

Cynthia Ann Parker

The details of Parker's early life are clouded in confusion and sources place her birth year between 1825 and 1827. One source narrows it to between June 2, 1824, and May 31, 1825. Her place of birth has been listed as Coles, Clark and Crawford Counties in Illinois where she was born to Silas M. and Lucy (Doty) Parker. Even her time of death has been listed from 1864 to 1871 and her final tombstone reads 1870. She did die in Anderson County, Texas where she is listed in the 1870 census.

Between birth and death she suffered the extreme agony of being kidnapped twice in her short lifetime. Around the age of nine or ten, her family moved to Texas and settled at the headwaters of the Navasota River in what is now Limestone County. The family developed a little community around the church of her uncle who headed the local branch of the Primitive Baptist Church. The community, known as Fort Parker, was enclosed with substantial walls and a company of Texas Rangers was formed for protection from the Indians.

On May 19, 1836, she suffered her first kidnapping when a band of Comanche braves raided the settlement. Several people were killed and five others were kidnapped with her. Within six years, all the victims were returned to their family except Cynthia Ann. She was to remain with the tribe for almost 25 years.

During this time she was to forget the ways of the white people and become a complete Comanche. At first she was beaten and abused, but she soon integrated into the tribe. She was given to a Comanche couple who raised her as their own and gave her the Comanche name of Naduah, which was also spelled as Nadua and Nauta. She became devoted to her adopted family and memories of the white ways quickly vanished. When requests for her ransom were received she asked the tribal council to refuse them.

A young chief by the name of Peta Nocona won her heart and they were married. He was quite famous for successful raids on white settlements in the territory. It was the custom of prominent Comanche warriors to take several wives, but Peta only took Cynthia Ann, a mark of extraordinary devotion and honor to her. Cynthia Ann presented Peta with two sons and a daughter, Quanah, Pecos and Topsannah, or Prairie Flower as she was also to be known. Quanah was to become one of the fiercest Comanche warriors in tribal history.

In December of 1860, Peta's camp was attacked by a group of Texas Rangers in what is known as the Battle of Pease River. Realizing that the battle was lost, Peta fled with the two sons. Peta was wounded and whether or not he survived is unknown as history does not mention him again. Cynthia and Topsannah were taken to Camp Cooper for her second "kidnapping".

She was identified by her uncle and taken to his farm in Birdville, Texas. She made repeated attempts to escape and return to her people and each one failed. She was heartbroken being away from her family and not knowing whether Peta was dead or alive. In 1863, she received word that Pecos had died of small pox and a few months later Topsannah died of influenza. In 1870, at the age of only 43, she could take no more, she stopped eating and her health failed. Some say she died of influenza and some think she starved herself to death. She was buried in Fosterville Cemetery in Anderson County near Frankston, Texas.

Quanah searched for his mother for many years and upon learning of her death had her body and that of his sister moved to the Post Oak Cemetery near Cache, Oklahoma. When Quanah died in 1911, he was laid next to his devoted mother. In 1957, all three bodies were moved to the Post Cemetery at Fort Sill and buried on what is known as Chief's Knoll. The city of Crowell, Texas holds a two day event every year known as the Cynthia Ann Parker Festival. The town of Groesbeck, Texas holds an annual Christmas Festival at the original site of old Fort Parker which has been rebuilt on the old site to exact specifications. Her story is told in the book, "Where the Broken Heart Still Beats: The Story of Cynthia Ann Parker".



