



Frontier Blood: The Saga of the Parker Family (Centennial Series of the Association of Former Students Texas A & M University)

Jo Ella Powell Exley

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The descendants of Elder John Parker were a strange and often brilliant family who may have changed the course of Texas and Western history. Their obsession with religion and their desire for land took them from Virginia to Georgia, Tennessee, Illinois, and finally Texas. From their midst came Cynthia Ann, taken captive by Comanches as a young girl and recaptured as an adult to live in grief among her birth family until she died. From their line too came her son, Quanah Parker, last of the great Comanche war chiefs -- and first of their great peace leaders.

Although the broad outlines of the stories of Cynthia Ann and Quanah are familiar, Jo Ella Powell Exley adds a new dimension by placing them in the context of the stubborn, strong, contentious Parker clan, who lived near and dealt with restive Indians across successive frontiers until history finally brought them to Texas, where their fate changed. Drawing on a wealth of contemporary accounts, including several first-person stories, Exley follows Cynthia Ann through her life in the Indian camp and eventually her recapture by her birth family. She also tells the dramatic story of Quanah Parker through childhood, battle, surrender, and reservation life.

This narrative is filled with authentic flavor and sets straight a story that has sometimes been distorted. It offers new insight if not a definitive interpretation of Cynthia Ann Parker's last years, providing a more complex picture of the "white" years of a woman who had matured among the Comanches since the age of nine.

Among the documents from which Exley draws are a short autobiography of Daniel Parker, Rachel Parker Plummer's two narratives of her Indian captivity, James Parker's account of his search for Rachel and the other captives, and several autobiographical accounts Quanah dictated to his friends.

Exley tells a compelling story and gives rich character insights into the extended Parker family. But she also does more: she gives a feeling of what it was really like to live on the frontier in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

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