

Journey to Fort Parker: Early Texas Baptist Cynthia Ann Parker

June 15, 2016

Fort Parker, near Groesbeck, is the site of the amazing story of one of the first Baptist families to settle in Texas.

Col. John Parker—who lived from 1758 to 1836—was an American patriot, veteran of the American Revolution, frontier Ranger, surveyor and a Primitive Baptist preacher. When he was young, he scouted the western frontier of what became Kentucky and Tennessee with his friend, Daniel Boone. Parker named



his first son Daniel in Boone's honor. (To read about Daniel Parker of Elkhart, click [here](#).) The Parkers made their way to Georgia, Tennessee and Illinois before they migrated south to Texas at the request of Stephen F. Austin.

Parker led a small colony of settlers—mostly members of his family—from Cole County, Ill., to Central Texas in the fall of 1833. About 30 people settled a mile west of the Navasota River and almost three miles northwest of the then-tiny village of Groesbeck in Limestone County. They built a log fort and stockade for protection against Indians and called it Fort Parker.



Cynthia Ann Parker On May 19, 1836, just 29 days after Sam Houston's victory at the battle of San Jacinto, a horrific tragedy occurred at Fort Parker. Some of the men had gone into the fields to work, leaving open the gates to the fort. Without warning, several hundred Comanches, Kiowas, Caddos and Wichitas attacked the fort, killing five men, including John Parker and two of his adult sons, Silas and Benjamin. They left for dead his wife, Sallie Parker, and many others. They also carried away into captivity two women and three children—Elizabeth Kellogg; Rachel Plummer and her toddler son, James Pratt Plummer; and 8-year-old Cynthia Ann Parker and her 5-year-old brother, John Richard Parker, children of Silas and grandchildren of John Parker. The survivors struggled to reach Fort Houston, living on "polecats and terrapins," finally arriving there May 24.

Elizabeth Kellogg was in captivity about six months, during which time she was sold to the Keechis, resold to the Delawares, and eventually purchased by Sam Houston into freedom.

Rachel Plummer never saw her baby James again, and her other newborn, who arrived shortly after her capture, was killed. After almost two years, she finally was ransomed by traders in the Rockies, a 17-days' ride north of Santa Fe, was purchased by the Donoho family, and taken to Independence, Mo., where she was restored to her extended family.



Quanah Parker Separate tribes of Comanches abducted Cynthia Ann and John Parker. Cynthia Ann grew up as a Comanche, married the son of a chief, Peta Nocona, and had three children. Her son, Quanah Parker, became the last great Comanche chief. She was rescued in 1860 at the battle of the Pease River, more than 24 years later, and taken to live with relatives, but she could not adjust to the cultural change. Her heart was broken. After her baby daughter, Prairie Flower, died of pneumonia, Cynthia Ann stopped eating and died of influenza in 1870. Her brother survived and lived the rest of his life in Mexico.

The Old Fort Parker State Historical Museum and Park stands today on the site of the original settlement. Each Christmas, the town of Groesbeck and its historical society host Christmas at the Fort, where re-enactors set up

walled tents and tepees and interact with visitors.



Down the lane and around the corner is the old Fort Parker Cemetery, where early Texas Baptist victims of the Fort Parker raid were laid to rest.

Visit Old Fort Parker State Historical Museum Park and the nearby cemetery and imagine how difficult the hardships were for early settlers of Texas—Baptists among them—and how precious it must have been to gather to worship with other believers in conditions such as these.

For more information:

- Read J. M. Carroll's History of Texas Baptists, pg. 90-93. Also see [Empire of the Summer Moon](#) by S.C. Gwynne.
- Visit Old Fort Parker Historical Park [website](#) for admissions, map, and information.
- While you are in the area, enjoy the nearby [Fort Parker State Park](#).
- See the Parker Memorial Cemetery [website](#) for directions, map and free admission.

Directions to Fort Parker:

Located 100 miles south of Dallas and 150 miles north of Houston.

Take Highway 14 between Groesbeck and Mexia.

Turn west on Park Road 35, just south of Fort Parker State Park, and drive one mile.