

ON THE WHITE MAN'S ROAD: LAWRIE TATUM AND THE FORMATIVE YEARS OF THE KIOWA AGENCY, 1869-1873

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Ulysses Simpson Grant was elected president of the United States in November of 1868: with his inauguration in 1869 came an innovation toward the Indians known as Grant's "Peace Policy." The emphasis of this policy was on peace and continued control of Indian affairs by civilians. The main points were that nominations for positions of agents and superintendents would be made by religious groups, disbursement of Indian appropriations would be made by a Board of Indian Commissioners and the treaty system of the United States government would be terminated. The Indians would be placed on reservations to be educated, civilized, Christianized and converted into self-sustaining agriculturalists. The last element of this policy, introducing the Indians to agriculture, met both with success and failure as evidenced by the work of Lawrie Tatum at the Kiowa Agency in the Indian Territory.

Following Grant's election, officials of the Society of Friends (Quakers) met with the president and asked to be made part of the new policy, requesting that members of their sect be selected as Indian agents. In February of 1869, Grant informed them that they could nominate members to fill the positions of superintendents and agents for the western Indian superintendencies. The Central Superintendency, comprised of Kansas and the Indian Territory and under the jurisdiction of the Quakers, included the Kiowa Agency which was located in the southwest corner of the Indian Territory. The Council of Friends chose Enoch Hoag of Iowa to head the Central Superintendency. Hoag's job required him to supervise 144,000 square miles, 9 agents and about 16,000 Indians.¹

In the spring of 1869 the Council of Friends nominated Lawrie Tatum to fill the position of agent for the Kiowa Agency. Until he read of his appointment in the newspaper, Tatum was unaware that his church leaders

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¹ Robert M. Uley, *Frontier Regulars: The United States Army and the Indian, 1866-1891* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1973), p. 190; "Lawrie Tatum Letters," *Prairie Love*, Vol. IV, No. 1 (July, 1967), p. 50; Martha Buntin, "The Quaker Indian Agents of the Kiowa, Comanche, and Wichita Indian Reservation," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. X, No. 2 (June, 1932), p. 204; Lee Cutler, "Lawrie Tatum and the Kiowa Agency, 1869-1873," *Arizona and the West*, Vol. XIII, No. 3 (Autumn, 1971), p. 226; Marvin E. Kroecker, *Great Plains Command: William B. Hazen in the Frontier West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1976), p. 74.

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were considering him for the position. Tatum was a God-fearing, I farmer who had been active in the work of his church. He received off notice of his appointment in May of 1869, accepted the church dire as a sign from God and immediately began preparation for his journe the Indian Territory. Tatum was without previous experience or knowl of Indian affairs, but he had faith that he could succeed.²

After receiving his appointment as agent for the Kiowa Agency, Ta obtained official instructions to meet Colonel W. B. Hazen, head of Southern Indian District, at Junction City, Kansas, on May 20, 1869. Hi was to escort the new agent to his agency. Tatum left his wife, Mary / and family late in May and departed with a friend, James Southwick the small village of Junction City, Tatum and Southwick met Hazen took them in an ambulance drawn by four mules 350 miles south to Kiowa Agency. As the group approached within three to four miles of Sill, Tatum saw the adobe agency house that Hazen had ordered buil

Colonel Hazen previously had selected the site for the agency near Sill. The country surrounding the post was "beautiful; well watered covered with luxurient vegetation." The streams had abundant timber a their banks, and the agency was located on rich bottom land with grass in the vicinity of Cache Creek. The construction of Fort Sill wa progress at the time of Tatum's arrival, and an agency building and s house had been erected near the post. Hazen also had ordered several s tracts of land plowed for the Indians. Approximately seventy acres of had been planted and cultivated, and an abundant crop had been vested. Another 1,500 acres on the reservation had been prepared for pl ing in the fall of 1869 or the spring of 1870.⁴

To prepare the Indians for their new agricultural life, Hazen had hir man to teach them how to plant and cultivate crops. Indian women alr had fenced in small plots with slender poles tied to stakes with bark. T the Indians had raised corn, melons and pumpkins while trying to l their ponies away from their fields. The Indians craved vegetables, ea melons before they were ripe and consuming the corn as soon as it edible. With the women and children doing most of the work, l quantities of corn and pumpkins were dried, but the frail "squaw fen

² Cutler, "Lawrie Tatum and the Kiowa Agency," *Arizona and the West*, Vol. XIII, p. Buntin, "The Quaker Indian Agents," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. X, p. 204.

³ Lawrie Tatum, *Our Red Brothers and the Peace Policy of President Ulysses S.* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1970), pp. 25-26.

⁴ Department of the Interior, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs*, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1870), pp. 59-60; Tatum, *Our Red Bro* pp. 26-27.



Colonel W. B. Hazen, head of the Southern Indian District

often failed to restrain the Indian ponies until all the corn could be gathered.⁶

The Kiowa, Comanche, Apache, Wichita, Waco, Tawacaroo, Keechie, Caddo and Andaghco Indians were at the Kiowa Agency. The Kiowa, Comanche and Apache were loosely confederated. The Wichita and their Caddoan brethren, who were affiliated into a cohesive band, were assigned temporarily to the Kiowa Agency until an agent could be appointed to supervise them. A small group of Delaware Indians also lived with both the Kiowa and Wichita factions. The Kiowa's and Comanche's camp was on Cache Creek, fifteen miles north of the agency, and the Caddoan people were located about thirty miles in the same direction from Fort Sill, cultivating small plots of corn and "trying to walk in the white man's road."⁷

On July 1, 1869, Tatum took control of the Kiowa Agency, replacing Albert Boone as agent. His orders were to stop the raids by Indians and

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*; Department of the Interior, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs*, 1869, pp. 59-60.

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confine them to the reservation. Tatum believed that this objective could be accomplished by increasing the amount of farming at the agency; wrote that "every reasonable effort should be made to localize the Indians and create a desire for him to remain on and take care of his farm." The first step was to put the agency in working order. Warehouses need renovation. A medical clinic, houses for a physician and the agency employees and a corral for agency livestock were needed. The adobe agency headquarters constructed by Hazen was abandoned by Tatum because its location. The old structure was located on the east side of Cache Creek but Tatum had the new building eventually located on the west side of that stream for reasons of convenience and health. With Tatum came staff of Quaker assistants: school teachers, clerks, artisans and a physician. He also employed local farmers at a salary of \$50.00 per month to teach the Indians farming techniques and to increase the plowed lands of the agency.

Tatum recognized the progress which had been made by Hazen and Boone and built on the foundation they had laid. In the early fall the agent broke and prepared for planting 850 acres for the Wichita and 100 acres for the Kiowa Agency Indians. Parcels of 100 and 200 acres in different locations were plowed on the agency to serve as model farms. The Quaker planned to plant the newly broken land in the fall and spring with corn and wheat. During this time he hoped to teach the Indians to farm rather than to raid. Also, to encourage the Indians to pursue the art of agriculture, he offered \$500 in prizes to be divided among the 10 Indians who raised the best crops.⁹

Tatum recognized the need for a grist mill on the reservation. He traveled to Chicago late in August to order a steam engine, sawmill parts, shingle machine and small millstones. He then hired men to construct the sawmill and assist with work at the agency. On his return trip to Lawrence, Kansas, Tatum purchased wagons, spring-seats, horses, mules, harness and camping equipment for use at the agency. His mission accomplished, he

⁹ Cutler, "Lawrie Tatum and the Kiowa Agency," *Arizona and the West*, Vol. XIII, 221, 227; Tatum, *Our Red Brothers*, pp. 27-28; William D. Pennington, "Government Policy and Farming on the Kiowa Reservation: 1869-1901," Doctor of Philosophy Dissertation, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma, 1972, pp. 26-27; Carolyn Foreman, "General William Babcock Hazen," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. XX, No. 4 (December, 1942) 334; W. S. Nye, *Carbine and Lance: The Story of Old Fort Sill* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1937), p. 131; Lawrie Tatum to Enoch Hoag, Annual Report, August 12, 1869, Reports (Agents) File, Kiowa Agency, Indian Archives, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

⁸ *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1869*, p. 383; Nye, *Carbine and Lance*, p. 132.

agent and his fellow travelers, ten men, four women and two children, made the long and monotonous return trip to the agency.⁹

The Indians at the agency had been relatively peaceful just prior to Tatum's arrival, conducting only minor raids into Texas. The Kiowa, numbering 1,928, preferred stealing horses and cattle to tilling the soil. The Comanche, numbering about 2,538, exhibited a greater interest in agriculture than did the Kiowa, and members of this tribe labored on their reservation farms. The Apache, numbering 288, shared the Kiowa's apathy toward agricultural pursuits.¹⁰

During 1869 the Comanche were the only tribe to show any substantial interest in farming. The work was done primarily by the Penateka band which previously had done some farming in Texas, but, although a few Indian men expressed interest, the women and children did most of the work with the aid of two white farmers. The Penateka had seventy-two acres planted in vegetables and corn; the other Comanche bands had only eighty-two acres in cultivation with the government working sixty acres of this land for them. However, on this land the Comanche raised 2,950 bushels of corn, 25 bushels of turnips and cut 20 tons of hay.¹¹

The progress of the Kiowa and Apache in farming fell short of that of the Comanche. Although their agent planted fifty-five acres of corn for them which produced a good yield, the Kiowa warriors, returning from a buffalo hunt, quickly ate and destroyed the corn, letting their ponies trample the fields. When their corn was gone, the Kiowa expected the Comanche to give them part of their crop. The results of these impulsive feasts were sometimes disastrous; some Indians gorged themselves, became sick and died due to eating green corn, unripened watermelons and various vegetables. Nevertheless, the agency reported at the end of 1869 that the Kiowa had cultivated 40 acres of corn which yielded 990 bushels; however, governmental farm labor probably accounted for the size of the harvest.¹²

At the end of 1869 Tatum made personal observations and recommendations. He thought that the agency should be self-sustaining because the soil and vegetation indicated that wheat, corn, and oats could be grown easily. He planned to build a flourmill on Medicine Bluff Creek, north of Fort Sill, which would cost \$8,000, an amount he claimed would be well worth the expense. He reasoned that the production of all the needed grain at

⁹ Tatum, *Our Red Brothers*, p. 31.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 55; Department of the Interior, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1869*, pp. 235-236.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 284, 470; Tatum to Hoag, Annual Report, August 12, 1869, Reports (Agents) File, Kiowa Agency, Indian Archives, Oklahoma Historical Society.

¹² *Ibid.*; *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1869*, p. 385; Department of the Interior, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1870* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1870), pp. 260-261.

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Quaker Agents, U. S. Indian Agencies, 1872. Standing back row, left to right: I. T. Gibson, Osage; Dr. Roberts, Shawnee; Supt. Enoch Hoag; Jonathon Richards, Wichita-Caddo; John Hadley, Sac and Fox; Lawrie Tatum, Comanche-Kiowa. Seated front row, left to right: Hiram W. Jones, Quapaw; John W. Miles, Kickapoo; B. Darlington, Cheyenne-Arapaho; Mahlon Stubbs, Kaw; Joel Morris, Potawatomi (From original photo, Oklahoma Historical Society)

the agency would be a practical means of teaching the Indians how to farm. It also would save the government shipping costs and reduce the number of visitors to the agency, which, in turn, would diminish the opportunity for smugglers to sell whiskey to soldiers and Indians.¹³

Despite continued raids by the Kiowa, Comanche and Apache in 1870, Tatum expanded the farming operations at his agency. He plowed and planted fields for the 4,754 Kiowa, Comanche and Apache, but most of these Indians refused to cultivate the land. In August the Quaker said, "The Comanches, Kiowas, and Apaches have made no effort to raise a crop this year." Nevertheless, during the year Tatum built the agency building and sawmill with the attached shingle machine and gristmill.¹⁴

¹³ Department of the Interior, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1869*, pp. 385-386; Cutler, "Lawrie Tatum and the Kiowa Agency," *Arizona and the West*, Vol. XIII, p. 230.

¹⁴ Department of the Interior, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1870*, pp. 254-255; 265.

In 1870 the Penateka band of the Comanche was again the only group that did any notable farming at the Kiowa Agency. Although these Indians fenced their plots and assisted in planting their crops, they were constantly threatened by raids from their fellow Indians on their crops. The agency's yearly report indicated that the Comanche had cultivated 6 acres and had produced 300 bushels of corn. These figures tempered Tatum's original optimism, forcing him to admit that the transformation of Plains Indians into farmers would be a long and tedious process.¹⁵

Weary and homesick, Tatum attended a meeting of Quaker agents and the Committee of Friends at Lawrence, Kansas, in December of 1870. After the conference adjourned, Tatum hurriedly traveled to Iowa to visit his family. His wife and many Quaker employees had returned to Iowa in July of that year because of increasing Indian problems. By March of 1871, Tatum was back on the prairie among his Indians at the agency. He was revived after his visit to his family, claiming that Iowa's climate had invigorated his system. Before his journey northward the malarial climate in the Indian Territory had adversely affected his health. Moreover, the brief vacation had allowed Tatum to relax; the mental pressures of the job had been mounting to an intolerable level.¹⁶

The Kiowa and Comanche continued their raids into Texas during 1871. These hostilities were curtailed with the arrest and confinement of the leading Kiowa chiefs Satanta, Satank and Big Tree. With a note of optimism Tatum reported that the Indians who remained on the reservation were giving little trouble. Nevertheless, he feared that the intermittently hostile activities of the Indians would bring their destruction: "The Kiowa and Comanche Indians are fast passing away, and unless they become civilized and embrace the Christian religion, so as to have the benefit of its moral influence, it is not likely they will last much beyond the present generation."¹⁷

The agent offered to prepare land for the Indians of his agency if they would work the land, but the offer was largely ignored, and little land was cultivated by the Kiowa, Comanche or Apache during the year. Again the Penateka were the most productive, cultivating 75 acres, raising 1,700 bushels of corn, harvesting 5 bushels of potatoes and cutting 20 tons of hay valued at \$200.¹⁸

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 263; Tatum to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, December 31, 1870, Farmers File, Kiowa Agency, Indian Archives, Oklahoma Historical Society.

¹⁶ Tatum, *Our Red Brothers*, pp. 35-36, 51-55.

¹⁷ Department of the Interior, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1871* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1871), pp. 3, 459-460, 502-504.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*



A Kiowa medicine man, with his wife and young child

The most significant agricultural activity of the Kiowa Agency was done on the agency farm which served as an example for the Indians and also provided a source for agency foodstuffs. This farm was worked by hired farmers, and it consisted of 240 acres of corn, 40 acres of wheat and produced 60 tons of hay. However, 1871 was dry, and Tatum complained that the high frequency of drought in the region made farming an uncertain occupation. Earlier in the year he had instructed the farmers to sow about 60 acres of oats and to plow more than 100 acres for a corn crop. He also had ordered that 400 to 500 peach trees be planted in the commissary yard and on the agency farm. Apple trees and grape vines were planted; these plants showed promise of surviving the blistering summer heat.¹⁹

The extreme dryness made plowing difficult, but an agency worker, Milton Dean, reported in April that his crew had sowed nearly 100 acres of corn, averaging 12 acres per day. Later in May soaking rains briefly stimulated the growth of the crops, but in early June the harvest was poor. Fortunately, the garden that was cultivated for the agency employees produced a large crop of vegetables, totaling 20 bushels of potatoes and 10 bushels of turnips. Nevertheless, the summer of 1871 was scorching; in August Tatum wrote that it was "oppressively hot and dry." Rainfall had been sparse since the middle of June, and although a fair crop of oats was harvested in July, the corn and wheat were almost a total failure.²⁰

The following year the Kiowa and Comanche continued to raid, and the attempts to convert the prairie nomads into farmers had limited success. That year the populations of the agency tribes were: Kiowa, 1,930; Comanche, 3,180; and Apache, 380. These Indians were allowed to roam on their spacious reservation of 3,549,440 acres. A few remained peacefully on the reserve which indicated a desire to learn to farm. The result of their efforts was a substantial crop of corn and potatoes harvested from a 100 acre tract.²¹

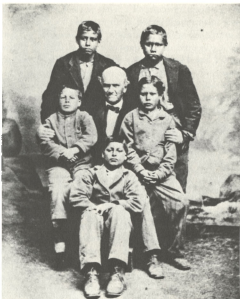
Tatum punished the Comanche and Kiowa who had committed raids in Texas by withholding their rations. However, the Quaker believed that this policy of purchasing peace with foodstuffs was wrong. He feared that the Indians would interpret the distribution of rations as rewards for their

¹⁹ Tatum to Hoag, Annual Report, September 1, 1871, Reports (Agents) File, Kiowa Agency, Indian Archives, Oklahoma Historical Society; Tatum to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Statistical Farm Report of 1871, Farmers File, Kiowa Agency, *Ibid.*; "Lawrie Tatum's Letters," *Prairie Lore*, Vol. IV, No. 1 (July, 1967), p. 54; "Lawrie Tatum's Letters," *Prairie Lore*, Vol. IV, No. 5 (January, 1968), p. 187.

²⁰ "Lawrie Tatum's Letters," *Prairie Lore*, Vol. IV, No. 1 (July, 1967), pp. 54-55, 57, 61, 188; "Lawrie Tatum's Letters," *Prairie Lore*, Vol. V, No. 2 (October, 1968), pp. 120, 124.

²¹ Department of the Interior, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1872* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1872), p. 41; Pennington, "Government Policy and Farming on the Kiowa Reservation, 1869-1901," p. 35.

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Lawrie Tatum and five Mexican boys who had been captured by the Coma

hostilities. Tatum said, "It was like hiring desperadoes and murdering the large cities to cease their depredations." The agent was frustrated, trying to convince any of the recalcitrant Kiowa and Comanche to farm. A few Apache agreed to begin cultivating small farms, and Tatum offered to provide a plow and plant their fields. Nevertheless, he still believed that he could control the Kiowa and Comanche if he could contain them on the reservation.²²

In the autumn of 1872, the Indians of Tatum's agency were assured that Satanta and Big Tree would be returned the following spring from prison in Huntsville, Texas. The agent realized that the return of these captives would erode further his already waning influence with the Indians.

²² *Ibid.*; Department of the Interior, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1872*, pp. 246-247.

diminish any possibility of persuading them to become farmers. Also, the pragmatic agent had learned that military force was often necessary to restrain his wards from raiding. The use of violence and arms contradicted the policy of the Council of Friends. Because of the mounting criticism of his stern methods of handling impudent Indians, Tatum resigned as agent in December of 1872. After three years and nine months of service to the government and Indians of the Kiowa Agency, Lawrie Tatum withdrew from the scene, seeking relief from the pressures which had constantly burdened him.²³

Tatum's administration at the Kiowa Agency ended in 1873, but contrary to his own conclusions and those of others, he did not depart as a total failure. The Quaker was frustrated because the "Peace Policy" had failed to be an immediate and complete success. Although Tatum did not make farmers of the nomadic Kiowa, Comanche and Apache, he introduced these Indians to agricultural methods and showed them how to till the soil. He also illustrated the agricultural potential of the area, not only to the Indians but also to the whites. Tatum supervised the construction of a school house, broke new farm land and built numerous agency buildings. Unknowingly, he had pioneered in the government's efforts to civilize and Christianize the Indians. His successors would build on his foundation and would learn from both his successes and failures.²⁴

²³ Department of the Interior, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1873* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1873), p. 201; Tatum, *Our Red Brothers*, p. 160; Cutler, "Lawrie Tatum and the Kiowa Agency," *Arizona and the West*, Vol. XIII, pp. 243-244.

²⁴ *Ibid.*; Tatum, *Our Red Brothers*, p. 160; Department of the Interior, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1873*, p. 201.