

**Quanah Parker** (ca. 1845 or 1852 – February 23, 1911) was a Comanche chief, a leader in the **Native American Church**, and the last leader of the powerful **Quahadi** band before they surrendered their battle of the Great Plains and went to a reservation in Indian Territory. He was the son of Comanche chief **Peta Nocona** and **Cynthia Ann Parker**, a European American, who had been kidnapped at the age of nine and assimilated into the tribe. Quanah Parker also led his people on the reservation, where he became a wealthy rancher and influential in Comanche and European American society. With seven wives and 25 children, Quanah had numerous descendants. Many people in Texas and Oklahoma claim him as an ancestor.

Quanah was introduced into the **Destanyuka band**, where **Chief Wild Horse** took him under his wing only after his father's death, several years after Pease River. Until Nocona died, he took care of his son and raised him. Chief Wild Horse taught Quanah the ways of the Comanche Warrior and he grew to considerable standing as a warrior. He never felt comfortable with the Destanyuka because he was half white. He left and joined the **Quahadi (Antelope Eaters)** band with warriors from another tribe. The Quahadi grew in number, becoming the largest of the Comanche bands, and also the most notorious. Quanah Parker became a leader of the Quahadi, and led them successfully for a number of years. In October 1867, Quanah was a young man and just an observer, along with all the important Comanche chiefs during the treaty negotiations held at Medicine Lodge. Chief Wild Horse made a statement about his refusal to sign the **Medicine Lodge Treaty**.

In the early 1870s, the Plains Indians were losing the battle for their land with the United States government. Following the capture of the Kiowa chiefs **Satank**, **Adoet (Big Tree)**, and **Santana**, the Kiowa, Comanche, and Southern Cheyenne tribes joined forces in several battles. **Colonel Ranald Mackenzie** led US Army forces to round up or kill the remaining Indians who had not settled on reservations.

In June 1874, a Comanche prophet named **Isa-tai** summoned the tribes in the Texas Panhandle to the **Second Battle of Adobe Walls**, where several American buffalo hunters were active. With Kiowa **Chief Big Bow**, Quanah was in charge of one group of warriors. The Indians were repelled by long-range Sharps rifles and, as they retreated,

Quanah's horse was shot out from under him at five hundred yards. He was then hit by a ricocheting bullet that lodged in his shoulder. The attack on Adobe Walls caused a reversal of policy in Washington and led to the **Red River War** which culminated in a decisive Army victory in the **Battle of Palo Duro Canyon**. On September 28, 1874, Mackenzie and his **Tonkawa** scouts razed the Comanche village at Palo Duro Canyon and killed nearly 1,500 Comanche horses, a source of the Comanche wealth and power.

Quanah took two wives in 1872 according to **Baldwin Parker**, one of Quanah's sons. His first wife was **Ta-ho-yea (or Tohayea)**, the daughter of **Mescalero Apache chief Old Wolf**. He had met her while visiting his Mescalero Apache allies and had to produce five mules for her hand in marriage. After a year of marriage and a visit of Mescalero Apache in the Quohada camps, **Ta-ho-yea** asked to return home citing as her reason her inability to learn the Comanche language. Quanah sent her back to her people. Quanah's other wife in 1872 was **Wec-Keah or Weakeah**, daughter of **Penateka Comanche** subchief **Yellow Bear (sometimes Old Bear)**. Although first espoused to another warrior, she and Quanah eloped, and took several other warriors with them. It was from this small group that the large Quahadi band would form. Yellow Bear pursued the band and eventually Quanah made peace with him. The two bands united, forming the largest force of Comanche Indians.

Over the years, Quanah married six more wives: Chony, **Mah-Chetta-Wookey**, **Ah-Uh-Wuth-Takum**, **Coby**, **Toe-Pay**, and **Tonarcy**. A c. 1890 photograph by William B. Ellis of Quanah and two of his wives identified them as *Topay* and *Chonie*. Quanah had twenty-five children with his wives. After moving to the reservation, Quanah got in touch with his white relatives from his mother's family. He stayed for a few weeks with them, where he studied English and Western culture, and learned white farming techniques.

Quanah Parker is credited as one of the first important leaders of the **Native American Church movement**. Parker adopted the **peyote religion** after having been gored in southern Texas by a bull. Parker was visiting his mother's brother, **John Parker**, in Texas where he was attacked, giving him severe wounds. To fight an onset of blood burning fever, a **Mexican curandera** was summoned and she prepared a strong

peyote tea from fresh peyote to heal him. Thereafter, Quanah Parker became involved with peyote, which contains **hordenine, mescaline or phenylethylamine alkaloids, and tyramine**, which act as natural antibiotics when taken in a combined form. Clinical studies indicate that **peyocactin**, a water-soluble crystalline substance separated from an ethanol extract of the plant, proved an effective antibiotic against 18 strains of penicillin-resistant **staphylococcus aureus**, several other bacteria, and a fungus.

Parker taught that the sacred peyote medicine was the sacrament given to the Indian peoples and was to be used with water when taking communion in a traditional Native American Church medicine ceremony. Parker was a proponent of the “**half-moon**” style of the peyote ceremony. The “**cross**” ceremony later evolved in Oklahoma because of **Caddo** influences introduced by **John Wilson, a Caddo-Delaware** religious leader who traveled extensively around the same time as Parker during the early days of the Native American Church movement.

**Parker’s teaching regarding the use of Peyote in the church is the reason why Rev. Read had so much difficulty in trying to get the Indians to see that there WAS a difference in what one believed about Jesus and the Bible. He was convinced that the use of Peyote went against Scripture that taught how we should live and treat our own bodies.**

Parker’s most famous teaching regarding the spirituality of the Native American Church:

***“The White Man goes into his church and talks about Jesus. The Indian goes into his tipi and talks with Jesus.”***

The modern reservation era in Native American history began with the adoption of the Native American Church and Christianity by nearly every Native American tribe and culture within North American and Canada as a result of Parker and Wilson’s efforts. The peyote religion and the Native American Church were never the traditional religious practice of North American Indian cultures. This religion developed in the nineteenth century, inspired by events of the time being east and west of the Mississippi River, Parker’s leadership, and influences from Native

Americans of Mexico and other southern tribe's. They had used peyote in spiritual practices since ancient times. Parker became wealthy as peyote became an important item of trade, combined with his ranching revenues.

At the age of fifty-nine, Quanah died on February 23, 1911, at **Star House**.



Quanah Parker's Star House ~ 2012

In 1911, Quanah was interred at Post Oak Mission Cemetery near **Cache, Oklahoma**. In 1957, he was moved to Fort Sill Post Cemetery at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, along with his mother Cynthia Ann Parker and sister Topsannah ("Prairie Flower"). The inscription on his tombstone reads:

Resting Here Until Day Breaks  
And Shadows Fall and Darkness  
Disappears is  
Quanah Parker Last Chief of the Comanches  
Born 1852  
Died Feb. 23, 1911

Biographer Bill Neeley wrote: "Not only did Quanah pass within the span of a single lifetime from a Stone Age warrior to a statesman in the age of the Industrial Revolution, but he never lost a battle to the white man and he also accepted the challenge and responsibility of leading the whole Comanche tribe on the difficult road toward their new existence."