

CAMP NAPOLEON

HERE ON MAY 26, 1865 A COMPACT
WAS ENTERED INTO BETWEEN THE
CONFEDERATE INDIAN TRIBES
AND THE PRAIRIE INDIAN TRIBES
THAT THE ANCIENT COUNCIL FIRES
SHALL BE KEPT KINDLED AND BLAZING

ERECTED 1931 BY
OKLAHOMA COLLEGE
FOR WOMEN

CAMP NAPOLEON

Dr. Anna Lewis

During the last year of the Civil War disorder and uncertainty reigned in the Indian Territory. Most of the Indian leaders in all the Five Nations now began to realize that they had been and were being used as a buffer to protect the Confederate States on their borders. With that realization came a desire to change this situation. The devastation of their country and the chaos among their people caused them to seek a redress by organization of themselves into an Indian league.

Protection against both domestic and foreign foes had been one of the chief inducements held out to the Indians in order to get them to move west. Then at the beginning of the Civil War when that guarantee of protection was withheld by the Federal Government, and the Confederate Government was making such elaborate offers of protection if they would join with the Confederacy, there seemed at the time a better chance for them to maintain their existence. As Joseph P. Folsom, a member of the Choctaw council, so ably expressed the situation, "We are just choosing in what way we shall die." The Five Civilized tribes had realized, especially since the Kansas Territory had been organized, that their hold upon the Federal Government was not very strong.

Before the first year of the war was over however, they realized that the protection which they sought from the Confederate Government, did not exist. The Indian Territory was in many respects beyond the pale of civilization. The outlaw bands had a chance and did operate without very much hindrance. The Indians saw their cattle all being driven off by groups of bandits. The dissension among the Creeks and Cherokees caused them to war against themselves. The Plains Indians to the west had not accepted any bounds to their country. This caused a very disturbing problem. There had always been a fear that the Plains Indians would go on the war path against them,

and now conditions seemed very favorable for this to happen.

All of these grievances caused them to seek a remedy; to exert some show of strength, some unity from within. They realized that inter-tribal unity was now, more than ever before, imperative, if they hoped to survive. By the beginning of 1865, there was a strong feeling among the tribes for protection by themselves. Since the outside had ceased to protect and had been the cause of all the disorder that they were now having, the Plains Tribes were infuriated as never before in their history. Major-General G. M. Dodge had been very relentless in his dealing with them. The loyal Indians had been dismissed from the services in the Home Guard without any reference whatsoever to the end of the war. This again caused a feeling of alarm.

Early in April, 1865, Texas officials realizing their own frontier conditions, discussed the possibility of an alliance with all the Indians, in order to help Texas protect her frontier. Though mindful of the hatred which the Kiowas and the Comanches held for the Texans, it was thought best to have Albert Pike or Douglas Cooper take the lead in a movement for a general council, which now not only included the Plains Indians but all the Slave owning tribes. Throughout all April and until the middle of May plans were being made for a general inter-tribal council.

The meeting place was first selected at Council Grove near the False Washita, and the time was to be May fifteenth. Rumors that the Federal military forces were being organized in Kansas with the idea of interfering with the meeting caused them to change the place of meeting. The place selected this time was on the Washita, known as Cotton Wood Grove, and the date of meeting was May 26, 1865.

By the last of May, Cotton Wood Grove was becoming a camp ground, as the Plains Indians arrived and set up their camps. And when the delegates from the Slave holding tribes arrived, one of the most interesting councils in the annals of Oklahoma took place—the council at Camp Napoleon. How or why the name Napoleon was given to the camp, history does not record.

If the Texas officials were at the meeting, and Heap-of-bears, the Kiowa sub-chief who helped to locate the site of the old camp, said that they were, they played no part in the council. This was an Indian council and the League formed was an Indian League. The compact signed at Camp Napoleon was an attempt at union in order to protect themselves against further aggressions. Most of them had realized that they were being used as a cat's paw and had been used as such repeatedly. This was a time when righteous indignation outweighed loyalty, and in order to save themselves an Indian League was entered into.

The conference at Camp Napoleon had its pathetic features. They renewed the long and troubled history of the relations between the red man and the white man, the compact was an attempt to save their race for the future. The story is best told in the language of the compact:

“Whereas the history of the past admonishes the Red Man that his once great powerful race is rapidly passing away as snow before the summer sun. Our people of the mighty nations of our forefathers many years ago having been as numerous as the leaves of the forest or the stars of the heavens, but now by the vicissitudes of time and change and misfortune and the evils of disunion, discord, and war among themselves are but a wreck of their former greatness. Their vast and lovely country and beautiful hunting grounds abounding in all the luxuries and necessities of life and happiness given to them by the Great Spirit having known no limits but the shores of the great waters and the horizon of the heavens, is now on account of our weakness, being reduced, and hemmed in to a small and precarious country that we can scarcely call our own, and in which we cannot remain in safety, and pursue our peaceful avocations—nor can we visit the bones and graves of our Kindred so dear to our hearts and sacred to our memories, to pay the tribute of respect unless we run the risk of being murdered by our more powerful enemies, and whereas there yet remains in the timbered countries on the plains and in the mountains many nations and Bands of our people which if united would afford sufficient strength to command respect and assert and maintain our rights—

Therefore we the Cherokees, Choctaws, Muskogeas, Seminoles, Chickashaws, Reserve Caddoes, Reserve Osages, and Reserve Commanches, Composing the Confederate Indians Tribes, and Allies of the Confederate States, of the first part, and our Brothers of the plains, the Kiowas, Arrapahoes, Cheyennes, Lapan, and the several bands of the Commanches, the Nacones, Cochateks, Senawuts, Yameparckas, and Mootchas, and Jim Pockmark's Band of Caddoes, and Annadahkos of the second part; do for our peace happiness and the preservation of our race make and enter into the following league of compact, To wit—

1st. Peace and friendship shall forever exist between all the Tribes and Bands parties to this compact. The Ancient Council fires of our forefathers already kindled by our brothers of the timbered countries, shall be kept kindled and blazing by brotherly love until their smoke shall ascend to the Spirit Band to invoke the blessings of the Great Spirit in all our good works. The Tomahawk shall forever be buried, the Scalping Knife shall be forever broken. The War path heretofore leading from one tribe to another shall grow up and become as the wild wilderness. The path of peace shall be opened from one Tribe or Band to another and kept open, and traveled in friendship, so that it may become whiter and brighter as the time rolls on, and so that our children in all time to come shall travel no other road, and never shall it be stained with blood of our brothers.

2nd. The parties of this compact shall compose (as our undersigned brothers of the timbered countries have done) an Indian Confederacy, or a Band of Brothers having for its object the Peace, the Happiness, and the Protection of all alike and the preservation of our race. In no case shall the war path be opened to settle any difficulty or dispute that shall hereafter arise between any of the Bands or Tribes parties to this compact or individuals thereof. All difficulties shall be settled without the shedding of any blood, and by the suggestions of the Chiefs and headmen of the Tribes, Band, or person interested.

The Motto or great principal of Confederate Indian tribes shall be "*An Indian shall not spill an Indian's blood.*"

In testimony of our sincerity and good faith in entering into this Compact, we have smoked the Pipe of Peace and extended to each other the hand of friendship and exchanged the tokens and emblems of Peace and friendship peculiar to our Race this the 26th day of May 1865.

Jack Spears 2nd Chf, and actg. Chf. Cherokee Nation
J. Vann, J. P. Davis, Smallwood, Chas. Downing, H. Guess,
John Chambers, H. T. Martin, W. P. Adair.

Delegates from the Cherokee Nation.

Tuckabatche Micco, actg, chf. Creek Nation Yarkin-
har Micco, Moty Kannard, Tidsey Fixics, Tustanuch Harjo,
Nocusyahholsr Pleasant Peter, Ward Coachney.

Delegates from the Creek Nation.

Israel * Folsom, Nathaniel Folsom.

Delegates from the Choctaw Nation.

Winchester Colbert, Cyrus Harris, Ashalatubbee.

Delegates from the Chickashaw Nation.

John Jumper, Chf. Seminole Nation. Nocos Harjo, Pus-
sah Yahhaolah, Thos. Cloud, George Cloud, Foos Harjo, No-
kus Emathla, Cha. Emathla, Tooshatchecochookamy, No-
cus Emathlochee, Nulthcup Harjo, Cahcheille, abjdikey.

John Brown Interpreter.

Delegates from the Seminole Nation.

Tiner, Chf. Reserve Caddo Nation. George Washing-
ton, Wm. Lieutenant, Chickiyoates, Johnson Washington,
Cahwahamer.

Delegates from Reserve Caddo Nation.

Wahtahshimgah, Chf. Osage Nation. Clairmore, Ninch-
amKah, Tally, Wahshashewah tah ingah, Kahnah Kihin-
gah, Black Dog, Chf. O. N.

Delegates from the Osage Nation.

Toshowah, Chf. Reserve Commanche Band.

Chapsirme, 2nd, Chf. Reserve Commanche Band.

Kahabbanait, Querrenait, Wahchenim Kah.

Delegates from the Reserve Commanches.

Tatobeeher, Chf. Kiowa Nation, Tahebecut, Quineto-
hope.

Delegates from the Kiowa Nation.

Little Roan, Chf. Asraphoe Nation. Peatipcent.

Delegate from the Arrapahoe Nation.

Wistooahtohhope, Chf. and Delegate from the Cheyenne Nation.

Woodercarnervesta, Chf. and Delegate from Lapan band of Opaches.

Queniheany, Chef. Noconee Band of Commanche Nation.

Mione, Chf. of Cochahkah Band Commanches.

Boiwa quastah Chf. of Tinnawith Band Commanches.

Toyek Kah nah, Chf. of Yampucka band of Commanches.

Pahrood sa mah, Chf. of Nooches Band of Commanches.

Buoye nah to yeh Delegate from Nooches Band of Commanches.

Upon this historic site the Oklahoma College for Women has erected a monument, in order that the "Ancient Council Fires shall be kept kindled and blazing."

The actual site of the Camp was located in September, 1930, through the efforts of Judge Ross Hume, Mr. Robert L. Boake of Anadarko, and the writer, with the aid of several Kiowa and Caddo tribal representatives. Heap-of-bears, sub-chief of the Kiowas, whose father, Tahebecut, signed the Compact, was himself at Camp Napoleon on that May morning of 1865, when this document was signed. He pointed out the different locations where the tribes were encamped. The whole city of Verden was included in the Camp site. The school ground on the Highway 62 was selected as the most appropriate place for the marker.

