alarming report, congress passed a bill for the
better protection of the northern frontier, which was
approved on June 12. The act raised the number of mounted
men patrolling the frontier to six hundred. The force would
remain in service for six months, and each division would be
assisted by a "company of spies, composed of Shawnees,
Cherokees, Delawares, or of other friendly Indians." The
act further stipulated that spoils taken from the enemy be
divided equally among the officers and men. Clearly, the
passage of this act demonstrated that the Texas congress was
increasingly more willing to enact stringent measures for
frontier protection.26

While Congress was taking action against the hostile
northern tribes, a band of southern Comanches sought peace
in Bastrop County. In the early summer of 1836, Chiefs
Quinaseico and Puestia and six warriors appeared at
Coleman's Fort waving a white flag. Communicating in
Spanish, they expressed a desire for peace with the whites
and requested that a commissioner be sent to their camp to
meet with their head chief, Muguara, to discuss terms for a treaty. Noah Smithwick, being the most conversant in Spanish, agreed to accompany the men to their camp on Brushy Creek, about thirty miles from the fort. He reported that the camp consisted of about fifty lodges and probably had no more than a hundred warriors.27

During his stay, Smithwick had many serious talks with the Comanche chiefs, and he came to understand the justice of their claims to the land. The chiefs explained to him that they considered the land to be theirs by right of inheritance; the game had been placed there for their food. Muguara complained that:

We have set up our lodges in these groves and swung our children from these boughs from time immemorial. When game beats away from us we pull down our lodges and move away, leaving no trace to frighten it, and in a little while it comes back. But the white man comes and cuts down the trees, building houses and fences, and the buffaloes get frightened and leave and never come back, and the Indians are left to starve, or if we follow the game, we trespass on the hunting ground of other tribes and war ensues.28

When Smithwick suggested that land be allotted to the tribe along with the tools to cultivate it like the white men, Muguara's reply was both honest and prophetic:

No, the Indians were not made to work. If they build houses and try to live like white men they will all die. If the white men would draw a line defining their claims and keep on their side of it the red men would not molest them.29

Smithwick made another observation that does much to explain the misunderstanding that confounded Texan-Comanche
relations. He noted that the Comanches believed that the white people were also divided into bands, with those residing in a particular area constituting a tribe. The Indians could not comprehend why a treaty made with one tribe, for example whites living on the Colorado, should extend to all whites in Texas. This misconception often caused whites to accuse Comanches of breaking treaty vows, while Comanches were actually honoring treaties as they understood them.\(^3^0\)

Muguara understood that a definite boundary between Indians and whites was the only way to achieve peace, but Texans were not willing to make that vital concession. Houston realized the futility of the boundary question, and when informed that the Comanches wanted a definite line of division between themselves and the whites, the president sadly replied, "If I could build a wall from the Red river [sic] to the Rio Grande, so high that no Indian could scale it, the white people would go crazy trying to devise means to get beyond it." In October 1837 the Texas Congress responded to the Comanche overtures for peace by authorizing the president to appoint a commission to negotiate with the tribe, but, as before, "no fee simple right of soil" would be acknowledged.\(^3^1\)

As a result of Smithwick's prolonged stay at the Comanche camp, he was able to persuade five of the chiefs, including Muguara, to travel to the new capital at Houston
to meet with the president. The meeting resulted in a treaty of "Peace and Amity" that was finalized on May 29, 1838. Robert A. Irion and Ashbel Smith signed the treaty for the Texans, and Muguara, Muestyah, and Muhy signed for the Comanches. The treaty is important because it embodied the terms by which Houston hoped to make peace with all the Comanches. The agreement made no provision for a boundary line, but stipulated that the Republic would send an agent to the Comanches to protect the rights of the Indians and to superintend trade with them. In return, the Comanches agreed to punish any member of their tribe who committed depredations against the whites and to return any stolen property. The treaty also established the principle of annual councils between Texans and Comanches, and the Comanches agreed to make war on any Indian tribe that interfered with the traders appointed by the Republic. The last article of the treaty warned that the Great Spirit "will curse all Chiefs that tell a lie before his eyes. Their Women and Children cannot be happy." The treaty was never ratified by the Texas Senate.

At the same time that negotiations were being conducted with Muguara's band, Houston was attempting to extend his pacific policy to a band of Comanches camped about 250 miles north of San Antonio. In October 1837 congress authorized the appointment of commissioners to be sent to induce those chiefs to visit San Antonio to negotiate peace with the
Texas government. The Comanches were suspicious of the motives of the commissioners, a fact that the agents attributed to "false representations, made by the Mexicans at Matamoros, and the North American Indians now among them, who tell the Comanche that our object is to acquire our lands unjustly." Whatever the cause of the suspicions, the Comanches insisted that the government recognize their territorial limits. They defined their boundaries as all the territory north and west of the Guadalupe mountains, extending from the Red River to the Rio Grande. The Comanches further resolved to kill all surveyors found within their territory.

After making their prerequisites for peace known to the agents, the Comanches agreed to send envoys to San Antonio. The delegation arrived in early May led by two chiefs, Isowacony and Isomania. General Albert Sidney Johnston conducted negotiations for the Texas government, and, in keeping with his instructions, refused to consider a definite boundary agreement. The Comanches left without reaching an accord with the Texans. Once again, the Texas government had refused to acknowledge the Comanches' possessory rights to the land, and thereafter Comanches would oppose Anglo encroachment in the most forceful way possible.

As Indian attacks continued to be an unceasing problem, the Texas Congress passed a series of bills to strengthen
the forces patrolling the frontier. On May 15 Houston signed a bill authorizing the president to raise a corps of up to 280 regular cavalry to range on the southwestern frontier. Later that month, congress approved an act requiring the president "to order out a sufficient number of mounted gunmen, from each brigade, to commence active operations against the hostile Indians on the frontier." Houston vetoed the bill saying that it was "in every feature objectionable." He favored regular, organized protection of the frontier, but he vehemently opposed offensive expeditions against the Indians.  

Additional bills aimed at frontier protection were enacted by the Third Congress when it met in November. An act authorizing an appropriation of twenty thousand dollars to outfit 250 militia was signed by Houston on November 6. That force would be under direct command of General Thomas J. Rusk, Secretary of War. Ten days later, Houston signed three more bills related to the frontier situation. The first authorized the president to draw on the treasury for the necessary funds to transport the troops and their supplies to the frontier. The second allowed the president to issue $100,000 in promissory notes of the government for purposes of frontier protection. The third bill pledged remuneration for all citizens who volunteered in defense of "our exposed and suffering frontier." The Texas Congress was willing to do all in its power to protect the frontier,
but it was not so committed to Houston's policy of fostering peace with the Indians.36

Despite a less than enthusiastic congress, Houston continued his efforts to make a binding peace with the Comanches. Since the legislative body had continually refused to establish any kind of permanent boundary between Texans and Comanches, Houston advocated instituting a line of trading posts that he hoped would act in lieu of an actual boundary. As promised in his earlier letter to Comanche chiefs, Houston sent several emissaries to promote trade with the various tribes, but his efforts met with little success. Although Congress had authorized the president to establish trading posts, no appropriations were made to enable Houston to carry out the provision. Houston had approved V. R. Palmer to establish a trading post for the Colorado River Comanches, but for unknown reasons, Palmer never initiated the enterprise.37

In the summer of 1838, two tragic incidents caused the further deterioration of Texan-Comanche relations. Houston directed Colonel Henry W. Karnes to travel to Comanchería to talk peace with Comanche subdivisions that had not yet come into contact with Texas officials. Karnes purchased trade goods in San Antonio and set out on his mission with twenty-one men. Before he could make contact with the Indians, news reached his company that Comanches had killed a party of surveyors who were mapping townsites on the Pedernales
River. Instead of pursuing peace as instructed, Karnes decided to retaliate against the perpetrators. He attacked the first Indian settlement he encountered, a village on the Arroyo Seco west of the Medina River, and killed some twenty Comanches. Since women and children were present, it is doubtful that the Comanches attacked by Karnes had been engaged in hostilities. In his quest for revenge, Karnes attacked a band that was probably not involved in the deaths of the surveyors."

Karnes's "peace" mission only served to further inflame the Comanches against the Texans. Historian William B. Gannett aptly summed up the effect of the attack on the Comanches when he wrote, "In addition to their apprehension that the whites would survey and take their land, the Comanches now had to worry that Texans would come to their villages and kill their women and children." The Penatekas, or southern Comanches, bore the brunt of Texan aggression, since they were the band occupying territory nearest the advancing line of Anglo settlement. Texans generally made no distinction between bands, so the Penateka were often punished for crimes committed by their northern neighbors, the Nokoni, Tenawa, or Tanima. By 1838 the many decades of contact with non-Indians, first Spaniards and Mexicans, then Texans, had obviously taken a toll on the southern Comanches. Muguara's people who visited Houston to negotiate a treaty in 1838 were described by observers as
"diminutive, squalid, half-starved, poverty-stricken savages, armed with bows and arrows and mounted on wretched horses and mules." Their condition would only worsen as Texans pushed farther and farther into their territory.³⁹

Houston's first term as president ended in December 1838, and because of a constitutional provision that limited the term of the first president to two years, he was not eligible to seek reelection. When Houston left office, relations with the Comanches were rapidly deteriorating. Houston's policy of pursuing peace and friendship had been largely unsuccessful, due primarily to an uncooperative congress, an impoverished treasury, and unsympathetic settlers who continued to encroach on Comanchería. His policy was also impeded by a poorly organized governmental system for overseeing Indian affairs.⁴⁰

Houston was committed to a policy of peace and consistently worked to implement that course of action, but his efforts failed to produce any lasting results. The one treaty that the Comanches signed was not ratified by the senate. Houston's plan to establish trading posts to act as buffers along the frontier was not implemented, and despite an expanded ranger force, Comanches still raided at will. In light of conditions on the frontier and the mood of the majority of Texans, Houston's successor, Mirabeau B. Lamar, would institute a policy diametrically opposed to that of Houston.
Throughout the years of the revolution and Houston's first administration, a chance for peace between Texans and Comanches still existed. Only a few years earlier there had been friendship between the two peoples. But Texans were unwilling to concede the one Comanche requirement for peace—a boundary between Texas and Comanchería. As land-hungry settlers continued to invade Comanche land, the opportunity for peace was lost.
Endnotes -- Chapter 2

1. Rupert N. Richardson, Ernest Wallace, and Adrian Anderson, *Texas: The Lone Star State*, 5th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1988), 138. In October 1835 the Permanent Council estimated the population of Texas to be "between sixty and one hundred thousand inhabitants." Since the estimate was included in a letter appealing to the citizens of the United States for help in the fight against Mexico, it is possible that the number was exaggerated in order to impress people in the States and encourage their support for the Texas cause. The letter, which was printed and circulated in the United States, is included in Eugene C. Barker, "Journal of the Permanent Council (October 11-27, 1835)," *Texas Historical Association Quarterly* 7 (April 1904): 271; John Galvin, ed., *Through the Country of the Comanche Indians in the Fall of the Year 1845: The Journal of a U. S. Army Expedition led by Lieutenant James W. Abert of the Topographical Engineers* (San Francisco: John Howell Books, 1970), 68, quotation; Ernest Wallace and E. Adamson Hoebel, *The Comanches: Lords of the South Plains* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1952), 292.


3. Ibid., 260-262, 271.

4. Ibid., 262.


6. Ibid., 1:543.

7. Ibid., 1:558.

8. Ibid., 1:576-577, 924-925.


15. Ibid., 1:858, 878.


18. Rupert N. Richardson, *The Comanche Barrier to South Plains Settlement* (Glendale, CA: Arthur H. Clark, 1933), 90-91, 91, quotation; Stanley Noyes, *The Comanches: The Horse People, 1751-1845* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993), 247-248. For a detailed account of the attack on Parker's Fort, see *The Rachel Plummer Narrative* (Reprint, Austin: Jenkins Publishing Company, 1977) or James T. Deshields's *Border Wars of Texas* (Waco: Texian Press, 1976), 172-186. Cynthia Ann Parker, who became one of the most famous captives in Texas history, was taken during the raid on Parker's Fort when she was nine-years old. She lived with the Nokoni Comanches for twenty-five years, became the wife of head chief Peta Nocona, and the mother of Quanah, the last great Comanche chief. For a biography of Quanah, see William T. Hagan, *Quanah Parker, Comanche Chief* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993).


25. Kavanagh, "Comanche Politics," 111-112; Richardson, *Comanche Barrier*, 83, 92; *Telegraph and Texas Register* (Houston), June 20, 1837.


28. Ibid., 134.

29. Ibid.
30. Ibid., 135.
31. Ibid., 138, quotation; Winfrey, Texas Indian Papers, 1825-1843, 27.
32. Winfrey, Texas Indian Papers, 1825-1843, 50-52.
33. Ibid., 43-44.
34. Ibid.; Richardson, Comanche Barrier, 95-96.
36. Gammel, Laws of Texas, 2:3-5.
37. House Journal, 2d Cong., reg. sess., November 21, 1837, 156-158. In Streeter Microfilm Collection, #252, reel 3; Anna Muckleroy, "The Indian Policy of the Republic of Texas," part 2, Southwestern Historical Quarterly 26 (July 1922): 22; Smithwick, Evolution of a State, 139-140.
39. Richardson, Comanche Barrier, 100-101; Gannett, "American Invasion of Texas," 336-337, 336, quotation; Telegraph and Texas Register (Houston), May 30, 1838. In Rangers and Regulars (Columbus, OH: Long's College Book Company, 1952), 140-141. George E. Hyde points out that during the republic period the Penateka suffered a disproportionate amount of abuse from the Texans. Hyde adds that, "Most of the chiefs of this group seem to have been so alarmed at the fighting-spirit of the Texans that they did all they could to maintain peace with them."
CHAPTER 3

THE ADMINISTRATION OF MIRABEAU B. LAMAR

1838-1841

In my opinion, the proper policy to be pursued towards the barbarian race, is absolute expulsion from the country. Nothing short of this will bring us peace or safety.

Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar, 1839

The presidential election of 1838 brought profound changes in Texas Indian policy. Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar had none of Houston's understanding and sympathy for Indians. He viewed them as impediments to the progress of civilized society and saw no possibility of peacefully resolving the difficulties between settlers and Indians. Lamar's attitude toward Indians, like that of his predecessor, Sam Houston, was founded in his earlier experiences. Before coming to Texas, Lamar served as private secretary for Governor George M. Troup of Georgia. During Troup's administration, Georgia was embroiled in a land controversy with the Creek Indians. The governor enforced the Treaty of Indian Springs, an agreement of doubtful legality, that ceded Creek lands to the state of Georgia and forced the removal of most of that tribe from the state. Troup denied the right of the Indians to
establish an independent government within the state, and dictated that any Native Americans who remained in Georgia become subject to state law. Lamar's views on Indian policy appear to have been greatly influenced by his service with Governor Troup.¹

In his first message to Congress on December 21, 1838, Lamar laid out his proposals for dealing with the Texas tribes. He considered Houston's policy of pacification a total failure, and argued that "as long as we continue to exhibit our mercy without shewing [sic] our strength, so long will the Indian continue to bloody the edge of the tomahawk, and move onward in the work of rapacity and slaughter." He urged that the time for retaliation had come, "not in the murder of their women and children, but in the prosecution of an exterminating war upon their warriors, which will admit of no compromise and have no termination except in their total extinction or total expulsion." To implement that policy, Lamar proposed the establishment of a line of military posts to protect the frontier along with the creation of an army sufficient to "deter the Indian from his depredations."²

Lamar's views on the Indian situation corresponded to those of the majority of Texans, most of whom had emigrated to the Republic from the United States. Those Anglo-Americans came to Texas with preconceived notions of how to deal with Indians. Their ultimate goal was to acquire land,
and the fact that the land was already occupied by roving bands of Prairie and Plains Indians was only a temporary inconvenience. One Texan, a transplant from the Southern United States, remarked that the settlers would devise a way "to keep the Indians at a respectable distance, as did our fathers of Tennessee." The culture of the Anglo-Americans was vastly different from that of the other European-based cultures, namely Spanish and Mexican, that the Comanches had thus far encountered. The Americans practiced a capitalist agriculture that required altering the landscape so that it would support crop growing. The system also required private ownership of land and therefore necessitated the eradication of all competing claimants. Texas settlers looked to Lamar to eliminate the Indian obstacles to Anglo land ownership. William McCraven of San Antonio wrote Lamar that "the people of this section are looking to you as as [sic] their only hope both as regards the title to their lands and protection against the Indians. The latter are exceedingly annoying so much so indeed as almost entirely to suspend the surveying." Just as the preponderance of citizens supported Lamar's Indian policy, so did the majority of congress, and laws embodying the new policy were soon passed.  

Lamar's policy also received the support of George W. Bonnell, Commissioner of Indian Affairs. In November Bonnell made a report to congress in which he charged that:
We have commenced with the worst policy that we can possibly pursue towards them [Indians]; every present which they receive they look upon as an additional proof of our fear, which stimulates them to new acts of hostility. The only kind of treaties that ever an Indian kept, particularly a Comanche Indian, was after having been severely whipped and compelled to sue for peace.\textsuperscript{4}

In January Lamar received additional support from the Committee on Indian Affairs whose report stated that "when the Indian dreads our power, then and then only will he be our firm friend and ally." The committee introduced a bill requiring the president to discharge all Indian agents. Its report asserted that the agents had become "the dupes of crafty warriors" who used the agents to deceive the government. The peace policy pursued by Houston had obviously come to an end.\textsuperscript{5}

The third congress proceeded to pass a succession of laws implementing Lamar's aggressive policy. The first, signed on December 21, 1838, created an extensive system of protection along the northern and western frontiers. It called for a military road to be laid out from the "mouth of the Kiamisha Red River" to the Nueces River where it intersected the San Antonio-Presidio del Río Grande road. A series of forts would be erected along the road, and a regiment of 840 men, divided into 8 detachments, would be stationed at intervals along the road so that, if practical, the space between each post might be traversed twice a day. The act further specified that as soon as the president
considered it expedient, trading houses should be established near the forts "in order to maintain amicable relations with the Indians."

At the end of December, Lamar signed a second frontier protection act authorizing the president to raise a force of eight companies of mounted volunteers for the term of six months. Most importantly, the act specified that the volunteer force could be used offensively or defensively as the president deemed necessary for the best interests of the country. A third act, signed into law on January 23, 1839, authorized three more mounted companies, specifically to patrol the frontier of Bastrop and Milam Counties, also for a term of six months.

A fourth bill, signed on January 24, appropriated one million dollars to finance the measures for frontier protection. With his new policy firmly established by law, Lamar began to implement his plan, and, in the words of historian Henderson Yoakum, "the whole frontier was lighted up with the flames of a savage war." That warfare soon reached the Comanches.

In late January, reports filtered into the settlements on the upper Colorado that a large band of Comanches was camped just to the northwest. Colonel John H. Moore organized a force of volunteers comprised of a company from Bastrop under the command of Noah Smithwick, a company from LaGrange led by Captain W. M. Eastland, and sixteen Lipan
Apaches, the traditional enemies of the Comanches. The combined force headed northwest into Comanchería, and on February 15 surprised a village on Spring Creek near the mouth of the San Saba River.

The Texans attacked before daybreak, and Moore reported that his men fought the Indians by "throwing open the doors of the wigwams or pulling them down and slaughtering the enemy in their beds." He estimated that they killed thirty or forty of the village inhabitants and wounded fifty or sixty. The attackers were forced to withdraw when they were counterattacked by a large force of warriors that had hastily assembled. After driving the Texans from the village, the Comanches sent an envoy carrying a white flag to propose an exchange of prisoners. Since the flag was the same one given to Comanche leaders during treaty signing ceremonies in Houston in 1838, it is most likely that the Indians attacked by Moore's force were Muguara's band.9

The envoy informed Moore that his people held five white captives and were willing to exchange them for Comanche prisoners taken by the Texans. Since Moore's Lipan allies had killed the Comanche prisoners, an exchange was not possible. Ironically, the white captives who narrowly missed freedom that day included Matilda Lockhart, a young girl captured a few months earlier, whose father, Andrew Lockhart, was a member of Moore's volunteer force. When Matilda was finally returned by her captors some thirteen
months later, she had been beaten and permanently disfigured. Her pitiful condition would be a catalyst for one of the most unfortunate events in Texas-Comanche history.¹⁰

The cycle of war between Texans and Comanches continued in 1839, despite the fact that the Texans were primarily occupied with driving the Cherokees out of the Republic. In May a second expedition against the Comanches was launched under the command of Captain John Bird. Bird and fifty rangers recruited from Austin and Fort Bend Counties traveled northwest up the Little River (present Milam County). They encountered a party of Comanches hunting buffalo and immediately gave chase. Bird followed the Indians for several miles across the open prairie before realizing that the fleeing Indians were increasing in number. Alarmed, he halted the pursuit and turned in retreat. The Comanches, by then some two hundred strong, also turned and began to chase the Texans who took cover in a ravine to escape the rain of arrows. After a brief and desultory siege, the Comanches lost interest and returned to their hunting. The rangers reported killing thirty Comanches and claimed a victory, but they had lost seven of their fifty men, including Captain Bird.¹¹

In the fall of 1839, a third expedition set out in pursuit of Comanches. The company, made up of volunteers from Galveston commanded by Colonel Henry Karnes, marched
northwest toward San Antonio. The inexperienced force lost several men during the march as a result of accidents but never encountered a single Comanche.12

In his annual message to congress on November 12, 1839, Lamar claimed that "with the wild Comanches . . . the war has been active and incessant, and . . . it has been carried on against them in their own haunts." What Lamar failed to mention was that the military campaigns had also resulted in Comanches bringing war to the "haunts" of the Texans.13

Comanches raided white settlements all along the north and west frontiers of Texas. The Penateka were the main perpetrators of the raids, for they had suffered severely from the warfare of the last two years and wanted revenge. The main objective of their raids was to stop Texans from intruding on Comanche lands, but they also sought plunder and captives. The goods acquired on their forays were items that they could use themselves or trade to Americans or Comancheros, Hispanic and Indian traders from New Mexico. The captives, primarily women and children, were often incorporated into their bands in hopes of replenishing their depleted numbers. By 1840 the fate of Comanche captives had become a major political issue for Texans, and Lamar was concerned with effecting the return of these individuals to their families. That opportunity presented itself in January 1840 when three Comanche chiefs arrived in San
Antonio and announced that their tribe wanted to negotiate peace with the Texans.\textsuperscript{14}

The Comanche deputation met with Colonel Henry Karnes, and their spokesman, "who appeared to be a Preist [sic]," informed the colonel that his tribe had met in general council and elected a distinguished chief to treat with the Texans. He added that his nation would accept peace on any terms, "being sensible of their inability to contend with the Texan forces." The envoy also disclosed that his people had rejected the offers of both the Cherokees and the Mexican Centralists to make war on the Republic.\textsuperscript{15}

Karnes did not trust the Comanches because of "their known treachery and duplicity;" however, he elected to "treat them well and dismiss them with presents, their number being too inconsiderable to think of retaining them as hostages." He instructed the Comanches that the Texas government would not enter into any treaty without the release of all captives and the return of all stolen property. They must also agree that "future depredators" would be "delivered up for punishment." The Indians agreed to Karnes's stipulations and promised to return with their principal chief in twenty or thirty days.\textsuperscript{16}

After meeting with the delegation, Karnes wrote to Secretary of War Albert S. Johnston to inform him of the proceedings and to request that commissioners be appointed to negotiate with the Comanches when they returned. Karnes
also suggested that those commissioners be "accompanied by a force sufficient to justify our seizing and retaining those who may come in, as hostages, for the delivery of such American Captives as may at this time be among them." It seems that the Texans were also guilty of "treachery and duplicity."\textsuperscript{17}

In preparation for the upcoming meeting, Johnston followed Karnes's suggestions. He appointed Colonel Hugh McLeod and Colonel William G. Cooke as commissioners and ordered Colonel William S. Fisher to take three companies of troops to San Antonio. Johnston instructed Fisher that if the Comanches brought in their prisoners as they had agreed to do, they should "be received with kindness and permitted to depart without molestation." If the Comanches failed to deliver the captives, Fisher was instructed to detain them and to send a Comanche messenger to tell the tribe that the emissaries would be held as hostages until all captives were returned.\textsuperscript{18}

The Secretary of War also issued guidelines for the commissioners that included a statement of the government's position on Indian land claims. He instructed the negotiators that the government "assumes the right, with regard to all Indian tribes residing within the limits of the Republic, to dictate the conditions of such residence." He added that the government would determine where the Indians could live and allow them to remain there only so
long as they abstained "from acts of hostility or annoyance to the inhabitants of the frontier." The commissioners were to tell the Comanches that "under the sanction of the Law, our citizens have a right to occupy any vacant lands of the government, and that they must not be interfered with by the Comanche."19

The Texas stance represented a reversal of the standard viewpoint on Indian land ownership. Whereas the United States recognized that the land belonged to the original occupants and that title must be transferred or forfeited, the Texas government insisted that it held title to all the land in Texas. In order to remain in the Republic, the Comanches must accept the government's terms for occupancy. The Comanches, of course, were unwilling to relinquish their right to the land. Texans could make the claim, but they could not so easily enforce it.

On March 19 the Comanche delegation, made up of sixty-five men, women, and children, and led by Chief Muguara, arrived in San Antonio. They brought only one Anglo captive, Matilda Lockhart, and insisted they had no others, but Lockhart told treaty commissioners that she had seen several other prisoners at the principal camp the day before they left. The pathetic condition of Lockhart, who was filthy, bruised, and had had the fleshy part of her nose burned off by her captors, incited the ire of the Texans. The commissioners, ignorant of Comanche social organization,
refused to believe Muguara when he told them that the other captives belonged to other tribes. Convinced that the Comanches were lying, the Texas officials ordered the arrest of the delegation whose members would be held as hostages until all captives were released.20

As troops surrounded the Council House to contain the prisoners, one Comanche chief, panicked by the sudden turn of events, bolted for the door. An order to fire was issued by the Texans, and a complete melee resulted. When the fighting stopped, thirty-five Comanches, including all twelve chiefs conducting the negotiations, had been killed. The remaining thirty Indians, consisting of women, children, and two old men, were captured and jailed. Texans also suffered casualties in the clash. Seven Texans were killed and eight wounded, some probably by their own crossfire.21

The next day, the Texans released one Comanche woman with instructions to return to her camp and inform her people that all captives must be returned within twelve days or the Texans would execute their Comanche hostages. The Comanches did not comply with the ultimatum, and the Texans did not execute the hostages, but more deaths were still to come as a result of the Council House fight. When the Comanches learned of the devastating losses suffered in San Antonio, they brutally tortured and killed thirteen of their Anglo captives in revenge. Only two prisoners, a five-year-old girl named Putnam and a boy named B. L. Webster, were
spared, because they had already been adopted into the tribe. The two were later returned through a prisoner exchange. All of the remaining Comanches held in San Antonio were eventually exchanged or escaped to rejoin their people, but the consequences of the Council House fight were not over.22

The leadership of the Penatekas was greatly diminished by the deaths of twelve chiefs. Especially devastating was the loss of Muguara, the wise old chief who had for years sought peace with the Texans. Those leaders who remained were determined to exact revenge, and on March 28 some three hundred warriors led by Chief Isomania appeared at the outskirts of San Antonio. The chief and a single brave rode into the town, shouting insults and challenging the townspeople to come out and fight. Some citizens directed the Indians to Mission San José where the soldiers were quartered. The chief led his warriors to the mission where they yelled more taunts and insults, but the commanding officer refused to fight the Indians, because he was under orders to observe a twelve-day truce with the Comanches in order to exchange prisoners. The commander invited the Indians to return in three days when the truce ended telling them, "We burn to fight you." Isomania and his warriors departed without a fight and did not return.23

A more destructive retaliatory raid occurred in August. The Comanches assembled a raiding party of over five hundred
warriors led by Potsanaquahip (Buffalo Hump), one of the surviving major Penateka chiefs. The large force headed south on the prairie between the Colorado and Guadalupe Rivers and on August 6 surrounded the town of Victoria. The townspeople were taken completely by surprise, since Comanches had not previously been a threat to settlers so near the coast. The Indians killed fifteen residents in the vicinity of Victoria and stole some 1,500 horses and mules before crossing the Guadalupe and heading southeast. Two days later, the vengeance party attacked Linnville, a small shipping port on Lavaca Bay. The Comanches looted and burned the town while many of its residents, who had escaped in boats, watched from the bay. Five more Texans were killed in the Linnville attack.24

The Comanches, laden with plundered goods and further slowed by an enormous caballada of stolen horses and mules, headed north toward Comanchería by the same route that had brought them south. The mass retreat was an uncharacteristic move for Comanches whose general practice was to divide escaping war parties into small groups that could travel faster and take circuitous routes to avoid detection. Probably a combination of unwillingness to divide the loot and confidence in the superiority of their force caused the raiders to abandon their traditional tactics.25
Because the Comanches chose to take a predictable return route, the Texans were able to plan an ambush. Colonel Ben McCulloch's ranger company had been pursuing the Indians for several days but lacked sufficient force to attack. McCulloch decided to circle around the retreating Comanches by way of Gonzales, assembling more men along the way, and intercept the raiding party at Plum Creek, a stream feeding the San Marcos River. Riders were sent out to alert the district of the need for additional forces who were to meet at Good's Crossing on Plum Creek (near present Lockhart). McCulloch was joined by companies led by Edward Burleson, Lafayette Ward, Matthew "Old Paint" Caldwell, and James Bird. General Felix Huston, commander of the Texas militia, arrived from Austin and took command of the assemblage. The combined force, made up of regular army, local militia, and rangers, numbered around two hundred. The Texans set up camp and awaited the approaching Comanches.26

On the morning of August 12, the Texans engaged the Comanche caravan in a running battle that covered some fifteen miles. The Texans completely routed the Indians who abandoned their plunder and fled in disarray. The number of Comanche casualties was difficult to ascertain because of the distance covered during the battle. General Huston originally reported forty Comanches killed but later revised his estimate to eighty. The Texans lost only one man, and,
most importantly, proved that they could retaliate effectively against a large Indian force.\(^7\)

The victory at Plum Creek was not enough to assuage Texan hatred of the Comanche. The previous July, J. S. Lester, a resident of LaGrange, had written to Lamar of the havoc created by the Indians in "nearly every settlement on the east side of the [Colorado] River." Lester suggested that a force be sent to destroy the Comanche villages on the upper Colorado and Brazos Rivers, "chastising them in a proper manner." He recommended Colonel John H. Moore to command the proposed mission. Lamar must have given some consideration to Lester's letter, for in October Secretary of War Johnston dispatched Moore with a command of about ninety rangers and twelve Lipan scouts. Their mission was to march up the Colorado River in pursuit of Comanches.\(^8\)

The expedition set out from Fayette County on October 5 and marched northwestward. On October 23 Lipan scouts reported sighting a large Comanche encampment on the Red Fork of the Colorado (near present Colorado City). Moore's rangers attacked the village the next morning at dawn and caught the Indians completely by surprise. The Texans charged the encampment and unleashed a barrage of fire. Some 130 men, women, and children were killed in the attack; many were killed in the village, others drowned or were shot as they attempted to cross the river to safety. The rangers, inflicting a second devastating defeat on the
Comanches, burned what remained of the village and departed with thirty-four women and children prisoners and a herd of five hundred Comanche horses. After the engagement, Moore's rangers divided the spoils among themselves, and eventually parceled out the captives to be trained as "servants." However, most of the women and children ultimately escaped.  

Lamar's war of extermination was exacting a heavy toll on the Southern Comanches. The fact that Moore's rangers had to travel three hundred miles before encountering the People is evidence that the harsh policy was driving the Comanches away from the Texas frontier. After their defeat at Red Fork, Comanches retreated even farther northward, migrating beyond the Red River, and, consequently, during the winter of 1840-1841, the frontier of Texas remained relatively quiet. The interval of peace convinced frontier Texans that Lamar's policy was a success, and when the Fifth Congress convened in November, it enacted additional measures to enforce that policy. 

Since the expedition against the Comanche village on the Colorado had been so successful, congress passed an act aimed at dislodging the Indians on the upper Brazos River. The law, signed by the president on December 12, 1840, authorized the raising of a corps of volunteers for an expedition against the Brazos tribes, and appropriated $10,000 to purchase beef for rations. Two weeks later, a
bill was passed authorizing the creation of three companies of "spies" (scouts) to operate on the western frontier. Each company would consist of fifteen men with company commanders appointed by the president. The scouts would be active for a term of four months unless discharged sooner."

In February 1841 congress enacted legislation to induce each county to institute individual measures for defense. "An Act to Encourage Frontier Protection" gave the settlers of twenty border counties the privilege of organizing volunteer companies of not less than twenty or more than fifty-six men, rank and file. Each county could enroll only one company, and those belonging to it received incentives from the government. Volunteers would be exempt from militia duty, from working roads, from paying a state, county, or corporation poll tax, and from paying the tax on one horse. Each man would receive one dollar per day while in active service, not to exceed fifteen days per expedition or a total of four months during a year. Each volunteer was to provide his own rations and equipment. The bill further stipulated that each company commander could commission up to five spies from company ranks to keep the volunteer force appraised of the frontier situation."

Lamar's war policy had succeeded in forcing the Comanches away from the Texas frontier. Three large and costly expeditions were launched against the Southern Comanches in 1841, and despite the fact that each stayed in
the field for weeks and traveled untold miles, none of the forces located a single Comanche encampment. The People had abandoned their prize campsites along the headwaters of the Texas rivers and had withdrawn north to the Red River, and although they continued to raid deep into Mexico, they generally avoided the Texas settlements. The Penateka had suffered severely during the 1840 war with the Texans, losing much of their leadership along with an estimated three hundred warriors. Their villages had been destroyed, women and children killed, and principal camp grounds lost."

Lamar's "war of extermination" had also been costly for Texans, both in terms of lives lost and property destroyed. But Texans were just beginning to realize the enormous monetary cost of the president's aggressive policy. Between 1839 and 1841 government expenditures on Indian affairs totaled the extraordinary sum of $2,552,319. The previous Houston administration spent only $190,000, and the succeeding administration would spend only a total of $94,092. Although Lamar's bold policies had succeeded in pacifying the frontier and opening up vast tracts of land for settlers, they had also created a staggering debt that the Republic could not begin to repay."

The Republic's third presidential election was held in the fall of 1841, and Sam Houston won a decisive victory over Lamar's hand-picked successor, David G. Burnet.
Houston took office in December, and in his first message to Congress announced that the Texas government would return to the pacific Indian policy that he had always advocated. Once again, the government would make an about-face in policy, but this time, as Texans attempted to establish friendly relations with the Indians, they negotiated from a position of strength. Historian Anna Muckleroy has made the succinct observation that "the path may have been well paved for Houston's subsequent pacific policy, by the wars prosecuted during Lamar's administration."
Endnotes -- Chapter 3


7. Ibid., 2:29-30, 78.


10. Ibid. 


16. Ibid., 100-101.

17. Ibid., 101-102.

18. Ibid., 105-106.

19. Ibid.


23. Green, *Memoirs of Mary A. Maverick*, 42-43, quotation on 43. The spelling of Chief Isomania's name varies from source to source. Mary Maverick calls the chief Isimanica; Richardson uses Isomania, Kavanagh uses Esananica, and Noyes uses Isananica, which translates as Howling Wolf.


32. Ibid., 2:646-648. A listing of the counties named in "An Act to Encourage Frontier Protection" clearly denotes the position of the frontier in early 1841. The counties were Fannin, Lamar, Red River, Bowie, Paschal, Panola, Harrison, Nacogdoches, Houston, Robertson, Milam, Travis, Bexar, Gonzales, Goliad, Victoria, Refugio, San Patricio, Montogomery, and Bastrop. It is no wonder that the Texas government had difficulty defending that lengthy and irregular line of frontier settlement.


CHAPTER 4

THE LATE REPUBLIC AND THE ADMINISTRATIONS

OF SAM HOUSTON AND ANSON JONES,

1841-1846

Peace will save our warriors from death.

Sam Houston, 1843

Peace is peace; I have no more to say.

Chief Potsanaquahip
Southern Comanche, 1844

Sam Houston was inaugurated for his second term as president of the Republic on December 13, 1841, and in his first message to congress he emphasized the importance of establishing and maintaining friendly relations with the Texas tribes. He criticized the Indian policy of the previous administration and argued that "the hope of obtaining peace by means of war has hitherto proved utterly fallacious." The goal of Houston’s peace policy was to provide safety and security for the frontier settlements, and he presented congress with a detailed plan for achieving that end. The new president advocated the negotiation of treaties with the various tribes. Once peace terms had been agreed upon, trading posts would be established along the western border. Those posts would be staffed by one or more traders and protected by a force of twenty-five or thirty
men. Houston assured congress that "this system, once established, would conciliate the Indians, open lucrative commerce with them, and bring continued peace to our entire frontier." The president also condemned Lamar's extravagant fiscal policy. He reasoned that "a sum less than one-fourth of the amount heretofore annually expended for these purposes would procure and maintain peace with all the Indian tribes now upon our borders."

Houston began to implement his peace policy in early 1842, and under his leadership congress did not pass a single act for offensive action against the Indians. However, frontier protection was still a necessity, and on January 29 congress approved a joint resolution authorizing the president to employ one company of rangers on the southern frontier, to be used as he deemed most beneficial to the public interest. Houston made it clear that he intended the force to be used for defensive purposes only. If the Indians entered a settlement without permission, they were to be removed, by force if necessary, and if they conducted a raid, they were to be punished. The president specified that every effort should be made to affix blame where it really belonged, rather than blindly retaliating against the nearest Indians, as was the custom of the previous administration. In July congress authorized two additional companies for the southwestern frontier and one company specifically to range on the Trinity and Navasota
Rivers. It should be noted that the companies were created for the dual purposes of defending the frontier from Indian depredations and guarding against any invasion force from Mexico.²

When Houston assumed office, the captive situation continued to be an emotional issue among Texans, and on January 17 congress approved an Act to Provide for the Ransom and Rescue of Texian Prisoners. The law authorized the Republic's treasurer to pay a $300 reward for each person rescued from captivity with "the hostile tribes." On the same day, congress appropriated $300 for the redemption of each of the following captives: the son and nephew of Jesse Cox, both captured in 1841; Mrs. Tidwell, captured on the Brazos in 1840; the son of Mrs. A. D. Smith, taken from Austin in 1840; and the son of Mrs. Lyons, captured in Fayette County in 1837. The fact that the economy-minded Houston administration would appropriate such a generous reward attests to the importance attached to the problem of captive recovery.³

To initiate the peace-making process, Houston sent emissaries to find the various tribes and inform them that the new "chief" of the Texans wanted to end hostilities. Many tribes responded favorably to the peace overtures, and, as a result, successful councils were held at Tehuacana Creek in March 1843, and at Bird's Fort on the Trinity River in September of the same year. The Comanches were
conspicuously absent from both councils. Since the last Comanche-Texan meeting had resulted in the Council House fight, the People were justifiably suspicious of any peace proposals, and Houston understood the Comanche reluctance to meet with the Texans. He explained to congress that they "were yet crying for their kindred and that the clouds of sorrow yet rested upon their nation, because their chiefs were no more, and they had not the light of their counsel to point to the path in which they should walk." The Council House tragedy had destroyed whatever confidence the Comanches had in the integrity of the Texas government. Houston would have to rebuild that confidence.

During 1842 and well into 1843, the Comanches generally avoided contact with Texans and rebuffed any attempts to talk peace. They continued to raid, primarily in northern Mexico, with only occasional attacks on outlying Texas settlements. As raiding parties traveled south toward the Rio Grande, they sometimes encountered ranger patrols or militia forces, and altercations usually resulted. One such incident occurred in 1842 at Bandera Pass when a party of Comanches met up with a ranger company led by Captain John Coffee Hays. The rangers, who were equipped with the newly invented Colt revolving pistols, had no difficulty routing the Comanches. The ongoing hostilities, although less frequent than in previous years, were hardly conducive to diplomatic exchange.
While efforts were being made to bring the Indian tribes to council, Houston continued to implement the other objectives of his policy. The president was confident that well-regulated trade would show the Indians the practical benefits of peace with the Texans, and he worked tirelessly to foster trade and commerce with the tribes. In January 1843 congress passed important legislation to initiate that aspect of Houston's policy. The new law, entitled "An Act to provide for the establishment and maintenance of peace, and to regulate friendly intercourse with the Indians," contained several important provisions. Section 1 created the Bureau of Indian Affairs as a division of the War Department. The formation of the Bureau centralized responsibility for Indian Affairs that previously had been haphazardly managed by several government departments. The bureau would be directed by a Superintendent of Indian Affairs appointed by the president. The president could also name as many as four agents and four interpreters to assist the superintendent. Houston appointed Joseph C. Eldredge as the first head of the Bureau, but in the fall of 1843 Eldredge was replaced by Thomas G. Western. Western proved to be a capable and energetic administrator and continued to head the Indian Bureau for the duration of the Republic's existence.

In addition to creating a bureaucracy to conduct Indian affairs, the act specifically organized a system for trade
and commerce with the tribes. It called for the establishment of five trading posts and designated their locations to be as follows: On or near the south fork of the Trinity; at or near Comanche Peak; at or near the old San Sabá fort or mission; at or near Porto Vanderá; and at or near the junction of Moras Creek and the Rio Grande. Traders would be appointed and licensed by the president and be answerable to him. Any unauthorized person who traded with the Indians would be subject to fine or imprisonment. Indians could enter Texas settlements for trading purposes only with special consent from an agent, and any person wanting to trade with them must obtain written permission from a justice. The provision allowing individuals to participate in Indian trade was repealed on February 3, and thereafter only licensed traders could deal with the Indians. Traders were required to keep "a full and accurate invoice of all goods, wares, and merchandize [sic] of every description whatsoever" and report that inventory regularly to the Bureau. Finally, they were prohibited from furnishing the Indians with intoxicating liquor or war supplies.

Additional provisions of the 1843 law set forth guidelines for maintaining friendly relations with the Indians. No Texan without permission from the president could go beyond the line of trading posts into Indian territory, and no Indian could travel below the line without
authorization from an agent and the company of one or more white men. Any stolen property found in the possession of either side must be restored by authorities to its rightful owner. Anyone who molested an Indian or made war on a tribe during peacetime would be guilty of a felony and punished accordingly. Historian George E. Hyde sarcastically remarked that this provision "was aimed at the class of frontier worthies who had the pleasant custom of shooting all Indians on sight and who went about boasting of their deeds."

Houston succeeded in initiating the establishment of trading houses, an objective that he had been unable to accomplish during his first term. In early 1843, John F. Torrey and his brothers opened a trading house near the council grounds on Tehuacana Creek, located southwest of present Waco. They carried on a brisk trade with the Indians, including the Comanches, and also did a sizable business with the Texas government. The Indian Bureau purchased supplies for its agents and presents for the Indians from the Torreys. The post also became a clearing house for frontier news and gossip, and therefore was an important source of information for the Bureau.

In March 1845 Mathias Travis was licensed to operate a trading house on the south fork of the Trinity. The post, completed in September, was actually located several miles from the Trinity on Marrow Bone Creek, to the north of
present Arlington. In May of the same year, a license was issued to Richard Fitzpatrick of Victoria for a trading house on the Colorado River. The Indian Bureau's enthusiasm for the trading post system was apparent in Superintendent Western's letter to the newly licensed trader. He informed Fitzpatrick that "The Govt/[sic] is desirous to see your establishment prosper and open new avenues to our friendly intercourses with the Comanches and other wild Tribes of the prairies--ample and legitimate motives to induce the Govt. to offer you every possible facility."\(^{10}\)

Houston had succeeded in putting much of his policy into actual operation, but he realized that the Republic's Indian problems would not greatly improve until an accord was reached with the Comanches. In the spring of 1843, the president decided to send another peace envoy to the tribe, and he entrusted the arduous mission to Joseph C. Eldredge, Superintendent of Indian Affairs. The purpose of Eldredge's trip was to convince the Comanches of the sincerity of Houston's peace policy. The president instructed the agent to tell the Comanches "that the same man is not the chief of Texas at this time who was when their chiefs were killed at Bexar--that he looks upon such things with abhorrence--that both parties are to forget all past injuries and that for the future we are to be friends." As a show of good faith, Eldredge would return two young Comanche captives to their people. He would also give presents to the tribe, making it
clear that they were "gifts of friendship and not offerings of fear." In addition, Houston sent a personal letter to Chief Pah-hah-yuco expounding the benefits of peace for both sides."

Eldredge set out on his journey in May 1843, accompanied by Hamilton P. Bee, Thomas Torrey, and three Delaware scouts whose names were Jim Shaw, John Conner, and Jim Second-Eye. The party also included the captive Indian children, some Delaware hunters, and a few other support personnel. The expedition was later joined by A-cah-quash, a friendly Waco chief. Jim Shaw presumed that the Comanches were camped on the headwaters of the Brazos, but later information revealed that they were much farther north. It was early August before Eldredge and his party found the Comanches, camped on Cache Creek, north of present Lawton, Oklahoma. The Indians invited the travelers to stay at their village to await the return of Pah-hah-yuco, who had gone to visit the Wichitas. The second chief even offered Pah-hah-yuco's lodge to the Texans, but they declined in favor of their own tents, which were much cooler. Despite the seeming hospitality of the Comanches, Eldredge quickly discerned that his party was in a precarious situation. The second chief seemed to distrust some of his people and would not allow the Texans to visit the other end of the village, saying "it was not good [and] making at the same time the action of scalping."
Chief Pah-hah-yuco returned after several days and appeared pleased to see the Texans. After greeting the visitors, he went into council with his chiefs and warriors, and the tribal leaders carried on an animated debate that lasted until sunset. The Comanches were divided over what should be the fate of Eldredge's party. Some, including Pah-hah-yuco's faction, wanted peace with the Texans; others, who had relatives slain at San Antonio, wanted the Texans killed in revenge. Eldredge was invited to address the council, and his eloquent talk must have convinced the Indians of his honesty, for the next day Pah-hah-yuco agreed to meet in council with the Texans at the Clear Fork of the Brazos in December. In the interim he would try to contact other Comanche bands and convince them to attend also. The chief signed a temporary treaty with the Texans, in which both parties agreed to cease "all hostilities and depredations upon each other" until they could enter into a formal treaty of peace. They also agreed to exchange all prisoners once the formal treaty was concluded.\footnote{13}

Because of heavy rains and high water, Texas commissioners were not able to meet with the Comanches in December as planned. Houston sent a letter to Pah-hah-yuco explaining the difficulties and requesting that the council be rescheduled for "the full moon in April next" at Tehuacana Creek. Indian agent Daniel G. Watson and Delaware guide John Conner were sent to deliver Houston's message to
the Comanches. Once again, the emissaries had difficulty locating the Indians who were not camped on the Clear Fork of the Brazos as reports had indicated. While searching in the Brazos area, the Texans did encounter a "war party" of four Comanches returning from the Rio Grande. The Indians were also seeking their tribe, believing that they might be camped on the upper Colorado River, so the two parties united in the search. They arrived at Pecan Bayou, a tributary of the Colorado, on March 17, but the Comanches were not camped there either. The four warriors suggested that the Texans wait there, while they went in search of the People who may have continued on to the Pecos River, a ride of two days without water. Watson and Conner made camp and awaited the return of the Indians.14

On March 21 two Comanche chiefs rode into Watson's camp. They informed the envoy that they could not attend the council in April as "all their young men were out in different directions, and could not be called together in time." Watson presented the chiefs with gifts and read them Houston's message. One of the Chiefs, Mopechucpe, dictated a reply to the president. He assured Houston that he would do all he could for peace, and he promised to meet in council with the Texans in September on the Clear Fork of the Brazos. The old Chief then talked of his major concern:

All I want now is a line run between our countries which line I want to commence on Brazos river passing over the Comanche Peak from thare
[sic] direct to the mouth of the first large creek running in the Colorado on the west-side below the mouth of the San Saba; from thence in a direct line to the Rio Grande; all above that line is Comanche Country and ever has been. I myself never have left it nor never intends [sic] to."

The council met at Tehuacana Creek in April 1844, but, as expected, the Comanches were not present. Since little could be accomplished without their attendance, John Conner and Jim Shaw were sent to make one last attempt to bring the Comanches to council. The two Delawares did not find Pah-hah-yuco. The chief was mourning the death of a son and had moved north to the Salt Plains of the Arkansas in hopes that new surroundings would lessen his grief. But the emissaries did find Mopechucope and the young war chief Potsanaquahip (Buffalo Hump) camped on the Clear Fork of the Brazos. Potsanaquahip said that his people were not yet ready to attend a council, and would do so only when they could meet with Sam Houston himself. When the Delawares informed the chiefs that this was the last time the government of Texas was going to send for them, Mopechucope agreed to go because he had given his word that he would do so, but Potsanaquahip refused the invitation. Mopechucope, accompanied by the Delaware envoys, set out for the Tehuacana council ground. They had been traveling for two days when Potsanaquahip caught up with them. He had apparently changed his mind about attending the council."
The "Grand Council," originally scheduled for September, did not convene until October 7. Representatives of ten different tribes, including the Comanches, met with Texas officials. The meeting was opened by smoking the pipe of friendship and peace, then President Houston addressed the gathering. He told those assembled that he was a friend of the Comanches and had made peace with them during his earlier term as president. Since he resumed office almost three years ago, he had been trying to get the Comanches "to council and talk," but the tribe did not come because they had once been deceived by the Texans. He expressed his sorrow over the Council House affair and put the blame on the "bad chief," his predecessor, Lamar. He added that it was time again to make peace, "as war can do us no good." He told those present that he wanted peace to exist not only between Texans and Indians, but also between tribes that had traditionally made war on each other. To achieve peace, the Indians must stop stealing Texan horses and be willing to exchange prisoners without ransom. He closed by emphasizing that he spoke the truth and his words would "last as long as the earth our mother, or the Great Spirit which is our father." 17

The next day the chiefs were invited to speak, and Potsanaquahip was the first to address the council. The chief told the assemblage that he had been uneasy until he heard Houston's talk. "What I came here for was to hear the
words of peace. I have heard them and all is right; peace is peace. I have no more to say." He then addressed Houston directly, "What you have said is good. I love your words." As the morning wore on, chiefs from other tribes addressed the council. In the afternoon, Houston read the draft treaty to those present and then presented a blue robe to each of the two principal Comanche chiefs."

On the third day of the council, treaty provisions were discussed. The Comanches objected to the boundary line drawn by the draft treaty to separate "the hunting grounds of the white and red men." The treaty called for a line from the Red River through the upper Cross Timbers to Comanche Peak and from there to "the old fort of San Saba" and on southwest to the Rio Grande. Ironically, the line in the treaty very nearly followed the boundary proposed by Mopechucpe the preceding spring, but Potsanaquahip protested that the line was "too far up the country." He argued that the buffalo in their annual migration frequently roamed below the San Saba, and his people must be allowed to follow the herds. The Comanches wanted the line to be farther to the southeast along the mountains northwest of Austin and San Antonio and then along the San Antonio-Presidio road to the Rio Grande. A lively debate ensued between the astute chief and the articulate Houston."

When it became obvious that neither side would accept a compromise, Houston proposed a solution. "You are pleased
with the treaty and call it all good but that part about the line; we will sign all but that part, which we will rub out and go on as before." Houston's suggestion was acceptable to the Comanches, and the treaty, as finally agreed upon, was very similar to the unratified treaty of 1838. In demanding a lower boundary line, the Comanches lost their chance for the one peace concession they had continually demanded. It is doubtful, however, that a boundary would have made much difference in future relations between the two peoples, since neither the frontier Texans or the Comanches had a history of respecting boundaries. Even if the line had been adopted, the rapid expansion of the Republic would soon have necessitated that it be moved.  

The Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Commerce was signed by three Comanche chiefs, Mopechucop, Potsanaquahip, and Chomopardua, as well as the chiefs of numerous smaller tribes. The parties agreed "to open the path of lasting peace, friendship and trade." The Texas government would establish official trading houses for the Indians and appoint honest men to act as traders and agents. In return, the Indians agreed to trade only with official government traders. Once peace was fully established, the traders would supply the Indians with "powder, lead, guns, spears and other arms to enable them to kill game and live in plenty." No whiskey or other intoxicating liquor would be sold to the Indians. In addition to traders and agents, the
president could send blacksmiths, mechanics, teachers, or other persons that he thought would benefit the tribes.\textsuperscript{21}

The Indians also agreed not to enter into treaties with any nation that was at war with Texas and promised to report any tribe that planned to wage war on the Republic. The Indians would not steal horses or other property from Texans, and if such thefts did occur, they would punish the perpetrators and return the stolen property. Both parties also agreed to exchange all prisoners. Some additional and rather unusual provisions of the treaty pertained to methods of carrying on warfare. The Indians agreed that if they went to war in the future they would not harm women and children in any way, and would always respect a white flag of truce. Any dispute that arose between Indians and whites would be reported to an agent and settled by the president. The government of Texas promised to send presents to the Indians from time to time as the president deemed proper, and all parties would meet once a year for general council. The treaty was ratified on January 24, 1845, becoming one of the few Indian treaties to receive the approval of the Texas Senate.\textsuperscript{22}

As with other such agreements, the treaty did not stop all raiding. The Comanche chiefs intended to keep their promises, but the very nature of Comanche society with its emphasis on individual freedom complicated that task. There were a number of Comanches, primarily young warriors, who
did not feel obligated to uphold the treaty and preferred to seek revenge for Texas hostilities. This problem was exemplified by a raid that occurred shortly after the treaty was signed. Ten Comanches attacked the home of Nancy Simpson, a widow with two children who lived near Austin. The Simpson children, a girl of fourteen and a boy of twelve, were abducted during the raid. When Texas agents learned of the incident, they informed the Comanche chiefs of the treaty infraction. Pah-hah-yuco was able to obtain the boy from his captors but learned that his sister had been killed on the day of the raid. The chief, accompanied by Mopechucope, returned the boy along with a black man and four stolen horses recovered from the Wacos to agent Benjamin Sloat at Torrey's Trading Post. The incident is significant because Pah-hah-yuco had not signed the treaty, yet he considered himself bound by the agreement. The chief told the Texans at the trading post that "I do not keep my words hid nor tell lies, but what I say is true, and I am anxious and so are all my tribe to make peace, and what I say now I will stick to as long as I live." He added that "all tribes and nations have some bad men who will steal but none but my good men shall come [to hunt buffalo near the Texas settlements] and we will do our best to keep all from stealing." The Penateka leaders obviously made an earnest effort to enforce the treaty and keep peace with the Texans.
As Houston's second administration came to an end in the fall of 1844, his Indian policy had achieved some measure of success. Texas law prohibited Houston from running for a consecutive term, and in a final message to congress, he summed up the accomplishments of his peace policy:

Our Indian affairs are in as good condition as the most sanguine would reasonably have anticipated. When it is remembered that a good while necessarily elapsed before the various tribes, all of whom were in a state of the most bitter hostility, could be reached through the agents of the government, and that they are now, taken as different communities, completely pacified and in regular friendly intercourse with our trading establishments, in the judgment of the unprejudiced and impartial, the policy which would inculcate and maintain peace, and thereby save the frontier from savage depredations and butcheries, will be viewed as satisfactorily demonstrated. It is not denied that there are among the Indians, as among our own people, individuals who will disregard all law and commit excesses of the most flagrant character; but it is unjust to attribute to a tribe or body of men disposed to obey the laws, what is properly chargeable to a few renegades and desperadoes. Other governments of far superior resources for imposing restraints upon the wild men of the forests and prairies, have not been exempt from the infraction of treaties and the occasional commission of acts of rapine and bloodshed. We must therefore expect to suffer in a greater or less degree from the same causes. But even this, in the opinion of the Executive, does not furnish overruling testimony against the policy which he has constantly recommended and which he has had the happiness to see so fully and so satisfactorily tested. 24

On December 9, 1844, Anson Jones was inaugurated as the fifth president of the Republic. Jones, a physician, former member of congress, and secretary of state, was regarded as
the administration's candidate, and his inaugural address made it clear that he would follow Houston's lead in Indian affairs. He vowed to continue the "friendly and just relations with our red brethren, a course not only according with the dictates of humanity, but the principles of acknowledged sound policy, as affording the least expensive protection and greatest safety to our extended frontier."  

In late December, T. G. Western reported to the new president that the Indian affairs of the Republic were "in a healthy condition." He added that although there were occasional depredations on the western and southwestern frontier, the prospects for a permanent peace continued to brighten as the Indians were finding it to their advantage to cultivate the peace and friendship of the Republic. Plans were already underway for the annual council to be held in September, as designated by the treaty of 1844. Jones sent a message to Pah-hah-yuco in January, inviting the Comanches to attend the meeting "to smoke the pipe as friends and brothers."  

Despite the comparatively peaceful state of affairs, frontier protection was still a necessity. In early February congress authorized Captain John Hays to organize and command detachments of troops for Robertson, Milam, Travis, and Bexar Counties for the purpose of protecting them from incursions. The same act empowered Henry L. Kinney to raise a company of forty men to safeguard the
settlements in the Corpus Christi area. The president could disband any portion of the forces when they were no longer needed.27

An incident that occurred in the spring of 1845 threatened to disrupt the tenuous peace that was being maintained on the frontier. A band of renegade Delawares murdered three Comanches near the headwaters of the San Marcos River. The Comanches swore to take revenge on the Delawares or any other Indians that were friendly to the whites. Since the Delawares were allies of the Texans, perhaps the Comanches believed that the Texans had instigated the attack, therefore any Indians who were friendly to the Texans would be suspect. Whatever their reasoning, Pah-hah-yuco warned the Texans that his warriors were angry, and it would not be safe for any white man or Delaware to enter Comanche country. The incident was particularly alarming because the Delawares had been the link between Comanches and Texans. In early summer, a party of Comanches and Wacos killed two Anglos near Austin, possibly in retaliation but more likely an act of lawlessness committed by young warriors who refused to accept peace. Western dispatched Benjamin Sloat, agent for both the Comanches and Delawares, to the Comanche camp to convince the tribe that the culpable Delawares would be punished and to insist that the chiefs control their
warriors better. Sloat would be accompanied on the unenviable mission by Jim Shaw, the Delaware scout.\textsuperscript{28}

The agent arrived at Mopechucop's camp in mid July and found the villagers in turmoil. A chief named Cut-Arm had tried to persuade a young warrior, probably the leader of the earlier raid near Austin, not to lead another party against the Texas settlements. The warrior had killed Cut-Arm, and in the ensuing fray, the young renegade and his father had been killed. The incident reveals the intensity of the struggle within the Southern Comanche nation over the issue of peace with the Texans.\textsuperscript{29}

Despite internal strife in the Comanche camp, Sloat accomplished his mission, mainly through the distribution of presents to the chiefs, but before he could depart from the village, Potsanaquahhip arrived with his people. The young chief planned to lead a war party into Mexico, and he insisted that Sloat accompany the band as far as San Antonio. The chief knew that the presence of the agent would assure his safe passage through South Texas. When the party neared San Antonio, the Indians made camp, and Potsanaquahhip and a few warriors, escorted by Sloat, went into the settlement. The chief met with Captain Hays and Colonel Kinney, and both men did their best to persuade the Comanche to give up his plan to raid in Mexico, but they were not successful. Despite the Texans' protests,
Potsanaquahihp and some 730 warriors headed south toward the Rio Grande.\(^{30}\)

With Potsanaquahihp in Mexico and Pah-hah-yuco far to the north, Mopechucope was the only prominent Comanche chief to attend the scheduled fall council at Tehuacana Creek. The object of the meeting was to remove any difficulties that might have arisen since the treaty was made, renew pledges of friendship, and distribute presents to the tribes. When commissioners complained that several tribes not present at the council, namely Wacos, Tawakonis, and Wichitas, were stealing horses, Mopechucope responded to the commissioners' complaint:

> I have frequently told them to stop it, but they would not listen, but if any of them come near my village I will make my warriors take any stolen property they may have, and will bring it into my white brothers, but I cannot be responsible for those Indians, they will not do as I tell them.

The chief's reply was indicative of his continued commitment to peace with the Texans. The one substantial accomplishment that resulted from the council was a peace agreement between the Comanches and their long-time enemies, the Lipans and Tonkawas. At the urging of the commissioners, the Comanches agreed to allow the two tribes to move into Comanche country.\(^{31}\)

In November Mopechucope brought Santa Anna, another principal Comanche chief, to the council grounds, along with twelve minor chiefs and forty warriors. The Indians met
with agent L. H. Williams, and during the course of the meeting, Santa Anna declared his willingness to abide by the treaty, saying that "he would keep peace as long as he and his party existed." The chief asked only that the agent provide him with a pass that would permit safe travel through the western settlements of Texas on his raids into Mexico. Despite the chief's professed desire for peace, the atmosphere at the council was tense. When Mopechucope asked each of the young warriors individually if he favored peace, the reply was not so wholehearted. Some of them answered that "it was not a matter of very little consequence whether they were or not as they should abide by the advice of the old men." Williams presented gifts to the Comanches and informed them that he had procured the services of a gunsmith to repair their firearms. The Indians left the meeting apparently "well satisfied." The council brought the last major Penateka chief into treaty relations with the Texans. Pah-hah-yuco, Mopechucope, Potsanaguahip, and now Santa Anna had all pledged to keep peace.

The proclaimed peace, along with a more southern migration of the buffalo, caused the Comanches to filter back onto the southwestern Texas frontier. In January 1845 Pah-hah-yuco had told agents at Torrey's trading house that "the buffalo are close by here, and we are obliged to come down with our families among them ... We shall range[e] from the Colorado to the Guadalupe and we wish to be
friendly with the whites, and I mention this that they may know that we will be there hunting, and not to steal so that they may meet us friendly." In early May officials reported a thousand Comanche lodges on the Little River. The closeness of Comanches and Texans made conflict inevitable, and the incidence of deadly encounters increased alarmingly. Ironically, the planned peace had only recreated conditions for war."

In 1845 after almost ten years of resisting Texan aggression, the Southern Comanches continued to live much as they had before the Republic of Texas was established—they hunted buffalo, fought with their traditional enemies, and raided in Mexico and Texas. But contact with the Texans had not left the Penateka unscathed. The years of warfare had depleted their numbers, and epidemic diseases further reduced them. Dependence on trade with the Texans had encouraged the People to kill large numbers of buffalo for hides, which they traded for manufactured goods. Market hunting, coupled with the Comanche's preference for killing two- to five-year-old bison cows, led to depletion of the buffalo herds, their main source of sustenance. Evidence indicates that as early as 1840 the Comanches were experiencing periods of dire hunger or even starvation. In October 1844, Houston told Comanches gathered at Tehuacana council ground that "we will have plenty to eat now, there will be no more hunger." His words implied that peace would
bring plenty, but that was not the case. It seems that the Southern Comanches were victims of a phenomenon that plagued the majority of frontier Indians; those who lived nearest the whites were significantly poorer than those who ranged farther from the settlements. The Penatekas were a prime example of that actuality.  

That postcontact decline resulted from a variety of factors, all of which combined to cause a deterioration of the traditional Indian way of life. The Comanches became increasingly dependent on trade with Texans, and in doing so lost some of their historic self-reliance. Although the acquisition of better technology should have improved the Indian standard of living, it seems to have had the opposite effect, perhaps because it so profoundly changed the Comanches' established mode of life. The effects of liquor, introduced by Anglo traders, also had a negative impact on Comanche society, and although Texas law prohibited the sale of alcohol to the Indians, the statute was difficult to enforce. Disease was another primary factor in the Penateka's decline, for contact with Anglo-Americans exposed them to European diseases, for which they had no immunity. By the 1840s, the Comanches had fallen victim to several devastating epidemics. Anthropologist Morris W. Foster suggested that the rapid and catastrophic changes in economic and social circumstances "outstripped the ability of the traditional culture unit to respond to them." The
decline of the Southern Comanches, perhaps inevitable because of environmental pressures, was accelerated by contact with Anglo-Texans.\textsuperscript{35}

In the fall of 1845, Texans voted overwhelmingly for annexation to the United States. The need for increased frontier protection was a prime factor that influenced public sentiment toward statehood, particularly in the western counties. In his final report as Superintendent of Indian Affairs, T. G. Western made the following statement: "It must be a source of congratulations that during the past year as well as at the close of our separate national existence, we have been and are at peace with all men both red and white." In light of the increasing number of Comanche raids on the frontier, Western's report painted an overly optimistic picture of the frontier situation. But the people of Texas were confident that annexation would bring an end to their Indian problems. The burden of frontier defense would be assumed by the United States government, and Texans welcomed that prospect. An editorial in the \textit{Telegraph and Texas Register} enthusiastically proclaimed that "the giant arms of the United States will soon sweep the few bands of hostile Indians from our borders." But even the powerful United States government would require thirty more years to subdue the Comanches, and during that time Texans and Comanches would continue to
fight and die in a struggle for the land—and for the Comanches "sorrow whispers in the winds." 

Postscript

In the spring of 1846, United States commissioners met with Texas Comanches at Tehuacana Creek council ground and negotiated a treaty of peace. When the United States government failed to fulfill the promises made in the treaty, the Comanches complained, "We want to see our friend Sam Houston, he never told us lies." But Houston could no longer help his "red brothers"—his peace policy was a thing of the past. The United States government and the Comanches continued to conclude treaties that both sides failed to uphold, and Comanche fortunes continued to decline. Historian Dan Flores argues that "the Comanches were reported to be eating their horses in great numbers by 1850, and their raids into Mexico increased all through the 1840s, as if a resource depletion in their home range was driving them to compensate with stolen stock." A campaign conducted by the United States Army in late 1874 finally forced the Comanches to abandon Texas for a reservation in Indian Territory. United States history records the event as a military defeat of the Comanches. Comanche historians, however, recount that the last nomadic bands of the People entered the reservation in the winter of 1874-1875, not as a
result of military defeat, but because they could not find anything on the Plains to eat."
Endnotes -- Chapter 4


16. Ibid., 101-103.

17. Ibid., 104-106.


19. Ibid., 109-112.

20. Ibid., 113.

21. Ibid., 114-118.

22. Ibid., 114-118. The treaty is also published in its entirety in Gammel's *Laws of Texas*, 2:1192-1196.


25. *Texas National Register*, Washington-on-the-Brazos, December 14, 1844, p. 14, as cited in Neighbors, *Indian Exodus*, 38. The presidential campaign of 1844 had shown that not all Texans approved of Houston's kindhearted handling of the Indians. Edward Burleson, Jones's opponent in the election who advocated a return to Lamar's war policy, carried all the thinly populated western counties. The vote indicated that the frontier people were overwhelmingly in favor of a policy aimed at driving the Indians out of Texas.


29. Ibid., 283-286.

30. Ibid., 325-326.


32. Ibid., 410-415.
33. Ibid., 173-174, 236-237.


36. Winfrey, Texas Indian Papers, 1846-1859, 31-32, 1st quotation; Telegraph and Texas Register, Houston, December 10, 1845, 2nd quotation; Williams and Barker, Writings of Sam Houston, 3:341-342, third quotation.

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