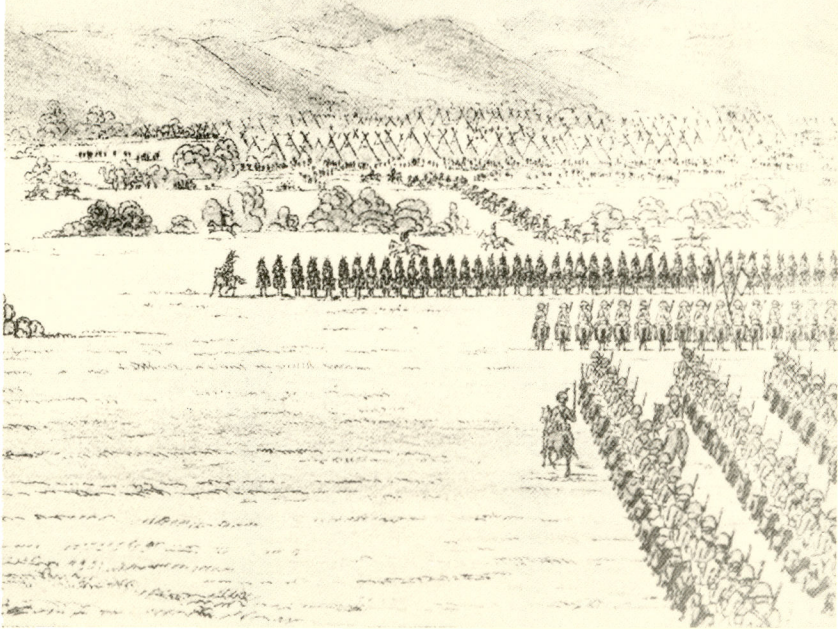


# The Site of Camp Comanche Dragoon Expedition of 1834



*By Gillett Griswold*

The exact location of the site of Camp Comanche, where the dragoons under the command of Colonel Henry Dodge bivouacked near a large Comanche village in July, 1834, has long been a point of confusion for historians, and therefore also for the public. That is due in part to the fact that none of the five known extant journals of the expedition described the site in much detail.<sup>1</sup> Although the diarists recorded the daily marches en route to the Comanche village, they merely stated approximate distances and

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the directions of marches, such as “north by east,” “northwest,” or “nearly due west,” rather than more accurate compass bearings. It is therefore impossible from that information alone to determine precisely the routes and nightly encampment sites. The same also applied to the route the expedition took between Camp Comanche and the Wichita village at the western end of the Wichita Mountains. The journals did not state on which side of the mountains they traveled in going and coming back, although that, too, is a significant factor in determining the location of the camp.

Ethnologist James Mooney in his “Calendar History of the Kiowa Indians,” published by the Smithsonian Institution in 1898, contributed to the confusion. In his narrative account of the 1834 dragoon expedition into the Kiowa-Comanche country Mooney made the following statement:

[T]hey one day discovered a large party of Comanche several miles ahead. When the purpose of the expedition had been explained to them, the Comanche said that their great village was a few days farther ahead, and abandoning their war expedition, they turned and escorted the troops to their camp. *According to statements made by old men of the tribe to Horace P Jones, post interpreter at Fort Sill, this Comanche village in 1834 was situated on Chandler Creek, close to its junction with Cache Creek about ten miles north of the present Fort Sill.* [Italics added]<sup>2</sup>

Mooney inadvertently interpolated data of his own in that statement which unfortunately altered the locational information, and which has been perpetuated by other historians.

In 1908 Joseph B. Thoburn published *A History of Oklahoma* in which he wrote:

The Dragoons proceeded, under the command of Col. Henry Dodge, to a point somewhere between the present site of Anadarko and the Wichita Mountains, where a large body of Comanche Indians were visited. From that point the command marched southwestward through the main range of the Wichita Mountains to the village of the Pawnee Pict.<sup>3</sup>

Obviously Thoburn’s reference material did not contain anything specific enough to pinpoint the site of Camp Comanche or the route to the Wichita village.

However, in his four-volume *A Standard History of Oklahoma* published in 1916, it is apparent that Thoburn had discovered Mooney’s statement, for in the chapter entitled “The Leavenworth Expedition” he wrote:

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Upon resuming the march, the command of Colonel Dodge took a westerly course where they met a Comanche war party, by whom they were conducted to a large Comanche village, located ten or twelve miles north of the site of Fort Sill. After camping near the Comanche village for several days, the march was resumed, westward toward the village of the Pawnee Picts (Wichitas).<sup>4</sup>

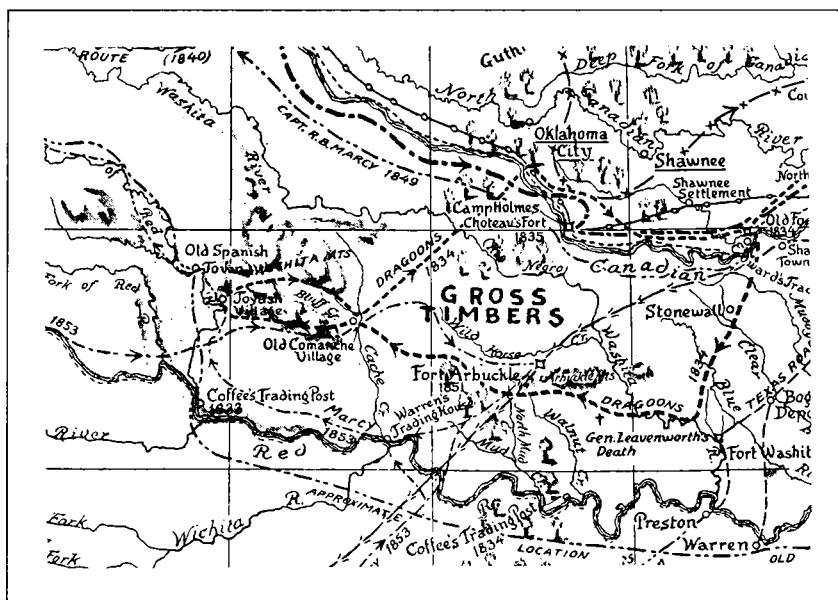
In 1925 *The Chronicles of Oklahoma* carried an article that also relied upon Mooney's statement for the location of Camp Comanche, although Mooney's work was not cited. The article, "Dragoon Expedition 1831-1835," is a transcription of the journal of Sergeant Hugh Evans, Company G, U.S. Dragoon Regiment, by Fred S. Perrine, with additional notes relative to the line of march and other data by Grant Foreman. The article also referred to Lieutenant Thompson B. Wheelock's journal. In a footnote Foreman stated, "From July 7 to 16 the course of the expedition is northwest across Carter, and Stephens Counties until their arrival in the northeastern part of Comanche County about twelve miles north of the present Fort Sill."<sup>5</sup>

Inasmuch as the Fort Sill Military Reservation is large, the distance in miles from Fort Sill to Chandler Creek can vary by several miles, depending upon one's point of departure, hence the difference between Mooney's "about ten miles" and Foreman's "about twelve miles."

In his book *Pioneers Days in the Early Southwest* published in 1926, Foreman wrote a detailed account of the dragoon expedition based on his own extensive research. In effect, he denied Mooney's statement that the Comanche village, and therefore the site of Camp Comanche, was "situated on the [present] Chandler Creek, close to its junction with Cache Creek, about ten miles north of the present Fort Sill." Instead, Foreman's map of the expedition's route shows the "Old Comanche village" at the junction of *Medicine Bluff Creek and Cache Creek*, the future site of Fort Sill. It also shows the route from the Comanche village to the Wichita village on the *south* side of the mountains, and the return route on the *north* side.<sup>6</sup>

In 1933 Lieutenant Wilbur S. Nye arrived at Fort Sill to attend the Field Artillery School. The commandant soon assigned him the task of writing an official history of the post. The University of Oklahoma Press published the results of his four-year project in 1937 as *Carbine and Lance. The Story of Old Fort Sill*.

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*This detail from Grant Foreman's 1926 map clearly shows the location of Camp Comanche and the route the dragoons took to and from the Wichita village (Taken from Grant Foreman, Pioneer Days in the Early Southwest).*

In beginning his research Nye wrote to Major General (Retired) Hugh L. Scott, whose memoirs dealt in part with his experiences on the frontier and with the Indians, including his service at Fort Sill in the period 1889–1897.<sup>7</sup> In the resulting correspondence, Scott generously provided valuable data on Fort Sill's history, including the dragoon expedition, and referred Nye to area Indians for their perspective and knowledge of the expedition.<sup>8</sup>

In his book Nye acknowledged Scott in a footnote in his chapter on the dragoon expedition, with reference only to the route taken to the Wichita village, as follows: "Major General H. L. Scott to Brigadier General William Cruikshank, December 13, 1933. General Scott's uncle, Captain David Hunter, was a member of the dragoon expedition. In 1889 Scott also received much information from Pah-kah, who was then a very old Comanche living with Quannah Parker."<sup>9</sup>

Nye followed Scott's leads in gathering further information on the location of Camp Comanche. He discovered that Pathkia's (Pahkah's) son Quasiah (Qussayah), like his father a highly re-

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spected man of his tribe, lived nearby in the town of Apache. Quasiah identified the site of the dragoon encampment as having been about 1,500 yards downstream from the *Medicine Bluff Creek-Cache Creek junction* at a deep bend of Cache Creek on the east bank "just north of where the remains of the first stone bridge now stands, near Magazine 19." Nye added, "The bend of Cache Creek, with its precipitous banks, afforded protection against mounted attack from the front and from the south flank; a tributary protected the rear."<sup>10</sup>

Nye noted in the opening chapter of *Carbine and Lance* and in manuscript footnotes, "Quasiah states that his father pointed out this spot very definitely to him," and "all the spots connected with the visit of the Dragoons."<sup>11</sup>

Nye obtained the Comanche account of the meeting with the dragoons from Quasiah, Timbo, Poafebitty, and Hoy-koy-bitty, and noted, "The account furnished by these Indians agrees remarkably well with that of Catlin, yet none of them ever heard of Catlin's book." In his manuscript notes Nye commented further, "[T]he account given today by Timbo and Quasiah agrees in almost every particular with that of Catlin and Wheelock."<sup>12</sup>

Before Nye left Fort Sill for other military assignments he installed concrete markers with inscribed brass plaques at several sites of historical significance on the military reservation, identified in the course of his research project. One marked the site of Camp Comanche.

In 1949 and 1950 the Oklahoma Historical Society in a project directed by Muriel Wright installed fifty historical markers at designated points on the highways nearest to important historic sites in Oklahoma. These included a marker designating Camp Comanche on Highway 62 at the junction of Chandler Creek and Cache Creek in Comanche County, two miles south of the Caddo County line. Another marker, Peace on the Plains, was installed near the site the dragoons visited at the western end of the Wichita Mountains.<sup>13</sup>

Concurrently *The Chronicles of Oklahoma* published a carefully researched and extensively annotated article on the dragoon expedition by George Shirk. "Peace on the Plains" described the five known extant journals of the expedition and included the complete Wheelock journal.<sup>14</sup> In Shirk's footnotes he provided his identification of the approximate location of each night's camp. For the entry of July 16, based on the location of the Society's newly-installed

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historical marker, he noted, "Camp Comanche was *probably* on Cache Creek, in the northern part of Comanche County, near Apache." [Italics added]<sup>15</sup>

I came to Fort Sill in 1954 to assume the newly-established position of director/curator of the U. S. Army Field Artillery and Fort Sill Museum, which had been operated solely by military personnel since its establishment in 1934. One of my first projects was to locate, map, and assess the condition of the dozen or more historical markers on the post and the military reservation installed by Nye in the 1930s.

In 1954 the bend of Cache Creek at the site of Nye's marker consisted of a deep narrow channel about thirty feet wide and thirty feet deep, with steep banks on both sides. Because of the deep channel the course of the creek had evidently remained unchanged for many decades, as revealed also by early maps of the area.<sup>16</sup>

The adjacent ravine was thirty feet deep and fifty feet wide in places, becoming shallower and narrower toward its north end. It served as a tributary to Cache Creek, emptying into the stream during periods of heavy rain or flood. Trees and brush marked its course. A distance of some 400 yards separated the head of the ravine from the Cache Creek bend upstream, giving restricted access on flat ground to the encampment site of about three acres. The creek and the ravine together formed a remarkable natural defensive position, as remarked by Nye.<sup>17</sup>

Wheelock described the topography of the site of Camp Comanche in his journal entry of July 16, 1834, as follows:

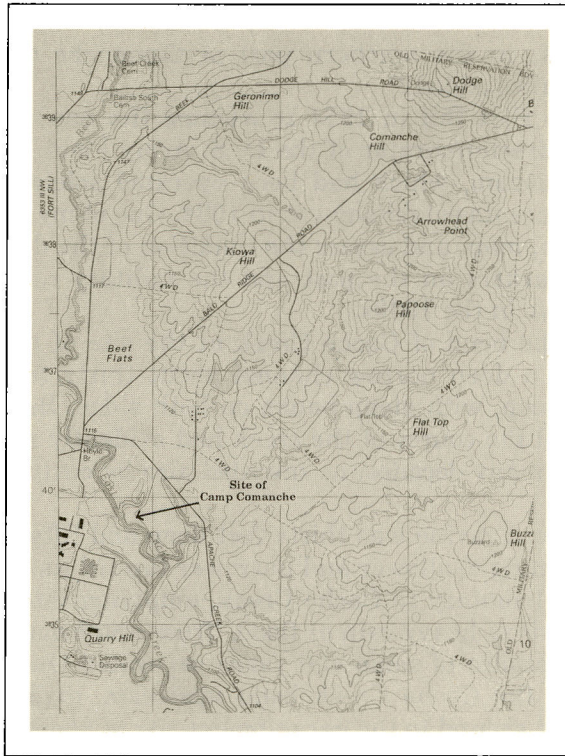
Two or three miles with our new friends brought us in sight of their camp, situated in a valley. On arriving at it they wanted us to cross the creek and encamp with them; Colonel Dodge, however, preferred leaving the creek between us and our red friends. Our camp, "Comanche," an admirable position—the steep bank of a creek in front, and a ravine bounding the other three sides<sup>18</sup>

The journal credited to James Hildreth also described the site:

Camp Camanche, July 13 [16] 1834. Our camp is pitched upon the border of a deep creek, the banks of which are high and precipitous, and we are nearly surrounded on the other three sides by a deep ravine, thus being encased within a strong natural entrenchment.<sup>19</sup>

Neither Catlin's nor Evans' journals described the site of the encampment, but the Company I journal written by an unknown

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*The author located the site of Camp Comanche on this section of the Arbuckle Hill quadrangle topographical map of the Fort Sill Military Reservation (Courtesy U.S. Geological Survey and Oklahoma Geological Survey).*

dragoon read, "Our encampment is divided from the wigwams of the Indians by a small stream of water the banks of which are almost perpendicular & probably 40 feet above the water."<sup>20</sup> I found it remarkable how closely, even after 150 years, the present topography of the site identified by Nye's aged Comanche informants conformed to Wheelock's and Hildreth's descriptions.

The topography described in the Wheelock and Hildreth journals appeared to be critical in corroborating the identification of the site of Camp Comanche. Therefore, with the assistance of members of my museum staff, I undertook a reconnaissance of the entire course of Cache Creek from above the town of Apache to below the city of Lawton, several years before the damming of

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Cache Creek created Lake Ellsworth, south of Apache and east of Highway 62.

We thoroughly examined the terrain on both sides of the creek, including the Chandler Creek-Cache Creek junction to which the OHS marker eluded. Nowhere, other than the Fort Sill site below the Medicine Bluff Creek-Cache Creek junction, did there exist the unique combination of a deep bend or former bend of Cache Creek together with a ravine bounding the other sides.

During that period the post engineers cut a new channel for Cache Creek just above the Fort Sill site, straightening the creek's meandering course by cutting off the deep bend. (The site did not then have the protection of the National Register of Historic Places.) As a result of the engineers' "flood control" measure, the creek has, over the past thirty-five years, filled half of the deep channel at this site with silt and eroded the once-steep banks. Nevertheless, the site still retains much of its original character.

The former channel, in the big bend which was thus cut off, was subsequently filled with rubble from the demolition of obsolete buildings on the post, then covered over with dirt. The old bend on the upstream side of the site is still discernible by the bordering trees and bushes marking its former course.

Nye revisited Fort Sill in 1958 after his retirement from active duty, and he and I examined the historic sites he had marked, including "Dodge Hill" and "Camp Comanche." Nye recounted the steps he had taken in the 1930s to verify the sites.

Dodge Hill overlooks the Cache Creek valley about three miles northeast of the site Nye determined to be Camp Comanche. It had been named in the distant past by old army officers acquainted with the expedition, and it appeared on military maps of the post at an early date. It commemorated the commander of the dragoon expedition at the point where he and his troopers had their first view of the great Comanche village and met the mounted warriors who came out to greet them.

Nye related that in researching and writing *Carbine and Lance* in the 1930s he had been aware of Mooney's statement. But he had concluded correctly that the "old men of the tribe" Mooney spoke of were referring to Medicine Bluff Creek at Fort Sill rather than to the *present* Chandler Creek. Old Kiowa and Comanche informants told Nye that Joseph Chandler, for whom the creek was named, lived on Medicine Bluff Creek near its junction with Cache Creek when Fort Sill was established (1869), and the Indians called



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Medicine Bluff Creek "Chandler Creek" at that time. Later Chandler moved back north to the creek currently bearing his name. Mooney apparently misunderstood his Comanche informants and interpolated phrasing that eluded to *present* Chandler Creek, rather than the former Chandler Creek now called Medicine Bluff Creek.

About the time of Nye's visit and interviews, the OHS published a booklet, *Mark of Heritage*, listing and describing its roadside historical markers. It gave the location of its Camp Comanche marker as "on Highway 62, near the boundary line of Caddo and Comanche counties." Its historical description ended with the statement, "The exact location of the camp will never be known with certainty."<sup>21</sup>

As my intermittent research on the dragoon expedition progressed, I became increasingly disturbed that two historical institutions commemorated Camp Comanche at two distinctly different locations. During a field trip to Washington, D.C., I learned that Scott's family had donated in 1953 to the Library of Congress his collection of papers totalling some 134 boxes. Although not yet cataloged, there were two boxes identified with his Fort Sill years. Through donor records I located Scott's two surviving daughters in New Jersey, and his grandson Hugh Lenox Scott, II, in Houston, who kindly donated to Fort Sill the original handwritten ledger-type notebooks the general kept during his years of duty at the post.

Nye also donated his research notebooks and papers to the Fort Sill Museum, including the series of original handwritten letters from Scott to Nye and to Fort Sill commandant Major General William S. Cruikshank.

Together those three sources—the letters from Scott, his Fort Sill notebooks, and other papers in his collection at the Library of Congress—yielded definitive information on the location of Camp Comanche.

Scott, as a first lieutenant and captain, Seventh Cavalry, had been stationed at Fort Sill, Indian Territory, for nine years, 1889–1897<sup>22</sup> By the time he arrived at Fort Sill he was a master in the use of the Plains Indians' sign language, and considered one of the most knowledgeable officers in the army in understanding and dealing with the Indians.<sup>23</sup> Consequently, all of the communication Scott had with the Indians of the Plains he carried on in signs without the intervention of a third person as interpreter.

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With regard to Camp Comanche, in a handwritten letter to Cruikshank in December, 1933, Scott wrote:

When I first went to Fort Sill in Feb 1889—I found an old Comanche named Pathkia (Poorly tanned robe that rattles) living at Quannah's who was present on arrival of the Dragoons in 1834. *Pathkia told me he saw the arrival of the Dragoons the year after the stars fell—Nov 1833. There was a Caddo village on the site of the old post and the Comanche village extended down Cache Creek for a long distance past the Quarry—later the Dragoons packed up & went south of the mountains to the Wichita village pictured in Catlin's work on the North Fork of Red River near the cattle trail. [Italics added]*<sup>24</sup>

This was a unique account by an Indian eyewitness of the arrival of the dragoons at Camp Comanche in 1834 in the authenticated handwriting of the recorder. The informant, Pathkia (Pahkah), was a grown man at that time and a leading inhabitant of the Comanche village the dragoons visited, as attested to by the fact that he was one of the chiefs who signed the treaty of 1835 between the Wichitas and Comanches and the United States government.<sup>25</sup> The old rock quarry to which Pathkia referred, also known as Quarry Hill, is three-fourths of a mile southeast of the old post on Fort Sill's east range, and close to Cache Creek.<sup>26</sup>

Scott, having conversed with a prominent Comanche who saw the arrival of the dragoons in 1834, also heard eyewitness accounts from his own great-uncle, David Hunter, a distinguished former dragoon. In a reminiscence penned in the 1920s, Scott wrote: “[H]is stories fired my imagination to a fever heat with desire to follow in their footsteps.”<sup>27</sup>

With his special interest in the dragoon expedition, and guided by his great-uncle's reminiscences and those of the aged Kiowas and Comanches who were living when the expedition passed through their country, Scott “went all around the Wichita Mts back & forth through them exploring the country and finding out the names and places of historic interest told me at night in the sign language by the scouts.”<sup>28</sup>

In his notebooks, Scott specifically recorded visits to the Wichita village at Devil's Canyon and all the sites of the Cutthroat Gap Massacre of 1833 as well as the Kiowa account of the Osage attack on them at Cutthroat Gap and its aftermath.<sup>29</sup> Scott's Kiowa informants, Taybodl, I-see-o, Poor Buffalo, and Stumbling Bear (who also served as informants for Mooney in his work among the Kiowas), gave Scott this account of the arrival of the dragoons:

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[A] Comanche war party went east of the Mountains looking for Caddo. They crossed Cache Creek, south of where Fort Sill is now, over on to the Beaver, and saw up near the Little Washita some people coming far away. They were not Caddo, they could see that. The scouts reported that they were white men, and that they had a pipe from their great chief to make peace with the Kiowa and Comanche and Apache, and they were now looking for them. *The Comanche war party turned back with them south of the mountains and went with them to the Wichita village on Walnut Creek [the North Fork of the Red River of Texas—Scott]. [Italics added]*<sup>30</sup>

According to Wheelock's journal that encounter with a second Comanche party took place "two or three miles" from a point where the expedition could see the Comanche village.<sup>31</sup> Ninemile Beaver Creek flows southeast within four miles of Dodge Hill on the east range of the Fort Sill Military Reservation—an elevated point that overlooks to the west the Cache Creek valley within which lie the old and new posts of Fort Sill, the junction of Medicine Bluff Creek and Cache Creek, and the old stone quarry downstream. That is the area identified by Pathkia as the site of Camp Comanche.

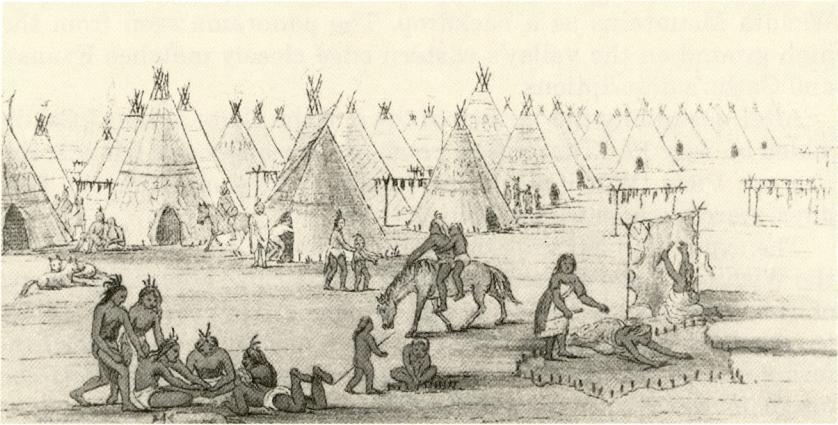
In addition to the distinctive topographic features of the Fort Sill site that conform so remarkably to the journal descriptions of Camp Comanche, there are other characteristics that corroborate the location.

Wheelock's journal for July 16 stated that the Comanche village was situated "in a valley. We are now in sight of a chain of *peaks*, so called—mountains, bearing south and west; behind these are the Toyash [Wichita] villages."<sup>32</sup> Evans's journal of the same date read.

[A]fter much difficulty and fatigue we came into a highly romantic and Elevated prairie when we arrived at the summit of which we could have a commanding view of all the surrounding country as far as the eye could extend when we could look forward and have a beautiful sight of the Comanche village looking like a great meadow with the small cocks of hay scattered-promiscuously over it when on the height of this eminence the beauties in looking down on the valley was truly grand and romantic.<sup>33</sup>

Catlin in his journal of the same date recorded.

[W]e were at last told by our Comanche guides that we were near their village; and having led us to the top of a gently rising elevation on the prairie, they pointed to their village at several miles distance, in the midst of one of the most enchanting valleys that human eyes ever looked upon. The general course of the valley is from N W., to



*Among the scenes Catlin painted were the dragoons meeting the Comanches with their village and the Wichita Mountains in the background (p. 322) and this village scene (Taken from George Catlin, North American Indians).*

S.E., of several miles in width, with a magnificent range of mountains rising in distance beyond. In the midst of this lovely valley, we could just discern amongst the scattering shrubbery that lined the banks of the watercourses, the tops of the Comanche wigwams. the Indians retreated slowly toward their village, escorting us to the banks of a fine clear stream half a mile from their village, which they designated as a suitable place for our encampment, and we were soon bivouacked at the place from which I am now scribbling.<sup>34</sup>

The appearance of the Cache Creek valley in the vicinity of present Chandler Creek, now filled by Lake Ellsworth, does not even approximate Evans's and Catlin's descriptions. It is considerably smaller and unremarkable in appearance. Cache Creek also is on the far or *west* side of the valley, so that the dragoons, coming from the east, would have had to pass *through* the village to reach their encampment, contrary to the journal accounts. Catlin's painting of the dragoons meeting the Comanches shows the mountains to their *front*, behind the Comanche village as seen from Dodge Hill, rather than to the southwest as seen from the Chandler Creek-Apache area.

The Cache Creek valley is indisputably at its widest and most scenic in the Fort Sill area. It extends several miles westward from the slopes of Dodge Hill, Comanche Hill, and Arbuckle Hill, with the shrubbery marking the winding watercourses of Cache Creek,

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Beef Creek, Sitting Bear Creek, and Medicine Bluff Creek, and the Wichita Mountains as a backdrop. The panorama seen from the high ground on the valley's eastern edge closely matches Evans's and Catlin's descriptions.

After describing the "principal town of the Camanchees," Catlin added on July 17, "They speak much of their allies and friends, the Pawnee Picts [Wichitas], living to the West some three or four days' march, whom we are going to visit."<sup>35</sup>

The expedition left the Comanche village on July 18, en route to the Wichita village at the west end of the Wichita Mountains. None of the journals specified on which side of the mountains they traveled. However, both Pathkia, the Comanche eyewitness informant, and the aged Kiowa leaders of the 1890s told Scott the dragoons went "south of the mountains."

Wheelock's journal stated that on the first day they "marched seven miles westwardly."<sup>36</sup> Evans's journal noted for the same day, "Our course nearly due west."<sup>37</sup> On July 19 Wheelock wrote, "[L]eft in sick camp, covered by a breastwork of felled timber, seventy-five men; marched twenty-three miles southwest our guide seems to have chosen the most uneven and circuitous route [neither] wagons nor artillery could possibly pass these hills."<sup>38</sup> Evans for the same day recorded, "our course nearly west 25 miles."<sup>39</sup> Hildreth said, "Arrived at the foot of the mountains, we were obliged to dismount and lead our horses, with the utmost difficulty, over immense ledges of over-hanging rocks, of stupendous size, by which we were encircled on every side this toilsome and intricate route."<sup>40</sup>

From the Quarry Hill-Camp Comanche site due west about ten miles is Blue Beaver Creek, a large stream on the south side of the mountains, where Nye's Comanche informants told him the dragoons established their fortified sick camp.<sup>41</sup> The expedition's course west and southwest from the sick camp, as recorded in the journals, would continue to be along the *south* base of the mountains.<sup>42</sup> Conversely, a route due west from the Chandler Creek-Cache Creek junction where the OHS located its marker for Camp Comanche, or from the nearby town of Apache, traverses the *north* side of the Wichita Mountains, contrary to the informants' statements.

Scott experienced travel with wagons on the south side of the mountains in 1891, when returning to Fort Sill with Indian scouts and a cavalry troop from the area of the North Fork of the Red

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River He noted they went “south of the Wichita Mountains, where there was no trail and where no one had ever attempted to take wagons in all the history of Fort Sill, because of the roughness of the country. I would not care to go that way again.”<sup>43</sup>

The entries concerning the expedition’s return journey from the Wichita village contrasted strikingly to the complaints about the roughness of the outward trip. Evans noted in his journal on July 26, “Continued our march over a much better country than the rout we went out leaving all the high rocky hills to our right.”<sup>44</sup> Hildreth said.

The Pawnee Indian who had served us for a guide, left us after the third day, and his place was supplied by a Toyash, who appeared to have a much more intimate knowledge of the country than his predecessor, leading the command over a fine level country instead of the ravines and rocky precipices over which the Pawnee had before led us.<sup>45</sup>

The very rugged terrain that was noted in the journals on the outward journey described conditions along the *south* base of the Wichita Mountains, while the easy route returning, when they traveled eastwardly, reflected travel conditions on the *north* side of the mountains. All of that serves as further confirmation of the Fort Sill-Camp Comanche site rather than the Chandler Creek-Apache location.

As to why their Indian guide had chosen to lead the dragoons on such a “long & tedious” route from the Comanche village to the Wichita village, the conjecture of the unknown dragoon who kept the Company I journal was probably correct; it gave “the Camanchees time to communicate with the Pawnees before our arrival.”<sup>46</sup>

As my research on the dragoon expedition progressed I became increasingly disturbed that Fort Sill and the OHS were commemorating Camp Comanche by means of historical markers at two distinctly different locations. In 1962 I called on George Shirk and Muriel Wright at the Society’s headquarters, taking with me the letter from Scott in which he gave Pathkia’s eyewitness description of the location of the dragoon encampment at the site of Fort Sill, Nye’s explanation of Mooney’s error with regard to the two Chandler Creeks with my own confirming research, and associated information.

In reviewing this compilation of data, Wright repeated that she had determined the location of the marker at the Chandler Creek-Cache Creek junction on the basis of James Mooney’s statement in

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“Calendar History of the Kiowa Indians.” She was aware of the different location attributed to the site by Nye in *Carbine and Lance*, but had believed the information obtained forty years earlier by an eminent ethnologist under the auspices of the Smithsonian Institution to be a more authoritative source.

Nye, in documenting his chapter in *Carbine and Lance* on the arrival of the dragoons at Camp Comanche, had unwittingly but understandably put the emphasis on his own second-generation Comanche informants. His footnotes referred to Pah-kah (Pathkia) as present when the dragoons arrived, and cited Scott’s letter of December 13, 1933, but he did not specifically state that it contained Pathkia’s precise identification of the site of the dragoon camp.<sup>47</sup> Consequently, the actual contents of the letter, when revealed to OHS officials, came as a great surprise.

Both Shirk and Wright forthrightly acknowledged the correct location of Camp Comanche to be at Fort Sill. And because of the lack of state funds at that time, they authorized me to relocate the Society’s marker from Highway 62 at the Chandler Creek-Cache Creek junction near Apache to Highway 62 near the Medicine Bluff Creek-Cache Creek junction at Fort Sill. It was installed soon after at the Key Gate entrance to the post on the east side.

In 1974, as director of the Fort Sill Museum, I nominated the site of Camp Comanche for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. Its location was described as being on the east bank of Cache Creek on the Fort Sill Military Reservation, three-fourths of a mile east of the main post, with supporting documentation provided.

Shirk, in his capacity as Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Officer, concurred in and signed the nomination.<sup>48</sup> It was entered in the National Register of Historic Places on May 12, 1977, as “Site of Camp Comanche. Location. Fort Sill, Comanche County.” The official announcement by the National Park Service was distributed by the Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office.<sup>49</sup>

Meanwhile, however, in 1976 the Society published its second edition of *Mark of Heritage. Oklahoma’s Historic Sites* in book form without revising its locational description of the Camp Comanche site and roadside marker.<sup>50</sup> Wright died in 1975 and Shirk in 1977, both after lengthy periods of illness. It is undoubtedly for that reason that no revision of the information for this site was made in *Mark of Heritage* before it was republished. As a result, the Society’s publication, although out of print, continues to identify

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incorrectly the location of the site as being near the town of Apache, whereas the National Register of Historic Places, with the concurrence of the Society, lists the site as being at Fort Sill.

What is the importance of all this? The dragoon expedition of 1834 was one of the first mounted U.S. military expeditions into the Great Plains. It ushered in the first treaty and trading relations between the United States government and Southern Plains tribes. It also was one of the most trying campaigns in the annals of the army, for nearly a third of the command perished.

It was at Camp Comanche that Colonel Dodge and his envoys held their historic first councils with the Comanche Nation, the most numerous and powerful of all the tribes on the Southern Plains. Seventy-eight dragoons and the noted frontier artist George Catlin remained in a nearby fortified sick camp for ten days while the remainder of the expedition continued on to the Wichita village and returned. It was there Catlin painted and sketched some of the earliest pictures of the Comanche and Kiowa Indians, portraying their warriors, village life, and war and hunting scenes.

The Oklahoma Historical Society is commended for its early recognition of the dragoon expedition of 1834 in the history of the state, and its role in having made original journals of the expedition and much related data available to the public through the pages of *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*. The Society is further commended for publishing corrective information on one of its historical markers. And, finally, the Society's historical description of the site of Camp Comanche can be revised to read, "The exact location of the camp is now known with certainty."

## ENDNOTES

\* Gillett Griswold served many years as director of the Fort Sill Museum, Lawton, Oklahoma, before retiring to Lakeside, Montana. Griswold died unexpectedly in early summer, 1995, soon after this article was accepted for publication.

<sup>1</sup> George H. Shirk in "Peace on the Plains," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, 28 (Spring, 1950): 6, 7, lists and describes the journals of Lieutenant Thompson B. Wheelock, as the official historian of the expedition, and Sergeant Hugh Evans of Company G; a journal ascribed to James Hildreth of Company B, who was discharged prior to the expedition, but also attributed to an Englishman, William L.G. Miller: one by an unknown dragoon of Company I; and one by frontier artist George Catlin.

<sup>2</sup> James Mooney, "Calendar History of the Kiowa Indians," in *Seventeenth Annual Report*, Part I, Bureau of American Ethnology, Smithsonian Institution (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1898), 265.

<sup>3</sup> Joseph B. Thoburn, *A History of Oklahoma* (San Francisco: Doub and Company, 1908), 45.



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<sup>4</sup> Joseph B. Thoburn, *A Standard History of Oklahoma* (4 vols., Chicago and New York, American Historical Society, 1916), 1. 123.

<sup>5</sup> Fred S. Perrine, with additional notes by Grant Foreman, "Dragoon Expedition of 1834–1835," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, 3 (September, 1925): 175, 180, 186 (hereafter cited as Evans journal).

<sup>6</sup> Grant Foreman, *Pioneer Days in the Early Southwest* (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1926), 124–129, 136–137 and "Map Showing Routes of Early Explorations and Expeditions in the Southwest, along the Arkansas, Canadian and Red Rivers and their Tributaries."

<sup>7</sup> Hugh L. Scott, *Some Memories of a Soldier* (New York, 1928).

<sup>8</sup> Colonel W.S. Nye, *Carbine and Lance: The Story of Old Fort Sill*, 3d ed., rev. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1937 1942, 1969), xvii, xviii.

<sup>9</sup> Nye, *Carbine and Lance*, 10, fn. 11.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 9, fn. 8, 9.

<sup>12</sup> Nye, Correspondence Notebook No. Twenty-five, Footnotes to Fort Sill, Part I, No. 17–19, Nye Collection, Fort Sill Museum, Lawton, Oklahoma (hereafter cited as FSM).

<sup>13</sup> Muriel H. Wright, "Fifty Oklahoma Historical Markers Completed, 1949," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, 27 (Winter, 1949–1950): 420–424, and "Oklahoma Historical Markers Completed, 1950," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, 28 (Winter, 1950–1951): 488–491.

<sup>14</sup> Shirk, "Peace on the Plains," 2–41.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>16</sup> Map, "Fort Sill and Vicinity as it Existed in 1871," in Nye, *Carbine and Lance*, facing 109 (following 10 in Centennial Edition); detail from Map, "Showing the Location of the Houses and Farms of the Apache Prisoners of War, military reservation at Fort Sill, Oklahoma 1897" and detail from Map, USGS Series, Arbuckle Hill Quadrangle, Oklahoma—Comanche County 7.5 minute series (topographic), 1991.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> Shirk, "Peace on the Plains," Wheelock journal, 18, 19.

<sup>19</sup> [James Hildreth], *Dragoon Campaign to the Rocky Mountains by a Dragoon* (New York, 1836; New York: Arno Press, 1973), 157 (hereafter cited as Hildreth journal).

<sup>20</sup> Louis Pelzer, "A Journal of Marches by the First United States Dragoons 1834–1835," *The Iowa Journal of History and Politics*, 7 (July, 1909): 349 (hereafter cited as Company I journal).

<sup>21</sup> Muriel H. Wright, George H. Shirk, and Kenny A. Franks, *Mark of Heritage: Oklahoma's Historic Sites* (Oklahoma City: Oklahoma Historical Society, 1958).

<sup>22</sup> Major General (Ret.) Hugh L. Scott to Lieutenant W.S. Nye, November 9, 1933, Scott Collection, FSM; General Orders No. 4, War Department, Washington, May 1, 1934; Obituary, Association of Graduates, United States Military Academy, West Point.

<sup>23</sup> Handwritten account by General Scott, apparent enclosure to his letter to Lieutenant Nye of November 24, 1933 (hereafter cited as Enclosure), Scott Collection, FSM.

<sup>24</sup> General Scott to Brigadier General William Cruikshank, December 13, 1933, Scott Collection, FSM.

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<sup>25</sup> Charles J. Kappler, *Indian Treaties, 1778–1883* (New York: Interland Publishing Company, 1972), 436.

<sup>26</sup> Nye, *Carbine and Lance*, 105.

<sup>27</sup> Reminiscence, General Hugh Lenox Scott, Scott Collection, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

<sup>28</sup> Enclosure, Scott Collection, FSM.

<sup>29</sup> Handwritten notes in bound ledger books, 1890s, Scott Collection, FSM; Scott to Nye, October 21, November 9, 1933, Scott Collection, FSM.

<sup>30</sup> Notes, ledger books, Scott Collection, FSM; Mooney, "Calendar History," 146, 163–164.

<sup>31</sup> Wheelock journal, 18.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Evans journal, 189.

<sup>34</sup> George Catlin, *North American Indians*, 2 (2 vols., New York, 1842).

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Wheelock journal, 20.

<sup>37</sup> Evans journal, 189.

<sup>38</sup> Wheelock journal, 20.

<sup>39</sup> Evans journal, 190.

<sup>40</sup> Hildreth journal, 159, 160.

<sup>41</sup> Nye, *Carbine and Lance*, 10.

<sup>42</sup> Catlin, *North American Indians*, 2: entries for July 19–22 (based on records kept by his friend Chadwick, because Catlin remained at the sick camp); Mooney, "Calendar History," 266–267

<sup>43</sup> Scott, *Memories*, 162, 164.

<sup>44</sup> Evans journal, 205.

<sup>45</sup> Hildreth journal, 178.

<sup>46</sup> Company I journal, 358.

<sup>47</sup> Nye, *Carbine and Lance*, 9, 10.

<sup>48</sup> National Register of Historic Places, Inventory-Nomination Form for Federal Properties, for "Camp Comanche, Fort Sill, Oklahoma, Comanche County," dated April 23, 1974, and First Indorsement, ATZR-DPTPO, U.S. Army Field Artillery and Center, Fort Sill, Oklahoma, to Headquarters, TRADOC, Fort Monroe, Virginia, subject: "Nominations to the National Register of Historic Places," April 30, 1974.

<sup>49</sup> Harry L. Deupree, State Historic Preservation Officer, State of Oklahoma, to Gillett Griswold, Director, U.S. Army Field Artillery and Fort Sill Museum, May 26, 1977 with enclosure from the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C., announcing entry of "Site of Camp Comanche" on the National Register on May 12, 1977

<sup>50</sup> Wright, Shirk, and Franks, *Mark of Heritage: Oklahoma's Historic Sites*, 2d ed. (Oklahoma City: Oklahoma Historical Society, 1976), 28.