

THE BATTLE OF BRUSHY

In contrast to the resident docile Tonkawas the itinerant Comanches were aggressive and hostile toward the white settlers. One story passed down through the generations is about a battle that took place a few miles north of Coupland. On January 25, 1839, word was passed around the white communities that a band of Comanches were encamped on the San Gabriel river. Captain John D. Moore organized three companies of volunteers from Colorado River settlements to conduct a search and destroy mission against them. The noted Indian fighter and folk historian, Noah

Smithwick, took charge of a company from Bastrop. An allied Lipan Indian group led by Chief Castro also joined the whites in the operation. This little rag-tag army finally located the Comanches on the San Gabriel River on February 14, 1839. They inflicted some damage on the Indians, scattering the survivors.

A few days later a large number of the surviving Comanches retaliated by raiding a number of white settlements near Hills Prairie and Webbers Prairie. The settlement of Hogeye (now Elgin) was also hit by the raiding party. One white woman was killed, one of her sons was killed, and another of her sons was taken captive by the Indians.

This attack so enraged the citizens of these settlements that they quickly organized a small army of about 80 men and boys and set out in hot pursuit of the Comanches. They chased the Indians through the area that is now Coupland and caught up with them near what is now Brown's gin and Battle Ground Creek. There followed a confusing and bloody confrontation known in history as the Battle of Brushy. When the tumult was over a large number of both Indians and whites had been killed. In recent years Taylor school students have erected a brown marble monument to mark the spot where the battle occurred. (To see it you must turn west on a dirt lane just south of Brown's gin). That battle was the last violent confrontation between the whites and the Indians in this region, though traveling Comanches on horseback were sighted as late as 1864.

Even though no Indians remain in the area, they left their mark upon this land--the artifacts they left behind and the trees they bent to point to the direction of their camps. They also left their mark upon our culture. One of the reasons the white settlers were able to survive as well as they did in this rugged land was their ability to adopt many of the ways of the Indians. It would be unwise to idolize the Indians; but perhaps we still have some lessons to learn from them, especially in the field of ecology, the reverent care of the earth and the responsible use of its resources.