



The Native American Texans



The White Shaman" an Archaic-period pictograph from the Lower Pecos River area

Native American history is the story of one of the most complex and violent, beautiful and tragic cultural changes in North America. Native Americans are people descended from the first humans who migrated from Asia and northern Europe to North America, arriving on the continent some 30,000 years ago. Direct evidence places them in Texas well over 12,000 years before the present.

Most Native American groups of North America had no fully written language, so were labeled "pre-historic" in European terms. But early groups passed on their stories and traditions orally and through such means as rock art and paintings on hides and bark. Thus, accounts of early Native Americans have been written and interpreted by anthropologists and archaeologists in contemporary times and in European terms...and not usually by the natives themselves until the last century.

Native Americans are not and never were a single culture; they were much more diverse than the peoples of Europe.

Europeans, discovering the huge, linked continents of North and South America, called the natives by several names. Christopher Columbus used the name "Indians" to support the rigorously held idea that he had found parts of Asia, perhaps the East Indies and this name stuck.

European and United States history, government reports and narrative fiction have, until recent times, spoken of "Indians," "Indian affairs," or "natives" among the more polite terms. "Indians" or "Native Americans" are terms now accepted by many people. The differing cultures preserve their own names for themselves.

More is known about some early cultures than others. Certain regions of Texas such as the lower Pecos and the trans-Pecos provide more to the story because of well-preserved artifacts such as potsherds, sandals, arrow points, scrapers, needles, ornaments, basket shreds, grinding stones and even bones of the people themselves. Even though most artifacts disappear into dust, become damaged by decay or are covered by parking lots, still much is known.

The number of Indians in the Texas area was almost certainly never great. The number is not accurately known, but estimates are as low as 45,000 just before written history to only a few thousand in the mid-19th century. The impact of European settlers was deadly, far in excess of inter-group warfare.

In Texas, at least four cultural areas met and, to some degree, blended: Western Gulf, Southeast, Southwest, and Plains. Within these huge categories, defined by Europeans, were groups with wide variety in cultural patterns and languages. All were linked by trade and competition, commonalities and conflicts. They were as diverse as the lands they occupied.



Reconstruction of an ancient Caddo dwelling in Caddoan Mounds State Historical Park

The groups—called bands, tribes, or nations by outsiders—were known by names which were guesses as to what the people called themselves, approximations of what others called them, or on occasion, location names transliterated into Spanish and French and English.

Indians of the Western Gulf—northeastern Mexico and the Texas coastal plains south of San Antonio—were people who hunted and foraged for a living. Men wore little clothing much of the year; women wore skirts of buckskin. Homes were small domes of bent saplings or cane with hide or woven covers. Their possessions—tools, containers, storage vessels, bedding, weapons, packs, toys—seem to have been minimal.

Fish and game animals provided food, supplemented by wild plants. Along the coast these people were known as Karankawa and were perhaps the first natives encountered by the Spanish in present Texas. Nomadic groups lived inland to the west and north as far as present San Antonio.

The cultural area of Southeastern natives stretched from the Atlantic Coast past the Trinity River in Texas. The Caddo and Atakapan were the most numerous in the northeast of present Texas. From the Caddo Spanish explorers recorded a word perhaps pronounced “tayshas,” which may have referred to friends or allies. The Spanish made reference to “los Texas” and used the word as an area name.

The Caddo apparently developed the most complex culture of Texas natives, although their civilization was in decline even before the arrival of Europeans. They built efficient and durable wood-framed, thatched homes and ceremonial centers, constructed impressive burial mounds and created professional work areas for manufacturing tools, cloth and trade goods. They were farmers with ranked social orders and elaborate belief systems.



Quanah Parker, Comanche leader and son of Chief Peta Nocona and white captive Cynthia Ann Parker, was one of the last warriors to accept defeat by the U.S. Army and surrender at Ft. Sill.

The natives of the present trans-Pecos area were on the edge of the influence of the huge Southwest Pueblo centers. Most lived near rivers and farmed; some built one-story thatched mud-and-river-cane buildings. Their crops of beans, corn, peppers and squash were adopted by the Spanish. The peoples of the lower Pecos lived in rock shelters, in a dry climate which helped preserve their belongings for centuries. Other groups built relatively complex apartment-like homes.

Group names in the Southwest remain uncertain. For one reason, the Spanish did not explore the area in detail and often applied the same name to different groups. The word “Jumano,” for example, referred to several groups in Trans-Pecos Texas, Arizona and New Mexico. One Jumano group in Texas hunted buffalo on the Southern Plains and was Plains Indian in nature. Another Jumano group—or the same people seen at different times—lived in a cluster of villages centered on the confluence of the Rio Grande and Rio Concho and was distantly Puebloan in culture.



Comanche family at Ft. Sill



Kickapoo family in Nacimiento, California, Mexico, c. 1900

Although the Spanish were wide-ranging enough not to stereotype the natives, except as natives.

Plains Indians became “The Indians” to many Anglo-American Texans.

Plains cultures extended fully across the Llano Estacado and Edwards Plateau...and into other areas whenever the Plains Indians wished. These groups, including Apaches, Kiowas, Kiowa-Apaches, Comanches, Wichitas and Tonkawas, were high plains hunters by way of life.

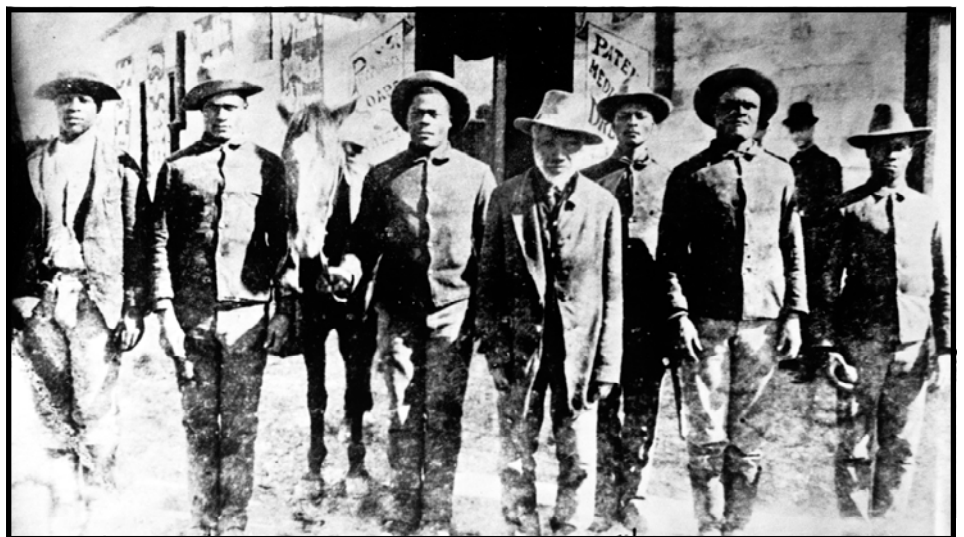
Acquiring horses and firearms, Plains Indians became mounted warrior societies. For a time, they excelled against both Europeans and other native groups. Although some bands did farm, most were highly mobile and very dependent on a main natural resource—buffalo. Not always friendly among themselves, intertribal warfare, often fierce, changed settlement boundaries and ways of life.

Thus, overlapping native cultures of the Plains were displaced, often shifted more than a thousand miles. With the arrival of the Spanish and later the relatively immense number of Anglo-American settlers, the native story changes to one of reaction. The Spanish, never as effective as Anglos against Indians in a military sense, nevertheless brought in the mission system in an attempt to alter native cultures. To some degree, this succeeded. Anglos were more pure conquerors who pushed the Indians out or killed them. Many exceptions exist; the generality was the rule.

European settlement intentionally and unintentionally not only displaced, but literally exterminated native cultures. “European settlement” meant land ownership, more efficient forms of farming and hunting, large numbers of people, the introduction of new, often fatal, diseases and the ability to use technology and belief systems—for example, guns and religion—to their advantage in attempts to take the land. Settlement was enforced by the United States Army and Texas Rangers. Indians were neither technologically equipped nor numerous enough to oppose the Europeans even though they tried.

Texas became a battlefield many a time—native versus native and native versus European—but during the Mexican and Civil Wars and in the late 19th century, Indian raids against the newcomers became common. To settlers on a night of the Comanche Moon, the western frontier was as close as ten miles west of Austin. With firearms and their horses, the Plains Indians, in particular, became formidable. But, ultimately the struggle was one-sided.

Texas set up reserves for a short time and reservations under state jurisdiction because Texas retained all public land when joining the United States as an independent nation. The desirability of the land soon brought the effort to an end. Natives who remained in Texas were taken into Indian Territory (future Oklahoma), driven into northern Mexico or killed. A few adopted a profile low enough for survival. Fewer still served as Army scouts and Ranger guides but their allegiance made little difference in the long run.



Black Seminole Scouts at Ft. Clark, c. 1885: (from left) unidentified man, Billy July, Ben July, Denbo Factor, Ben Wilson, John July and William Shields. Descendents of the July family still live in Southwest Texas.

In all times, but particularly from the early 19th century, Texas became a crossroads for Indians as well as Europeans. Tribal groups and shattered remnants of cultures crossed the land: Cheyennes, Osages, Pawnees, Kickapoos, Navajos, Pueblos, Apaches, Choctaws, Chickasaws, Creeks, Cherokees, Delawares, Shawnees, Biloxis, Quapaws, Yaquis, mixed heritages such as the black Seminoles and scores of others. Contemporary scholarship has disentangled some of the relationships and present-day understanding changes year by year.

Three small groups managed to stay in Texas, at first on private land, then on donated or purchased land later expanded into “reservations.” All had moved from beyond the area of modern Texas. Fragments of Alabama and Coushatta groups still live near Woodville and the Tigua people of Ysleta del Sur Pueblo live southeast of downtown El Paso. The latter are descendants of Pueblos who followed the Spaniards from New Mexico over three centuries ago. Recently, remnants of the Kickapoo tribe have been recognized as a native group and have been granted land at the Rio Grande near Eagle Pass. These groups have strong tribal organizations and welcome visitors to displays, activities and museums.

Many other descendants live in Texas, some trying to carry on traditions of their ancestors in a vastly changing world: black Seminoles can still be found, especially in South Texas; some Cherokees are in rural East Texas, descendants of those few who successfully hid for several generations; Caddos also live in East Texas; and Yaquis still live on both sides of the Rio Grande since an earlier deportation from northwestern Mexico.

In modern times the Federal Bureau of Indian Affairs brought Indians from all over the continent to Dallas, Houston, and San Antonio. Programs of the Field Employment Assistance Office, now discarded, placed them in urban centers with the goal of their entering the new world that had surrounded them.

In Texas today over 200,000 people are listed on national census rolls as Native America. Tens of thousands more acknowledge descent. Before few individuals would admit to “mixed blood.” In recent years the status has become not only socially acceptable but also a source of pride.

For the past two or three generations in Texas, the older—and for the most part destroyed—native cultures have been studied as well as they can be. Native Americans have entered all forms of modern employment, some giving up what remains of their heritage and others trying to incorporate that heritage in a new way of life. The “pre-historic” ways of life are gone, but much remains.



Lindsay and Sally Poncho's wedding c. 1894, the first Christian wedding of Alabama-Coushattas



Tiguas in ceremonial dress at Ysleta del Sur, 1936

Belief systems, even when melded into contemporary religious faiths, have been accepted as legitimate ways of life. Traditional crafts and skills have been maintained by some individuals only as

demonstrations of past values. Native American oral (and, lately, written) literatures are now seen as magnificent creations and a source of historical understanding. In some prose, poetry and art, the story is told from Native American viewpoints, not in the cadences of European scholarship.



The Native Americans changes over the past three hundred centuries have been immense. The changes, as for all people,

will continue.



Name: _____ Date: _____ Period: _____

The “push-pull” theory says that people migrate because things in their lives *push* them to leave, and things in a new place *pull* them. *Instructions: Decide what environmental factors push and pull people. Complete the graphic organizer below using the word bank.*

Environmental Push Factors	Environmental Pull Factors	WORD BANK
		<div>Natural Disasters</div> <div>Good Weather</div> <div>More Living Space</div> <div>Drought</div> <div>Crowded Cities</div> <div>Farmable Land</div>

Native Americans in Texas

Archeologists believe that many thousands of years ago, people from Asia came to North America. Then, little by little, they moved south through the Americas. Some of these early people came in small groups to what is now Texas, and archeologists think that they arrived here about 12,000 years ago. These people came to be known as Native Americans and they make up many diverse tribes and cultural groups.

The earliest people of Texas were *nomadic* and they moved from place to place, following large animals that they killed for food. Native Americans that lived on the plains, such as the Apaches, Kiowas, Comanches, Wichitas and Tonkawas, followed buffalo herds and depended on these animals for food, clothing, tools and even their shelter. They used every part of the Buffalo and nothing went to waste.

After Europeans brought horses and guns to the Texas, these tribes became excellent mounted hunters. As more settlers came to Texas, however, Native Americans were pushed off their land and could no longer live and hunt as they had for thousands of years. Instead of moving to follow buffalo herds, tribes were forced to move onto new reservation land set aside for them by the U.S.

When did the first people probably arrive in Texas?

What does *nomadic* mean?

Native Americans living on the plains depended on the buffalo. Why was it important to them?

What happened to Native Americans when settlers arrived in Texas?

Digging Deeper

Using *Texans One and All: The Native American Texans*, answer the following questions about why Native Americans moved to Texas and what their life was like in the state.

Native Americans living in Texas were very diverse. Historians divided them into four cultural areas that represent huge categories of groups with a wide variety of cultural patterns and languages. Complete the chart below with details about the tribes located in each of the four regions.

REGION	TRIBES	FOOD SOURCES	CLOTHING, TOOLS, OR HOMES	ONE INTERESTING FACT ABOUT NATIVE AMERICANS IN THIS REGION IS...
Western Gulf Region				
Southeastern Region				
Southwest/West Region				
Plains Region				

Summarize What You Learned

Write 2 sentences to summarize what you learned about Native Americans and environmental push and pull factors.