

A Terrible Truth: The Tonkawa Massacre of 1862



*By Joseph Connole**

Rafferty stopped for the evening to have dinner when a gunshot rang out from the surrounding mountains. He came to the Arbuckle Mountains to seek out an acquaintance named Sylvester Baffin. The two spent the evening talking at Baffin's shop months earlier and Rafferty recommended that he come to the mountains to mine for asphalt. Soon after the gunshot rang out, Rafferty discovered Baffin sitting on a ledge some distance above him. Rafferty saddled his horse and made his way to Baffin's location. Baffin held a rifle across his lap and had the look of a man possessed, but as soon as he saw Rafferty he relaxed and began to smile. After exchanging pleasantries, Baffin reassured Rafferty he had not fired a shot and the two men made their way to Baffin's camp. There they encountered a horrific sight. Baffin's grandmother lay dead. Baffin then related to Rafferty his grandmoth-

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er's story; she was one of two survivors of what had become known as the Tonkawa Massacre. Baffin told Raftery that the Tonkawa had been known primarily for cannibalizing their prisoners, and the survivors of the massacre, Baffin's grandmother included, were to this day hunted by their sworn enemies, the Comanche. It was a chilling tale—and one loosely based in sad reality.¹

Baffin's story as related by Raftery presents several difficulties, not least that Baffin misrelated the number of massacre survivors (he claimed two, while in fact nearly half the tribe survived). However, the tale does at least relate a reason behind what took place. In the course of a few hundred words, Raftery shapes the message of the Tonkawa Massacre. While there has been much debate over what caused the Tonkawa Massacre, many historians have cited cannibalism as one of the chief causes.² Raftery's version of events demonstrates the struggle to understand the Tonkawa Massacre from the very moment it occurred.

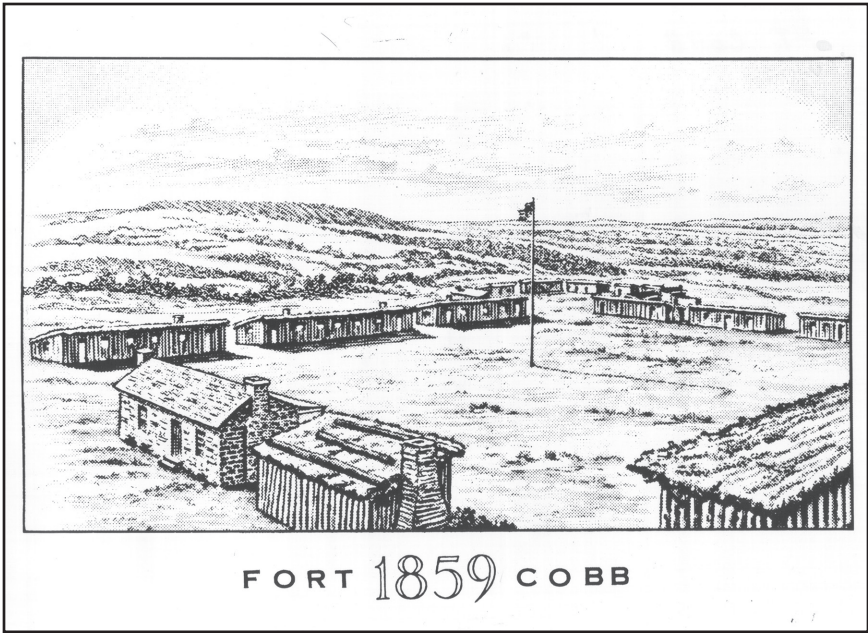
The Tonkawa Massacre was one of the most devastating events in Indian Territory during the Civil War, yet because of arguments that marginalize the massacre it has remained on the periphery of history. Historians disagree on the cause of the Tonkawa Massacre, repeating lines like "who instigated it remains unclear. . . . equally unclear was the reason."³ The charge of cannibalism is often cited as the cause of the massacre.⁴ Others contend that the massacre was incidental to an attack on Fort Cobb that occurred at the same time. The raiders, having had their fill of Fort Cobb, turned their attention on the unsuspecting Tonkawa.⁵ A third argument is built upon the Confederate report of the massacre; it was a "bloodletting" for those tribes that despised the Tonkawa for their relationship with the Anglo-Americans.⁶ I build upon David La Vere's argument, which suggests that the instigators and reasons for the massacre are unclear, but that we do know certain things about the Tonkawa that help better explain the reasons for the massacre.⁷ The Tonkawa relied heavily upon their alliances with Anglo-Americans, which alienated them from the other tribes. In turn, Anglo-Americans had done little to ensure the safety of the Tonkawa despite the latter's continued support and cooperation. Finally, the United States placed the Tonkawa in proximity to the other Texas tribes with whom they had warred on and off for centuries, creating an environment of hostility that resulted in the Tonkawa's sad fate. My research demonstrates that the Tonkawa were victim to their decision to ally with the Anglo-Americans, and when those alliances broke down as a result of the American Civil War, the Tonkawa were left exposed to other tribes.

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Given all of that, cannibalism is still the primary reason named.⁸ The death and rumored cannibalization of a young Caddo child is often cited, but the charge of cannibalism has its own problems. As Thomas Dunlay points out, "There may have been an element of hypocrisy and rationalization in this attitude. The Comanches evidently found the Tonkawas' habits tolerable" during their wars with the Apache in the eighteenth century.⁹ Indeed, if cannibalism was so reviled that it resulted in the 1862 massacre, why no retaliation sooner? In truth, cannibalism was typically used against enemies and, at particular times, among a variety of tribes; the Tonkawa were no different from others local to the modern-day San Antonio, Texas, region in this practice.¹⁰ They were neither the most prolific nor the only practitioner of cannibalism. The Kiowa and Comanche attached the charge in order to establish the Tonkawa "as pariahs and scapegoats." For all who heard the charge, it did not matter if the Tonkawa were guilty or not, "the common attitude apparently supplied its own confirmation."¹¹

Long dependent on the Spanish who had come to their region, the Tonkawa's regular contact with Americans began around the year 1790; from that time the Tonkawa thirsted for American goods and, more importantly, an American alliance. That reliance continued in the nineteenth century as Tonkawa dependence on the Spanish diminished to the point that, by the time of the Texas Revolution, the tribe was "agreeable to keeping the peace with the Americans but refused to keep the peace with the Mexicans." This decision stemmed from American military might; the Tonkawa were impressed with the Americans, especially on receiving much-desired firearms in trade.¹² Meanwhile, they resisted Mexican authority over the "inability of Mexico to provide trade goods and gifts."¹³ The decision to side with the Americans would have a lasting impact on the Tonkawa. After the Texas Revolution, the new Texas government made alliances with friendly tribes and remained opposed to hostile tribes; the Tonkawa were among the main tribes sought out by the Houston administration. Mutual hatred for the Comanche ensured a successful alliance. Additionally, the Tonkawa still occupied an area of Texas that was "thinly settled" in 1836. The Texans needed the Tonkawa as much as the Tonkawa needed the Texans. By the 1830s the Tonkawa and Texans were cooperating with each other fairly frequently.¹⁴ On June 22, 1836, the Republic of Texas entered into a treaty with the Tonkawa, "setting up a trading agent who would control the intercourse between the Tonkawa and the people of Texas." By November that treaty was extended. In April 1838 the Texans once again met with the Tonkawa to sign a treaty; this treaty gave the Texans the power to appoint agents who were not only

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Drawing of Fort Cobb, 1859 (10332.A, Oklahoma Historical Society Photograph Collection, OHS).

tasked with handling trade, but also expanded their role to handle all relations with the tribes.¹⁵ The Texans sought Indian alliances to help in their wars against raiding hostile tribes such as the Comanche and Wichita. The Tonkawa and other tribes helped teach the Texas Rangers how to fight these other tribes.¹⁶

After 1846 the Tonkawa's relationship with the Republic of Texas was swallowed up with the United States's annexation of Texas. Whatever happened now was subject to the US government's unsteady policies toward American Indians and subsumed by the growing tensions there.¹⁷ Changes did not occur overnight; indeed, the Tonkawa accompanied Texas Volunteers under Edward Burleson to Matamoros in their efforts against the Mexican army. Eventually, though, the US government's Indian policies did significant harm to the Tonkawa, continuing to place the tribe on reservations with their enemies.¹⁸ The mutual interests of the Republic of Texas and the Tonkawa tribe were forgotten.

Meanwhile, the relationship of the Texas people with other American Indians continued to spiral out of control. Settlers, perhaps unaware of the Tonkawa's previous contributions, blamed the tribe for

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continued raids, lumping them in with traditionally hostile tribes.¹⁹ Anthropologist William K. Jones wrote, “In January 1849, it was determined that the Tonkawas had been stealing horses and mules and had killed several citizens, all depredations that had previously been blamed on the ‘wild Indians.’” In turn, the Texans demanded that the Tonkawa surrender those responsible and restore the stolen property. The Tonkawa remained peaceful for the next few years, though the practice of forcibly separating the tribe from Anglo settlements remained. This policy eventually led to the Texas government granting the federal government permission to create two reservations along the Brazos River. Some 650 Tonkawa relocated to the Brazos Indian Reservation in present-day Young County, just outside Newcastle, Texas.²⁰

In February 1854 the federal government, along with the Texas Legislature, approved the creation of a reservation system for the Texas tribes out of lands held by the state, with the understanding that should the Indians ever be removed from the lands, the lands would revert back to state control.²¹ Texas Governor Elisha Pease appointed two men—Captain Randolph Marcy, who fought in the Mexican-American War and established the Marcy Trail from Fort Smith, Arkansas, to Santa Fe, New Mexico Territory, and Robert Neighbors, who had been appointed the Indian agent in charge of the Tonkawa and Lipan Apache in 1845 and later was made the supervising agent for Texas Indians by President Franklin Pierce—to find a new location for the Texas tribes along the Brazos River.²² The Tonkawa were removed to their new homes in two periods. The first removed in 1854 while other members of the Tonkawa remained in southwestern Texas under the charge of Indian Agent George Howard. Howard brought another 250 Tonkawa in the spring of 1855.²³ In total some “650 people were moved to the upper Brazos.”²⁴ While on their new reservation, the Tonkawa continued helping Texas and American militaries in their wars against other tribes, namely the Comanche. In December 1857, approximately fifteen Tonkawa accompanied the Seventh US Infantry through Kickapoo territory. In April 1858 they accompanied the Texas Rangers in action against the Comanche. Over the next couple of years, the Tonkawa took part in many raids against the Comanche, putting them in the crosshairs of the Comanche and their allies, the Caddo and the Wichita.²⁵

Neither their continued alliance with the Texans nor the forced move to the Brazos Reservation could protect the Tonkawa indefinitely. Continued raids by the northern Comanche against Anglo settlements perpetuated a culture of fear and resentment of all the reservation tribes,

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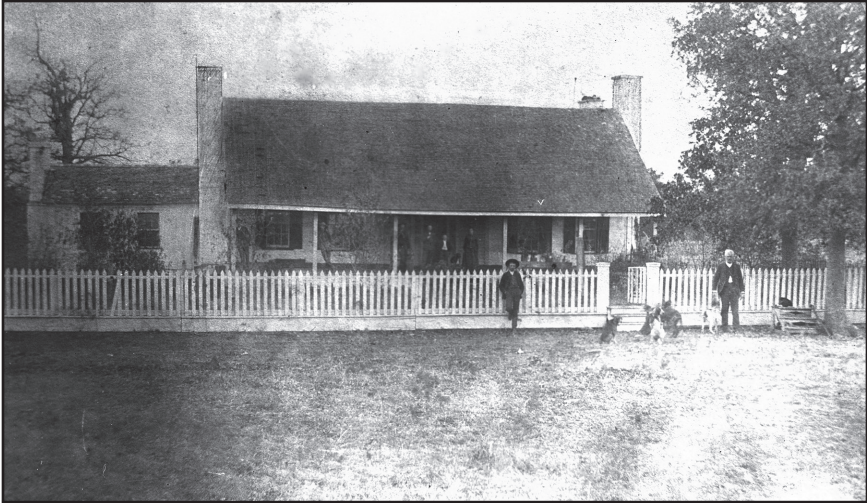


Randolph B. Marcy, c. 1860–75 (2017893771, Brady-Handy Photograph Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC).

who themselves dealt with their share of Comanche antagonism. The Texas populace was so agitated that the resident Indian agents—Samuel Blain, S. R. Ross, Mathew Leeper, and Robert Neighbors—became concerned about the possible outcomes. In an effort to curtail possible war, those agents moved the tribes from the Brazos further north, to the Washita River in Indian Territory.²⁶

The land set aside for the Brazos Reservation tribes came from the Choctaw and Chickasaw, who occupied lands in the southeastern portion of Indian Territory. It was a part of what was called the Leased District, the westernmost portions of the tribal lands between the Red and Canadian Rivers. The Brazos Reservation tribes were to be placed on lands with the Taovaya, Kichai, and Whitebead Caddo.²⁷ Samuel Blain, who had recently been appointed the agent for the Wichita tribe, was appointed to take charge of the newly established agencies.²⁸ Before removal, US Army officers and government agents met with the leaders of nine tribes, including the Brazos tribes and the Wichita, at Fort Arbuckle. The United States offered protection in exchange for tribal settlement near the Wichita Mountains.²⁹ The site chosen for the tribes was an area four miles upstream from the convergence of Sugar Creek and the Washita River. With good land and natural spring water, the area had been recommended for a military post by Douglas H. Cooper several years earlier. With the leaders of the nations on board

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Commandant's quarters at Fort Arbuckle, Indian Territory (6715, Joseph Thoburn Collection, OHS).

and land for a new fort settled upon, the federal government made ready for removal of the Texas tribes.³⁰ However, before they were able to move the Brazos Reservation tribes north onto the Wichita Agency, residents near the Brazos Reservation moved to attack the Brazos tribes.

The residents were led by John R. Baylor, the great-nephew of Robert E. Bledsoe Baylor, the founder of Baylor University. John Baylor was a former Indian agent for the Comanche who moved to north Texas and began a campaign against the Indian tribes living along the Brazos River. He was the author of an anti-Indian newspaper called the *White Man*.³¹ On May 23, 1859, a contingent of 250 mounted vigilante settlers led by Baylor rode into the reservation with violent intent. A detachment of the US Army met the vigilantes, who then backed down, but not before murdering two elderly Indians and a woman tending her garden.³² Less than a month later, with tensions still high from the attack, Indian Agent Robert Neighbors received orders from the federal government to immediately evacuate the tribes from their homes into Indian Territory.³³

On the first of August 1859, the tribes of the Brazos and Clear Fork Reservations, including the Tonkawa, were ordered to load into wagons that would go north into Indian Territory. A US Army escort led by Major George Thomas was to accompany the tribes north.³⁴ The Tonkawa arrived in Indian Territory far too late to begin planting any

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food, and they had not had time to herd their cattle north during the removal; as such, the army and Indian agents permitted the Tonkawa to hunt for their food. The Indian agents were forced to continue providing for the tribes until the Bureau of Indian Affairs could give them the tools and equipment to plow and plant crops. Agents placed in a position to help the tribes also did much to harm them as some "cheated the Indians out of their supplies and left them in a deplorable condition."³⁵ The ongoing threat presented by the northern Comanche exacerbated the situation. Federal officials had failed to consider existing tribal conflict, made worse by the Texas tribes' removal into traditional Comanche territory. The military escort that had protected the Texas tribes on their way north was not left at the agency to protect them, despite specific treaty guarantees between the tribes and the US government.³⁶

The withdrawal of federal troops from the Wichita Agency exposed the tribes to escalating violence, as the northern Comanche were joined by the Kiowa. When word of the continued fighting and refusal by the hostile tribes to leave the vicinity of the agency reached federal authorities, a new fort was authorized for protection.³⁷ Major William H. Emory was assigned to establish Fort Cobb; troops occupied the fort by October 1, 1859.³⁸ Fort Cobb was located 160 miles northwest of Fort Washita and three miles west of the Wichita Agency headquarters.³⁹

Intended to protect the Texas tribes in their new home, Fort Cobb had the desired effect, and the tribes quickly began to disperse, except the Tonkawa, who never entirely left the vicinity of either the Wichita Agency or Fort Cobb. The fort was garrisoned with two companies of the First Cavalry and one company of the First Infantry.⁴⁰ Despite the new fort and its garrison, problems remained. While many of the Texas tribes had dispersed, hostile tribes did not and continued to raid the Wichita Agency, and the scant resources in Indian Territory generally left Fort Cobb without backup in case of emergency.⁴¹ This led Lieutenant General Winfield Scott, in a letter to Secretary of War John Floyd, to conclude, "In connection with this point must be considered the safety of the garrison in case of attack by a superior force . . . the post is at such a distance from the base of co-operation as to leave it unsupported; the retreat of its garrison would be easily cut off; hence it requires a powerful garrison if any."⁴² In a short time, this concern would be exploited to disastrous consequences.

In January 1860 Agent Samuel Blain warned the tribes that he feared the government would not long be able to sustain them on their new lands and encouraged each to begin planting that spring.⁴³ As historian F. Todd Smith illustrates, many of the tribes heeded Blain's

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warning and started farming. Notably, Smith dismisses the efforts of the Tonkawa, praising the Caddo and Wichita as industrious and pointing out that the Tonkawa planted little in comparison.⁴⁴ Despite the efforts of the tribes to farm, a severe drought destroyed their crops, forcing the government to provide for them for another year.⁴⁵

By October 1860 Agent Blain was replaced by Mathew Leeper. The exact reason for Blain's replacement is unclear, but perhaps it was political, as is suggested by historian John C. Paige. It is suggested that the proof for political motives in replacing Blain are seen in the support for his removal by William Burnet, son of Texas Governor David Burnet.⁴⁶ Whatever the reason for Blain's removal, Leeper took his place as agent with disastrous consequences. Leeper, a Texan who harbored secessionist beliefs, was cantankerous and failed to get along with his staff, let alone with the tribes.⁴⁷ Tribal animosity made Leeper's job quite challenging. Resentment festered against the Tonkawa for their now age-old alliances with European and Anglo-American governments, especially their participation in raids alongside the Texas Rangers and US Cavalry. In 1860, following attacks by the Kiowa along the Santa Fe Trail, federal cavalry units led by Caddo, Tonkawa, and Wichita scouts attacked the Kiowa, resulting in the death of a Kiowa man at the hands of the Caddo.⁴⁸ The Kiowa and their allies had now even more reason to resent the Wichita Agency tribes, of whom the Tonkawa, who had participated in many of the Texas wars against the Comanche and their allies, remained the focal point of their anger.

Old wounds festered for the Wichita Agency tribes as these animosities simmered to a boil.⁴⁹ The garrison at Fort Cobb was ill-prepared for an attack on the tribes, let alone on the fort itself. For the Tonkawa, this meant relying on an ally unable to protect them against growing hatred. Their enemies would blame cannibalism, but it is clear from the sequence of events overall that it was the Tonkawa's alliances with Anglo-Americans against other tribes that drove the enmity against them.

The Tonkawa decision to stay close to Fort Cobb had another consequence, as national events affected the fort's fate. The government was too unconcerned with the goings-on of the Indian Territory to pay any attention to the individual tribes and had already demonstrated ignorance in their affairs. The neglect was evident in Leeper's appointment to the role of agent for the area, which would have disastrous consequences for the agency, the fort, and the tribes entrusted to his care. But the whole of the blame cannot be laid on Leeper's shoulders; American policy toward the Texas tribes assured the marginalization of the Tonkawa.

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The 1860 election of Abraham Lincoln, and the resulting secession and Civil War, left the Tonkawa virtually without allies. The peaceful annexation of Texas had allowed the Tonkawa to mostly continue as they had, but decades of appointing southerners and secessionists such as Leeper to key posts in the Bureau of Indian Affairs assured that Indian Territory would become a battleground. The Tonkawa had eschewed other tribes, sometimes violently, and would now be without protection or aid from the US government. Fort Cobb was bereft of adequate resources long before this point, made worse with the onset of the Civil War and further diversion of those resources, not to mention the seesaw of who, exactly, was in charge.

After the April 1861 attack on Fort Sumter, the situation in Indian Territory shifted. Leeper came under the employ of the newly established Confederate States of America. In the eastern Indian Territory, the Five Tribes were already making overtures to join the Confederacy. For the Wichita Agency tribes this was disastrous; many of them had suffered ill treatment at the hands of Texans while they lived at the Brazos Reservation, and they had long supported the Union. The Tonkawa, true to habit and history, were the exception, having remained loyal to the Texans. They were subsequently alone among the Texas tribes in supporting the Confederacy.⁵⁰

With the outbreak of war back east and the need to consolidate resources, military authorities decided to abandon their positions in Indian Territory. The decision prompted the now Confederate Texans to send a force under the command of Colonel William C. Young to take possession of the forts in Indian Territory. A feeble attempt was made by federal troops to prevent the capturing of the bases, but to no avail.⁵¹ Texas then had military control over the territory while Arkansas clamored to send envoys into Indian Territory to acquire alliances. The Confederacy ultimately sent General Benjamin McCulloch along with Albert Pike, the Confederate agent assigned to negotiate treaties with the Indian tribes in the Indian Territory.⁵² Pike secured agreements with the Choctaw and Chickasaw, a handful of Seminole, and about half of the Muscogee (Creek), while the lone holdout was Chief John Ross of the Cherokee. Pike then turned his attention to the Wichita Agency, where he found the tribes less willing to join the Confederate cause and negotiate treaties. As he had done with the Seminole and the Muscogee (Creek), Pike simply forced some to sign while he forged the signatures of others onto his treaties. The one tribe in the Leased District to willingly sign a treaty with Pike was the Tonkawa.⁵³

The Tonkawa decision to side with the Confederacy escalated tensions in the Leased District. To the east, the Muscogee (Creek) were

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gathering those who wished to remain loyal to their treaties with the United States. By early fall 1861 Colonel Douglas Cooper, the joint Choctaw-Chickasaw agent, decided it was time to put an end to the Muscogee (Creek) insurrection. Over the next few months the Muscogee (Creek) loyalists, under the command of Opothleyahola, fought with Cooper's army while they pushed ever further north.⁵⁴ The Seminole, some Choctaw and Chickasaw, the Cherokee loyal to Chief John Ross, and a gathering of others from the Leased District joined the Muscogee (Creek). By December the situation became perilous, and after a defeat by Confederate forces under the command of James McIntosh, the loyalist band fled north into Kansas. Once there, Union and Confederate leaders influenced the two opposing American Indian camps. Both Union and Confederate leadership enflamed the passions of their American Indian counterparts, provoking further animosity between tribes.⁵⁵

Meanwhile, the Union needed to remove the thousands of refugees flooding into Union-held Kansas. While in eastern Indian Territory, the home of the Five Tribes, a full-fledged military invasion was required to return those refugees. In the Wichita Agency it was left to the tribes who called it home to launch an invasion, and ultimately an attack, on the Confederates. The immediate cause of their return to Indian Territory and eventually the attack on Fort Cobb was the return of Agent Mathew Leeper, who was among the most hated of the Anglos stationed there. Leeper, knowing the danger his agency and life were in, had fled Fort Cobb in 1862 along with his family. With Leeper gone to Texas, the Caddo began to hold secret meetings of which the temporary agent, Horace Jones, was utterly ignorant. In the chaos, a young Caddo boy was found murdered. The Caddo blamed the Tonkawa and accused them of cannibalizing the boy.⁵⁶ The death of the Caddo boy was a symptom of deeper problems. Despite having lived on the same reservation for six years in Texas, the Tonkawa and the Caddo were as different as could be. The Tonkawa spoke a different language, had a different lifestyle (the Tonkawa were nomadic hunters, the Caddo were settled agriculturalists), and most importantly, the Tonkawa were the allies of the Texans.⁵⁷ In addition to the young Caddo boy, two years earlier the Tonkawa had cannibalized "some of the slain Comanches" following a joint raid with the Caddo, Wichita, and Texas Rangers against the Comanche and Kiowa.⁵⁸ General antagonism against the Tonkawa by the various tribes, including the northern Comanche, Kiowa, and Caddo, persisted and came to a head during the summer of 1862. To complicate the situation, the Confederacy removed Colonel Young's men and replaced them with thirty-seven men they had re-

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Tonkawa dance at Anadarko, 1901 (16482, Virgil Robbins Collection, OHS).

cruited from the tribes.⁵⁹ Another severe drought in 1862 forced many to flee the Wichita Agency and head for Kansas; the Tonkawa were the lone tribe to remain in the agency. Their decision further alienated the Tonkawa from the other Wichita Agency tribes. And, as stated previously, the other tribes resented the Texans and thus also resented the Tonkawa who chose to ally with them. As a result of this resentment, the other tribes were angered when the Tonkawa stayed.

The spark for all this to catch fire was Union encouragement for an attack on the Confederate forces at Fort Cobb. The US Bureau of Indian Affairs appointed Edwin H. Carruth as the agent for the Wichita Agency, and it was his responsibility to care for the starving and sick who flooded across the Kansas border into the agency between late 1861 and early 1862.⁶⁰ Like his predecessors, his job was made more complicated by ill feelings between the tribes under his authority. Union attempts to return all of the refugees to their homes had stalled, and the Wichita Agency tribes were forced to stay in Kansas until after the war. However, a Union scouting party slipped into the territory and to the Wichita Agency. The party was made up of about one hundred men, “some Shawnees and Delawares, as well as Kickapoos, Seminoles, Cherokees, and Osages” all led by the Delaware Ben

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Simon. Only one first-hand account of what came next, the attack on Fort Cobb, is known to exist, as related by the temporary agent, Horace Jones.⁶¹

Jones was living in Indian Territory, about four miles north of the Washita River, when the attack occurred. Reports that the Osage, who had allied with the Union, were planning an attack on the agency and the Tonkawa in the area were circulating, which precipitated Agent Leeper's fleeing and leaving Jones in charge. Jones reported that the Caddo, allies of the Osage and who Jones considered friends, assured him that there was no danger and that the Osage were not planning an attack. The assurances by the Caddo resulted in Leeper returning to Fort Cobb. However, at around 9 p.m. on October 23 a war party descended upon Fort Cobb. Jones, who was planning a hunt for the next day, had gone to bed when his dogs alerted him to the attack. He was able to escape his house along with a companion who was ultimately killed. Jones made it to the home of a Dr. Sturm. After showing Sturm the burning buildings of the fort, they decided to ride twenty-five miles south of the agency to the house of a man named Chandler. The war party killed four at the agency and burned down all the buildings before turning its attention to the Tonkawa.⁶² Leeper's ultimate fate is unclear. He did return to the fort before the attack, and the majority of historians suggest that he was killed based on reports, though at least one historian suggests that Leeper survived. "Leeper fled from the building after hearing war whoops of the attacking Indians. . . . and the next day an Indian called To-she-way gave him a horse on which he fled." According to this story, Leeper made it to Sherman, Texas, where he lived out the rest of his days before dying in 1894.⁶³ Regardless of Leeper's fate, it is established fact that years of animosity between the Tonkawa and other Texas tribes finally reached a conclusion.

The Tonkawa were camping along the Washita River to the south of Fort Cobb. When they heard the fighting, they fled east toward Anadarko. Comanche and Kiowa warriors followed the Tonkawa and alerted the raiding party at Fort Cobb of their location.⁶⁴ There were an estimated three hundred Tonkawa under the leadership of their chief, Placido. Most of the men of fighting age were off on a hunt and had taken with them all of the tribe's arms. As daylight broke over the Tonkawa camp, the war party split itself and attacked the Tonkawa camp from two sides. The massacre resulted in 137 men, women, and children dead with others taken captive, and while the Tonkawa had been able to mount some defense, only a few of the attackers were killed.⁶⁵ Those who survived the massacre fled south to Fort Arbuckle

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and the safety of the Confederate army, and eventually back into Texas. The Tonkawa campsite, however, was filled with the bodies of the dead. A couple of years later, a Quaker teacher named Thomas Battey reported that the field was still covered with the remains of the dead. Another resident, John Clark, recalled in the 1930s, that “the skeletons were scattered over the hillside just as the Tonkawas were killed.”⁶⁶

In the aftermath of the war, the US Army built a series of forts from Texas to Montana to aid in the conquering of the frontier. The Tonkawa eventually settled at Fort Griffin in Shackelford County, Texas. Their living conditions deteriorated. With barely 150 members still alive, they were subject to neglect by the US government. The Tonkawa once again took up the position of acting as scouts for the army and continued to serve in this capacity for the remainder of their time in Texas. In 1884 the Tonkawa were again removed from Texas to Indian Territory. It was reported by Elias Chandler in 1884 that “Tonkawas and Lipans have been occupying lands belonging to private parties, and it has been through the kindness of those parties that the Indians were allowed to remain here,” but that “active preparations are being made for their removal from this place to the Quapaw Reservation, in the Indian Territory.”⁶⁷ The Tonkawa were removed on October 22, 1884, to Indian Territory and placed on the Iowa Reservation. They remained there until the United States transferred the Tonkawa to the Oakland Agency on June 30, 1885.⁶⁸

The Tonkawa struggled to recover in the wake of the massacre. The annual Indian agent report of 1884 indicates that the Tonkawa were receiving \$3,000 from Congress. They had little game to hunt in Texas, and reportedly (as had always been the case) failed to adapt to an agricultural lifestyle. Chandler reported that the Tonkawa were among the most uneducated of American Indians, stating that the “agency is behind every other agency in the United States.” In his report from 1883, Chandler said of the tribe:

The Tonkawa have ever been the friend of the white man, and they have many times suffered at the hands of their neighbors, the Comanches and Kiowas, on account of that friendship; yet, notwithstanding all this, they are more poorly provided for by the Government than any other tribe of Indians in the country. Their lands have all been taken from them, and none have been given them in return.⁶⁹

In addition, Chandler reported that, at that point, no more than seventy-eight Tonkawa remained.⁷⁰ The picture he created of the Tonkawa

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shows a tribe on the verge of extinction. Perhaps it was because of their seclusion in Texas, their decision to continue to aid the government in its ongoing war for the West, and their low population that historians began to merely ignore the Tonkawa in favor of larger, more powerful tribes of the Great Plains and Southwest. The Tonkawa Massacre certainly had a role in making this happen.

The Tonkawa Massacre of 1862 remains one of the most underappreciated events in the Civil War, though it was arguably one of the most devastating events to occur in Indian Territory during the war.⁷¹ The exact reasons for the massacre can be debated, but the evidence points repeatedly to the animosity between warring tribes, built up over decades, being a key factor. Moreover, while the war party made up of the Shawnee, Kiowa, Kickapoo, Comanche, Caddo, and other tribes are to blame for the direct assault on Fort Cobb and the actual massacre of the Tonkawa, it remains the joint fault of the Union and Confederate militaries for not doing their part to protect the Tonkawa in accordance with their treaty obligations. The Tonkawa are the worst example of collateral damage in the Civil War, neglected and unprotected by those they trusted as allies. Historians do a further disservice to the abused Tonkawa by dismissing the massacre as the natural consequence of cannibalism, failing to take into account the many complicated reasons for tribal conflict and government complicity in the situation. A general disregard for the Tonkawa as a people has been the most predominant feature of their relationship with Europeans and Anglo-Americans. The massacre was the outcome of that relationship, a tragic culmination of disregard and policy. What occurred later, as American Indian policy took center stage for the federal government during western expansion, can easily find its roots in the treatment of the Tonkawa and the resulting massacre.

Endnotes

* Joseph Connole is an avocational historian. His research focuses on the evolution of federal power concerning American Indians. He has published on topics related to the tribes of Oklahoma, including the Comanche Code Talkers of World War II and the Civil War in Indian Territory. His first book, *The Civil War and the Subversion of American Indian Sovereignty*, was published in 2017 by McFarland and Company, Inc., Publishers. He currently resides in Washington, North Carolina. The photograph on page 450 is of Chief Grant Richards, a Tonkawa who was one of the survivors of the massacre (3762, W. P. Campbell Collection, OHS).

¹ John Raftery, "The Last of the Tonkawas," *Santa Fe (NM) New Mexican*, August 5, 1903, 7. The story tells how the narrator, John Raftery, heard of Sylvester Baffin and the woes Baffin experienced, including his businesses burning down and his crops being eaten by a herd of ponies. Baffin was described by others as a quiet person who kept to himself. Raftery's account tells of how Baffin was friendly yet paranoid, and unwilling to talk about his misfortune. This story appeared in numerous newspapers at the beginning of the twentieth century. According to the *Santa Fe New Mexican*, this story was originally published in the *Chicago (IL) Herald Record*, without mention of a publication date.

² Andrée F. Sjöberg, "The Culture of the Tonkawa," *Texas Journal of Science* 5, no. 1 (1953): 284.

³ David La Vere, *Life Among the Texas Indians: The WPA Narratives* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1998), 40.

⁴ Angie Debo, *A History of the Indians of the United States* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1970), 177; Mary Jane Warde, *When the Wolf Came: The Civil War and the Indian Territory* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2013), 124; F. Todd Smith, "The Most Destitute' People in Indian Territory: The Wichita Agency Tribes and the Civil War," in *The Civil War and Reconstruction in Indian Territory*, ed. Bradley R. Clappitt (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 97.

⁵ Annie Heloise Abel, *The American Indian in the Civil War, 1862–1865* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 182; Edwin C. McReynolds, *Oklahoma: A History of the Sooner State* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1954), 215; Thomas F. Schilz, "People of the Cross Timbers: A History of the Tonkawa People" (PhD diss., Texas Christian University, 1983), 175–76.

⁶ Laurence M. Hauptman, *Between Two Fires: American Indians in the Civil War* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1995), 29.

⁷ La Vere, *Life Among the Texas Indians*, 40–41.

⁸ Thomas W. Dunlay, "Friends and Allies: The Tonkawa Indians and the Anglo-Americans, 1823–1884" *Great Plains Quarterly* 1, no. 3 (Summer 1981): 149, digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly/1904.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ James Mooney, "Our Last Cannibal Tribe," *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, September 1901, 551.

¹¹ Dunlay, "Friends and Allies," 149.

¹² Schilz, "People of the Cross Timbers," 143.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 132, 143.

¹⁴ Dunlay, "Friends and Allies," 149–50.

¹⁵ William K. Jones, "Notes on the History and Material Culture of the Tonkawa Indians," *Smithsonian Contributions to Anthropology* 2, no. 5 (1969): 68.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 152–61.

¹⁷ Kelly F. Himmell, *The Conquest of the Karankawas and the Tonkawas, 1821–1859*, (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1999), 93, 96.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 95.

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¹⁹ Ibid., 107–08. As Himmel writes, “Public opinion about Indians, in general, continued to harden.”

²⁰ Jones, “Notes on the History and Material Culture of the Tonkawa Indians,” 70.

²¹ Himmel, *The Conquest of the Karankawas and the Tonkawas*, 110.

²² Thomas W. Cutrer, “Marcy, Randolph Barnes,” Handbook of Texas Online, www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fma43; Rupert N. Richardson, “Neighbors, Robert Simpson,” Handbook of Texas Online, www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fne08.

²³ Himmel, *The Conquest of the Karankawas and the Tonkawas*, 111.

²⁴ Jones, “Notes on the History and Material Culture of the Tonkawa Indians,” 70.

²⁵ Ibid., 70–71; “In 1858, besides their services with Ford’s Rangers, the Tonkawas and other Brazos Reserve Indians were in Major Earl Van Dorn’s bloody victory over the Comanches in Indian Territory,” from Dunlay, “Friends and Allies,” 150.

²⁶ Muriel H. Wright, “A History of Fort Cobb,” *The Chronicles of Oklahoma* 34, no. 1 (Spring 1956): 53.

²⁷ Jones, “Notes on the History and Material Culture of the Tonkawa Indians,” 71.

²⁸ John C. Paige, “Wichita Indian Agents, 1857–1869” in *The Civil War Era in Indian Territory*, ed. LeRoy H. Fischer (Los Angeles, CA: Lorrin L. Morrison, 1974), 75.

²⁹ Wright, “A History of Fort Cobb,” 54.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Jerry Thompson, “Baylor, John Robert,” Handbook of Texas Online, www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fbaat.

³² Himmel, *The Conquest of the Karankawas and the Tonkawas*, 118.

³³ Ibid., 120.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Paige, “Wichita Indian Agents, 1857–1869,” 75.

³⁶ Wright, “A History of Fort Cobb,” 55.

³⁷ Ibid., 56.

³⁸ *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Vol. 1 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1880), 660; Smith, “‘The Most Destitute’ People,” 91.

³⁹ Wright, “A History of Fort Cobb,” 56.

⁴⁰ Smith, “‘The Most Destitute’ People,” 91.

⁴¹ Ibid., 92. Information regarding the placement of Fort Cobb is in Wright, “A History of Fort Cobb,” 57.

⁴² *War of the Rebellion*, Vol. 1, 660.

⁴³ Smith, “‘The Most Destitute’ People,” 92.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 91.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Paige, “Wichita Indian Agents, 1857–1869,” 76.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 78.

⁴⁸ Warde, *When the Wolf Came*, 122.

⁴⁹ Abel, *The American Indian in the Civil War*, 182.

⁵⁰ Schilz, “People of the Cross Timbers,” 174–75.

⁵¹ Abel, *The American Indian as Slaveholder and Secessionist* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1992), 99–108.

⁵² Ibid., 134, 143–44.

⁵³ Ibid., 152–53, 158, 199–202.

⁵⁴ Arrell Morgan Gibson, *Oklahoma: A History of Five Centuries* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1981), 120–21.

⁵⁵ Abel, *The American Indian in the Civil War*, 182.

⁵⁶ Paige, “Wichita Indian Agents, 1857–1869,” 80.

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⁵⁷ F. Todd Smith, *The Caddos, the Wichitas, and the United States, 1846–1901* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1996), 86.

⁵⁸ Jones, “Notes on the History and Material Culture of the Tonkawa Indians,” 71.

⁵⁹ Wright, “A History of Fort Cobb,” 59.

⁶⁰ Paige, “Wichita Indian Agents, 1857–1869,” 80–81.

⁶¹ Warde, *When the Wolf Came*, 124.

⁶² Joseph B. Thoburn, “Horace P. Jones, Scout and Interpreter,” *The Chronicles of Oklahoma* 2, no. 4 (Winter 1924): 383–85; Edwin C. McReynolds provides a more elaborate account of the events of October 23. McReynolds, *Oklahoma: A History of the Sooner State*, 213–15.

⁶³ Paige, “Wichita Indian Agents, 1857–1869,” 80.

⁶⁴ Schilz, “People of the Cross Timbers,” 175. In *Oklahoma: A History of the Sooner State*, McReynolds retells the story of the massacre without mentioning the Tonkawa by name. McReynolds, *Oklahoma: A History of the Sooner State*, 215.

⁶⁵ Historians generally agree about what happened during the massacre, though some details differ. For example, the Confederate report of the battle as recorded by Mary Jane Warde, in her work *When the Wolf Came: The Civil War and the Indian Territory*, suggests that twenty-three warriors and one hundred women and children were killed. Angie Debo, in her *A History of the Indians of the United States*, does not provide a number of killed, survived, or a number of the total Tonkawa present at the massacre—instead she cites that fifty-seven survivors were still alive in her time. Annie Heloise Abel, in the second part of her *Slaveholding Indians Series, The American Indian as Participant in the Civil War* (Cleveland, OH: Arthur C. Clark Company, 1919), claims 150 Tonkawa survived the attack. In his work *Between Two Fires: American Indians in the Civil War*, Laurence Hauptman states that 137 were killed, but does not say how many survived.

⁶⁶ Interview reprinted in La Vere, *Life Among the Texas Indians*, 63.

⁶⁷ US Office of Indian Affairs, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for the Year 1884* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1884), 154, babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=umn.31951d02724900u&view=1up&seq=214.

⁶⁸ US Office of Indian Affairs, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for the Year 1885* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1885), 98, babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=umn.31951d02724902q&view=1up&seq=336.

⁶⁹ US Office of Indian Affairs, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for the Year 1883* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1883), 137, babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.tz1nwq&view=1up&seq=221.

⁷⁰ US Office of Indian Affairs, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for the Year 1884*, 153–54.

⁷¹ La Vere, *Life Among the Texas Indians*, 40.