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# God Dogs and Education: Comanche Traditional Cultural Innovation and Three Generations of Tippeconnic Men

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**God Dogs and Education: Comanche Traditional Cultural Innovation  
and Three Generations of Tippeconnic Men**

**by**

**Eric Tippeconnic**

B.A. Arts and Humanities Colorado State University, Ft. Collins CO, 1992

M.A. Humanities University of Colorado at Denver, Denver CO, 2003

DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of  
**Doctor of Philosophy**

**History**

The University of New Mexico  
Albuquerque, New Mexico

**December, 2016**

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory and legacies of my paternal great-grandfather Tippeconnic and grandfather John Tippeconnic. In addition, the dissertation is dedicated to my father Norman W. Tippeconnic Sr. and my mother Kirsten Tippeconnic. My father continuously provides a living example of the Comanche ethos that I hope to emulate and in turn pass on to my own children. Words do not do justice to the sacrifices my mother made to leave her home country of Denmark and for the moral framework she exemplifies for her children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. Moreover, this work is dedicated to my children Emma, Thea, Ava and Zalen. Finally, it is with much love and appreciation that I dedicate this work to Suzy Hartman for the unyielding support and encouragement to persevere.

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I want to thank former Comanche Tribal Chairman Dr. Ronald Burgess, who encouraged me while serving as the Director of the Comanche Education department, to become the first tribal member to procure a doctorate in history. I am also grateful to Dr. Burgess for the knowledge he has shared with me since I was a young boy. I want to extend gratitude to the former Eastern Shoshone Tribal Chairman, Darwin St. Clair Jr., for the countless hours we have shared in discussion, at the drum, on the court, traveling, and most of all in friendship. My heartfelt gratitude and appreciation extends to Comanche Tribal member Rita Coosewoon for the time she spent assisting me in preparation for the language

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there to extend unconditional love and of course those beautiful smiles. Finally, I thank Suzy, without your love, encouragement, and devotion, I could not have persevered. Udako-Thank you.

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## **ABSTRACT**

In my dissertation, “God Dogs and Education: Comanche Traditional Cultural Innovation and Three Generations of Tippeconnic Men,” addresses two interconnected themes: it provides a biography of three generations of Comanche men, Tippeconnic, John Tippeconnic and Norman Tippeconnic, and it offers an examination of the Comanche cultural principles, or ethos, that guided each of them through three different historical eras in the years, 1852-1987. In this research I examine the transition that Comanche people made from their origins as Shoshone people to a distinct group that controlled the majority of the southern plains. I argue that that the Comanche ethos enabled our people to become the dominant plains horse culture. I also argue that it was this cultural ethos that provided the Comanche with the ability to deal with the involuntary changes impressed upon them as their way of life on the plains ended and the reservation period began following the Red River War. I contend that the



Comanche ethos was ingrained in most aspects of rearing children. Further, I explore the methods Comanche people utilized to instill this ethos in their children. This dissertation argues that the transmission of cultural values survived another involuntary transition in the early twentieth century as the Comanche reservation was broken up into allotments. I explore the lives of three generations of Comanche men, Tippeconnic, John Tippeconnic and Norman Tippeconnic whose lives spanned the pre reservation era, the reservation era, the allotment era and the post allotment era. In addition, this dissertation explores the methods in which pre reservation Comanche men achieved social status and contends that the horse was the primary vehicle for both the transference of the Comanche ethos and the method to attain social status. The areas of critical examination include the aforementioned historical periods but also the adoption of western based education. My primary argument is that John Tippeconnic was able to successfully shift the method whereby Comanche men could achieve social recognition and prestige in the twentieth century to education due to the Comanche ethos.

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## ***INTRODUCTION***

Each time I get into my vehicle and make the journey back home to Oklahoma, loosely following one route across Comancheria that Numunu (Comanche) people utilized since at least the early seventeenth century, my mind replays the colorful stories that were relayed to me as a young boy on similar journeys. Today, I find myself repeating the same narratives to my own children hoping, in this fast paced cyber age, that they will one day comprehend the importance of understanding their cultural history. Some of the stories I share, are about the seasonal Numunu raiding parties that journeyed deep into New Mexico to procure horses from the Spanish settlements. Others describe life lessons that were a significant part of the education provided to Comanche children. I do my best to relay to them the values Comanches cherished and instilled to form the Comanche ethos. As we continue to drive through New Mexico I share with my daughters that the Numunu capitalized on the horses re-introduced by Spaniards in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. In addition, I inform them that the decision to acquire the horse resulted in a voluntary lifestyle change that transformed our people into a dominant plains horse culture. While trying to instill in my children the importance of humility and the Comanche tradition of letting others speak of one's virtues and accomplishments, I also relay to them that many historians advance the idea that Comanches were the dominant Indigenous horse culture. Adopting the horse had a tremendous impact on the lives of all Comanches. It also played a significant role in the manner in which young men gained prestige and status amongst their people.

Other stories are from the 1940s, when my grandfather, John Tippeconnic and his wife Juanita would pack up their family each summer and journey back to Oklahoma in their Mercury sedan equipped with a burlap water bag dangling from the passenger window. This provided both drinking water for the family and on some occasions the liquid needed to cool off an overheated radiator. My father recalls with a smile on his face the location where his parents would unload the kids for a picnic before continuing the journey home. Nostalgically my father Norman Tippeconnic Sr. indicates that his younger sister Mary Jo used this opportunity to allow her cats a chance to roam around after being restricted to the backseat with five siblings.

Traveling with my daughters, I point out landmarks like Tome Hill South of Los Lunas New Mexico and the mesa Numunu called Mua Tucum Kari (Night House), still rising up out of the New Mexico landscape like a beacon announcing Tucumcari's location to travelers. Tome Hill and Mua Tucum Kari served as landmarks and meeting places for the Comanche traveling these routes. The Comanche used these landmarks routinely during the pre-reservation era. Further along our journey and just outside of Canyon, Texas, practically invisible until one is directly on top of it, lay Palo Duro Canyon, utilized by bands of pre reservation era Numunu as shelter during the inhospitable winter months.

My children and I walk along the Prairie Dog Town Fork of the Red River that formed the canyon during the Pleistocene age; we notice the abundance of wild turkeys and rabbits that must have added variety to Numunu diets. This was the place that the people loved, a place to enjoy family and friends in peace, until September 27, 1874, during the Red River War, when the United States Army attacked a combined Comanche, Kiowa and Cheyenne camp. Most of the Indigenous peoples escaped the US Army that day, however the latter delivered a blow, for all

intents and purposes ending the war for the Numunu, when they captured and shot 1400 horses. Although this was a severe setback, it would not signal the demise of the people, only an end to one way of life. I inform my daughters that the destruction of what remained of the Comanche horse herd at Palo Duro led, in the next few months, to the voluntary surrender of the Numunu still resisting life on a reservation. For Comanches the reservation era ushered in a significant departure from the lifestyle they had enjoyed for the past century and a half. I further explain that while this was an involuntary life altering change; it was not the end of a people. After all, we are still here. The story, in fact, continued and the Numunu adjusted and adapted to life on the reservation. Initially a select few thrived, some made the best of a challenging situation but for many the quality of the life once enjoyed, deteriorated. Still, the Comanche people adapted and survived. Some Comanches became businessmen leasing out lands to Texas cattlemen, others joined the Indian Police, and some became involved in peyote, and still others in Christianity. While the method to procure prestige and recognition from other Comanches had to change, the desire for status remained.

After we get back in the car and continue further on the trail, the appearance of rich red clay makes the marble sign welcoming people to Oklahoma unnecessary. With the Wichita Mountains in sight I bring my daughters to a location my father refers to as “the home place” and what I have heard others refer to as the farm. It is a place that marks another significant change in Numunu history, the breaking up of the reservation and the allotment of Comanche lands into one hundred sixty acre parcels. “The home place” is my great grandfather Tippeconnic’s original allotted land. Our family is fortunate, we still possess the entire allotment. The transition to private ownership of land, in the early twentieth century, did not always end up well for

Comanches, consequently many lost or sold their land. I share with my children that this is where my great grandfather Tippeconnic experienced yet another involuntary change following the dismantling of the Comanche reservation. When the twentieth century arrived, the Comanche reservation would soon be dismantled. The Comanches would now have to accept allotment. For Comanches this marked the second involuntary change in the past quarter of a century.

Today, on the “home place” much of the property is overgrown and in disuse. However, I remember coming here as a child and staying at the old house. Sadly, it is now crumbling and just a shell of its former existence. I share with my children the childhood adventures I had exploring near Cache Creek which runs through the property. Often I would happen upon an armadillo or see a snake swimming in the creek. My father spent a great deal of time here as a child and each time he speaks of “the home place” it is with reverence. This is a story of three generations of Comanche men, and while each lived in vastly different Comanche historical eras, it is here, on the “the home place”, that the lives of my paternal great grandfather Tippeconnic, my paternal grandfather John Tippeconnic and my father Norman Tippeconnic all converge.

I continue to share unsolicited stories with my daughters that feature the childhood of my grandfather John. It was here, at the “home place” that he grew up. It was from here that he first ventured off to attend school armed with only sweet potatoes in his pockets for lunch. It would be from here that Tippeconnic and his mother Wimmerchy departed to deliver him to the Fort Sill Indian Boarding school to learn English. Finally, it was from here that he would leave to attend school at Bacone for four years. After graduation from Bacone, he would begin his journey to Ottawa, Kansas where he would become the first Comanche to graduate from college. When he achieved this goal in 1926, most mainstream Americans did not possess a college degree. I

share with my daughters that every time he left home to pursue his education, regardless of the destination, he always took with him Comanche teachings ingrained since childhood. Following each school year, John Tippeconnic returned to the “home place”, establishing a pattern that would continue even throughout his professional life. John’s father, Tippeconnic used the horse to gain social status. Growing up in a Comanche society much altered from his father’s era, John had to find a different tool to achieve the prestige every Comanche longed for.

The Tippeconnic allotment was also where my father spent much of his early childhood. Norman beams with joy recalling his days on the farm. He learned to hunt here, he fished here, and he played and worked here. Norman was born thirty two years after allotment commenced among the Comanche and while he could not have known the significance of it, he was the first Comanche whose father possessed a bachelor’s degree. Norman and his younger siblings were the beneficiaries of John’s knowledge and education. An important part of that education remained the transmission of the Comanche ethos. Norman began his life in the post allotment era and in the midst of the Great Depression. When he began his professional career, he carried with him the values that allowed his grandfather and father to cope with cultural environmental changes and yet remain traditional Comanches.

This dissertation is the result of one journey into Comanche history. It is a personal journey into my family history. While it is a narrative that includes historical realities that affected all Comanche people, it is not the history of all Numunu. However, this narrative will follow events that most certainly affected each tribal member. This study is the story of the lives of three Comanche men who lived through some of the most turbulent changes in Comanche history. Each of these men was born in a period vastly different than the era of his, offspring.



Through the examination of these three men and their lives it is possible to glimpse back into the days when the Comanche lived free on the plains, then into the reservation era, allotment, and the present day.

This study addresses two interconnected themes: it provides a biography of three generations of Comanche men, Tippeconnic, John Tippeconnic and Norman Tippeconnic, and it offers an examination of the Comanche cultural principles that guided each of them through three different historical eras in the years, 1852-1987.

This work examines the voluntary and involuntary changes that drastically altered Comanche history. The Comanche voluntarily adopted the horse, which resulted in their emergence as the dominant plains horse culture from the early eighteenth to the late nineteenth century. By the mid-1870s, Comanches were left with little choice, and had to submit to reservation life. Roughly twenty five years later, their reservation would be broken into allotments in an attempt to sever communal ties and facilitate assimilation. These involuntary changes once again affected Comanche culture and history and the methods traditionally utilized to gain status. This dissertation advances the thesis that John Tippeconnic was able to successfully shift the method whereby Comanche men could achieve social recognition and prestige. During his father's generation the vehicle primarily utilized to achieve the aforementioned prestige was the horse. I contend that John changed that vehicle to a formal western based education. This study also advances the idea that he was able to make this shift successfully because of the traditional Comanche ethos instilled in him by Tippeconnic. This study is advancing the idea that the Comanche ethos remained intact even after the involuntary transition from living free on the plains to the confinement of reservation life. I am

also asserting that the Comanche ethos persevered through the allotment era and into the twentieth century. By Comanche ethos this study refers to the old plan of providing an education to Comanche children by advice and precept that inculcated certain desirable attributes that remained with them through life. The desirable attributes are cooperation, consideration for others, self-denial, courtesy, reverence, self-reliance, conservation, alertness, prestige, courage, respect, loyalty, perseverance, responsibility, neatness, reliability, honesty, trustworthiness, utilization of the environment, and love for one another.<sup>1</sup> These attributes formed the foundation for traditional Comanche education and culture that were transmitted in order to ensure the continuation of the Comanche cultural ethos. This study does not advance the notion that a young John Tippeconnic consciously set out with the goal of shifting the primary method for achieving prestige and conveying Comanche knowledge from the horse to education. However, this work contends that this is exactly what he did.

There have been numerous studies of the Comanche and I have utilized them in this study. For much of the pre reservation period I have relied on Pekka Hämäläinen's *The Comanche Empire*. This 2008 study thoroughly examines Comanche history from the first western documentation to the reservation period. *The Comanche Empire* was invaluable because it presents events involving the Comanche in chronological sequence while other studies progress thematically. Hämäläinen advances a unique thesis compared to previous works on the Comanche. He argues that one hundred and fifty years of Comanche depredations into Mexico dealt a severe blow to that country's ability to adequately defend its border against

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<sup>1</sup> John W. Tippeconnic, "Comanche Indian Customs With Educational Implications" (Master's thesis, Arizona State Teachers College, 1942), 57.

the United States in 1846. I did not emphasize this information in my dissertation, however it is the first time a scholar has credited the Comanche with impacting the war with Mexico. Unlike the *Comanche Empire* this study relies heavily on Comanche oral narratives. Stanley Noyes's work, *Los Comanches: The Horse people*, published in 1993, is especially useful to the historical narrative when discussing Comanche and Spanish interaction in New Mexico. Noyes utilizes letters and correspondence between Spanish officials in Santa Fe and the Viceroy in Mexico City, as well as numerous Spanish colonial documents to bring alive a century of conflict and ultimately peace between the Spaniards and the Comanche. Thomas Kavanagh's *The Comanches: A History 1706-1875*, begins with the first Spanish documentation of the Comanche and ends with the Red River War and the reservation period. Kavanagh does more than recount a vital period of Comanche history, he draws on Comanche sources to enhance the narrative. Gerald Betty's *Comanche Society: Before the Reservation* provides a fresh approach to the accepted historical narrative that brings the Comanche south onto the plains once they acquire the Spanish horse. Betty notes that some of the Comanche were already living amongst their Ute kin when they were exposed to the horse. Morris W. Foster's *Being Comanche: The Social History of an American Indian Community* provides valuable information on the Comanche in the twentieth century. This book assesses the Comanche people and incorporates information on the Comanche people and their responses to their ever changing world, including their adaptation to peyote, Christianity, and education in order to retain or establish new Comanche communities in the twentieth century.

William T. Hagan's *United States Comanche Relations: The Reservation Years*, was extremely useful in determining what the Comanche initial responses were to a limited

geographical land base as well as the limits placed upon their personal freedoms. In addition, Hagan, through the use of letters from Indian Agents and military officers and politicians, and church officials, reveals the various groups that were competing for Comanche resources. In addition, Hagan provides the reader with early missionary activity as well as educational efforts on the Comanche reservation.

Wallace and Hoebel's *the Comanches: Lords of the South Plains* remains valuable in terms of its contribution to the discussion on the horse in Comanche society. Wallace and Hoebel do fall a bit short especially in their inaccurate claim that the Comanche did not possess military societies. However, that was not a focus of this dissertation. This dissertation is the first history of the Comanche written by a Comanche. Moreover, it is the first to conceptualize the period of 1852-1987 through three generations of Comanche men. Furthermore, while there are many historical studies about the Comanche written from an outside perspective looking in, this study provides an original perspective. Moreover, by advancing the thesis and effectively arguing its merit I will be offering evidence, as an enrolled member of the Comanche Nation, that I am the living proof of Tippeconnic's, John Tippeconnic's and Norman Tippeconnic's cultural legacy.

In the field of Native education David Wallace Adams' *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928*, offers a general narrative on the late-nineteenth century reform movement. This was useful in relaying the general narrative in terms of reform efforts that led to federal Indian off reservation boarding schools. His title explores the reformers' motivation for these changes, their implementation of the schooling plan, and ultimately the effect these infamous institutions had on Indigenous

peoples. Brenda J. Child's *Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families, 1900-1940*, reveals the words of Indian Students and their parents through an examination of letters exchanged among students, families, and the school administrators. Her work is extremely important because it provides an Indigenous voice to the discourse. In addition, Helen Sekaquaptewa's *Me and Mine: The Life of Helen Sekaquaptewa*, is a wonderful example of a Hopi girl's first-hand experience in federal boarding schools. I think it is important to show the varied responses Indigenous peoples had to boarding school. Sekaquaptewa's journey was similar to the response/reaction of my grandfather and father in that she thoroughly enjoyed her overall experience.

Margaret Connell Szasz's scholarship provided this narrative with the origins of efforts to educate Indigenous peoples in this country. Her study on colonial Indian education explores educational efforts in several regions including Virginia and New England, and reveals that the motivation in the latter English immigrants was intricately connected with conversion efforts. *Indian Education in the American Colonies, 1607-1783*, shows that early colonial educational efforts and late nineteenth and early twentieth century education for Indigenous students were linked with Christianity. Another of Connell Szasz's titles that gives the narrative important historical background for Indian education in the twentieth century is *Education and the American Indian: The Road to Self Determination Since 1928*. This title discusses Indian New Deal reforms to the boarding school experience and is essential to both the section of the book that discusses John's teaching and Norman's days as a student.

Through the examination of primary documents such as government reports, school quarterly reports, yearbooks, letters, papers, photographs, paintings, personal interviews, oral

narratives, treaties, telegrams, commencement programs, game programs, certificates and more, it is possible to recreate the lives of three Comanche men. These men were intimately connected to one another but lived in vastly different eras. These events of these distinct eras affected all Comanche people. This is a history that deviates from most histories that have been produced about the Comanche.

The most valuable source for this dissertation is John Tippeconnic's 1942 master's thesis titled *Comanche Indian Customs With Educational Implications*. John produced this study for Arizona State Teachers College in Flagstaff, Arizona in August, 1942. John interviewed fifteen men and ten women. He wanted to make sure that he presented the information from both the female and male point of view.<sup>2</sup> Equally important John felt that these twenty-five Comanche men and women were a true representation of Comanche values, "On this small group of individuals this study was centered, for they are the true representatives of the Comanches since they portray the old time customs in their reactions to the present day Indian problems that affect the tribe. Their lives are still governed and influenced by the early training they received. This training was based entirely on Comanche Indian customs that are still very much in evidence in the ways of thought and actions of many of the Comanches of today."<sup>3</sup> Over a three week period, John personally interviewed the informants who lived in five different counties across southwestern Oklahoma. He spent between two and five hours interviewing each Comanche. Perhaps what makes this resource more valuable than other studies that have utilized Comanche informants is that John conducted each of these interviews himself and

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<sup>2</sup> Tippeconnic, "Comanche Indian Customs With Educational Implications," 1.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

entirely in the Comanche language. “No interpreter was used in this study, for the native Comanche Indian language was used by the writer who was the interviewer. This was an important factor in creating a common interest and a true understanding of the reaction of the old Comanche toward present day practices. Without this native background the work would have been very difficult.”<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, only six out of the twenty-five informants spoke English.<sup>5</sup> John gave the informants as much time as they needed to answer his enquiries because a display of impatience would have been the antithesis of Comanche customs.<sup>6</sup>

John collected a great deal of information, however he did not use the entirety of each interview. The only information that was included in his master’s thesis was that which demonstrated educational implications. The Comanches interviewed by John ranged in ages from fifty-six to eighty-six years of age. John did not limit the interviews to a specific set of questions, he allowed the informants to speak as long as they chose and about anything they chose. However, John did ask them to look back on their childhood.<sup>7</sup> Yet another reason why this is the most important source in is that it offers the perspectives and life experiences of Comanche people who were contemporaries of Tippeconnic (To-Wick-ah). Tippeconnic was born in 1854. Therefore the contemporaries of Tippeconnic were able to provide information on what it would have been like when Tippeconnic grew from a young child to a man on the Southern plains.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 56.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

From the Oklahoma Historical Society in Oklahoma City I was able to collect a number of primary documents that made John Tippeconnic's life more clear. John was born amidst the implementation of the allotment process which dissolved communally held Comanche lands. The quarterly reports from the Fort Sill Indian Boarding School also provided information on John's siblings at this institution. These reports provided important pieces to the Tippeconnic puzzle. They allow one to glimpse back and see the job assignments for each pupil. Beyond the obvious, like gender categorization and name, these reports listed the number of students who had run away. In addition, these reports illustrate how much schooling students had received before attending Fort Sill. These documents also help this author make the argument that John's educational journey was challenging. This is evident as we see how many of his siblings began school at Fort Sill. John was not the first, but he would go the furthest. Many members of John's own family would begin western education but he thrived on it. Therefore, these quarterly reports help this author make the point that John's educational journey was truly significant.

I found the early Comanche census rolls from the Oklahoma Historical Society extremely helpful. These rolls were wonderful sources that allowed me to locate the age of Tippeconnic's mother and of course the age for Tippeconnic. The census rolls also confirmed that Tippeconnic was in fact married to at least two people at the same time, which was one of the Comanche practices in place in the early 1900s. This is valuable because while Tippeconnic knew that his children would have to learn English and go to school to thrive, he resisted change in his own way; wearing his braids long until he passed, wearing Comanche regalia and refusing to learn English.



At the Oklahoma Historical Society I was able to secure yearbooks for John while he attended Bacone. These proved to be invaluable in bringing this four year period to life. While today's yearbooks might be more flashy, the way that Bacone and Ottawa University organized the events of a single year is incredibly thorough. The activities for an entire year could be pieced together to present a narrative, in some cases utilizing students' words, to provide an accurate idea of what these time periods were like. John was clearly a well like individual and his words and ideas are all over the Bacone annual. The Bacone yearbooks revealed much about John Tippeconnic including loyalty and the idea that an individual cannot make it alone. The Bacone yearbooks also provided the reader with a glimpse into Mr. Weeks' life and an explanation for my father's (Norman) middle name.

I was also able to gather a great deal of information from the papers John Tippeconnic wrote and the reports that he issued while serving as the Principal at Canoncito. In his own words one can see the dedication John possessed for not only Comanche people but Indigenous people in general. These papers and reports provide valuable data for John's stint at Canoncito. They demonstrate that John fully believed that the community should support the education of their children by personally getting involved. Also, if administrators did not help achieve this goal, it might fail. Further, they illustrate John's belief that that Navajo students should take pride in their own culture by incorporating everyday aspects of the Navajo life into teaching.

For Norman Tippeconnic's story it was also important to procure as many primary documents as possible, such as yearbooks, letters, correspondence, both business and personal, and photographs. When I tried to secure primary documentation from the Navajo Methodist Mission from Navajo Preparatory School, I was informed that an alumna from the

mission possessed all of this information in her home. I tracked down this person and discovered that she did have all the yearbooks, as well as photos and letters. She was so incredibly kind and generous with her time. Following this visit, I combined the newly found information with the letters and correspondence. My father has a plethora of letters sent to him from Tribal Chairmen as well as other tribal officials thanking him for his character and service. I discovered through these letters that my father helped the Karok Nation achieve federal tribal recognition. I discovered that he built schools, dams, and other public projects. I also discovered that he was known for his loyalty; loyalty to Indigenous organizations and for his insistence on the government's stated position for Indigenous hiring.

Extremely valuable to this project are the Oral Narratives collected through personal interviews. When my father tells a story recalling his childhood, it is clear that what he is remembering is pure joy. However, for this project they reinforced the ideas relayed to John while he was compiling interviews for his master's thesis seventy-six years ago. Norman told me that Wild Boy taught him to hunt and to use the bow and arrow, just as Andrew Per du so pah told John that this is how he learned as a boy in the nineteenth century prior to the reservation era for Comanches.<sup>8</sup> The stories he relayed about helping his grandmother (WImnerchy) are so vivid they bring his story to life. In short they provide evidence that the Comanche ethos had continued for yet another generation.

This dissertation utilizes three men and weaves through the pre-reservation era, the reservation period, allotment and post allotment periods up to the modern era. It also is the

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<sup>8</sup> Tippeconnic, "Comanche Indian Customs With Educational Implications," 9.

first Comanche history to be written from a Comanche perspective. While previous histories primarily focus on the pre reservation era, this study asserts that the very core of what it was to be Comanche, the values of the Comanche ethos transcend historical periods and did not end with the reservation period. Furthermore, most previous studies focus on the rise and fall of Comanche peoples in bygone eras. This study asserts that the Comanche are still here and while both involuntary and voluntary changes have influenced our communities, we have constantly found ways to adapt and ultimately thrive. For many on the outside looking in it might seem implausible that a western institution could act as the conduit for the Comanche ethos. However, adapting and adopting to change, just as we did with another western technology, the horse, is what the Comanche have always done. At the core of the Comanche culture are the values that have survived all of these changes, the Comanche ethos.

Chapter one- *Finding "God Dog"- Early Comanche Cultural Evolution* This chapter will examine the origins of the Comanche people. The Comanche originated as Shoshone people in the Snake River region of modern day Idaho and Wyoming. The Shoshone split in what is now Wyoming and the group that emerged from the Rocky Mountain region and onto the plains became the Comanche. These people called themselves Numunu. When Spanish peoples first documented sightings of Numunu they inquired of the Ute people as to their identity. The Utes called them Kho-Mats, which translates as "those who fight me all the time" therefore, the Spanish called them Komantcia. When the term was anglicized it emerged as Comanche. This chapter briefly examines the break from the Shoshone before turning to the Numunu's voluntary cultural transformation encompassed by the acquisition of the horse.

In *Comanche Society: Before the Reservation*, Gerald Betty claims that the acquisition of the horse is not sufficient to explain the southern Comanche migration. “In the seventeenth century, Utes occupied the territory just to the north of New Mexico. Pre-contact Comanches generally lived to the north of Ute lands. Consequently, as individuals of each tribe intermarried they would, theoretically, have been free to live with either of their families. This type of behavior set the foundation for the Comanches’ movement toward New Mexico and beyond.”<sup>9</sup> Betty does not dispute that the Spanish horse herds provided an obvious attraction to Comanche people. Instead he suggests that through previously established kinship networks with the Ute, some Comanche were already in place to capitalize on the arrival of this Spanish technological re-introduction to the Americas. This chapter shows that Comanches swiftly capitalized on new technology in order to rapidly migrate and extend hegemony over a vast region on the southern plains. Their kin, the Utes, exposed them to horses brought by the Spaniards to New Mexico, however it was the Comanche ethos that allowed them to take full advantage and transform this technology into the vehicle that ensured their ascent.

This alteration equipped the Numunu with a remarkable mobility, and the horse quickly permeated every aspect of Comanche society, including the transmission of the Comanche ethos. While the horse did not create the Comanche ethos, it certainly was one of the most significant tools utilized to express it. In the pre-reservation years the horse was a valuable part of the education process.

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<sup>9</sup> Gerald Betty, *Comanche Society: Before the Reservation* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2002), 56.

## Chapter two- *Involuntary Change: From Comancheria to the Reservation and Allotment*

This chapter examines the Comanche ethos and the methods utilized in the integration of that ethos into the education of Comanche youth. I assert that the Comanche ethos was ingrained in most aspects of rearing children from an extremely young age. This chapter contends how simple activities like storytelling, swimming, and playing with one's peers, as well as hunting and learning how to be proficient on horseback, were all vital in order to instill the youth with Comanche ideology. From the late seventeenth century to the reservation era, the horse was a vital part of the Comanche code. During this period the horse was more than a technology that facilitated the migration and expansion of Comanche people. This chapter asserts that the horse was both an educational implement and a conduit for knowledge transference that enabled Comanches to survive, thrive and expand. In addition, this chapter explores the involuntary changes Comanches experienced with the introduction of the reservation era as well as the additional modification forced upon them during the allotment period. The source primarily used to enforce these ideas is the collection of interviews conducted by John Tippeconnic in the late 1930s of twenty five Comanche elders. Some of these elders were born around the same time as Tippeconnic therefore their recollections are of a Comanche life in the pre-reservation era. Tippeconnic is introduced in this chapter and both US government census reports and rather than Comanche oral tradition establish his place amongst the Comanche as well as the events that would provide him with his name. In this chapter I also utilize the Medicine Lodge Creek Treaty and the Dawes Act as sources to help facilitate the story.

This chapter also discusses the monumental involuntary changes the Comanche experienced after the Red River War of 1874. Eight years after the Treaty of Medicine Lodge

Creek was negotiated, the final Comanche band still holding out on the plains had peacefully surrendered to the United States. By 1875, every Comanche band had made their way to the Ft. Sill reservation. The reservation era lasted only a quarter of a century, when the Comanche were forced to accept allotment. The Comanche were successfully able to hold off allotment until 1900, following the ratification of the Jerome Commission Agreement by Congress. For the Numunu this process proceeded in July 1900, and was completed within one year.<sup>10</sup>

Tippeconnic was raised in the vastly different environment of the pre-reservation era and was instilled with the Comanche ethos in a time when the horse was a key ingredient of that code. As the reservation period ended and allotment arrived, shortly after the turn of the twentieth century, it was clear that the horse would no longer be the primary conduit to relay the Comanche ethos.

Allotment turned out to be more devastating to the Comanche than the transition from the plains to reservation life because of the reduction of Comanche land and the attempted eradication of tribalism. Before allotment, while Comanches had to adjust to reservation life, groups still resided in close proximity to each other. It is clear that the horse would no longer have the place in Comanche life that it had held before the reservation era. This chapter notes that while Tippeconnic adamantly refused many markers of western society he saw that in order for his children to survive they would need to learn English and attain an education.

Chapter three- *With Only Sweet Potatoes in his Pockets*. This chapter will explore John Tippeconnic's first experiences in a formal western education setting. I will advance the point

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<sup>10</sup> William T. Hagan, *United States-Comanche Relations: The Reservation Years*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990), 264.

that during this era the Comanche method of knowledge transference shifted from the horse to education. Furthermore, it also looks at the introduction of a formal education during the boarding school period. Here I suggest that the Comanche method of knowledge transference shifted from the horse to education. This study does not suggest that this was a conscientious decision made after organized formal tribal deliberation. I am suggesting that through small incremental steps taken by individual Numunu, this shift occurred organically as a way of adjusting to involuntary changes. In other words, Comanche people like John Tippeconnic used education as the available avenue, under changing circumstances, to continue the transmission of Comanche cultural knowledge. I contend that the conduit for this conveyance was facilitated through education. Just as Comanches had utilized a western species, the horse, to voluntarily change their culture, I contend that through the involuntary changes incurred by the Comanches during the reservation and allotment eras, the people would once again adapt and adopt new methods for cultural transmission that continue to this day. John Tippeconnic utilized the western institution of education as a way to retain Comanche culture. Scholar Noenoe K. Silva's, research suggests that subjugated peoples, while appearing to become assimilated into the dominant culture, simultaneously resist domination and retain and reproduce their traditions. Furthermore, studies assert that new forms of cultural expression while appearing to function as a mechanism for deep acculturation to the larger society revealed important degrees of cultural revitalization as well.<sup>11</sup> John Tippeconnic did not set out to change the method to achieve prestige in Comanche society. The crystallization of his

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<sup>11</sup> Noenoe K. Silva, *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 7.

educational experiences were only revealed in adulthood. John Tippeconnic was raised with the Comanche ethos. This chapter asserts that the Comanche ethos itself fostered the development of the attributes that John Tippeconnic would need in order to succeed during his initial years of exposure to western education, including a stint of six years at a federal boarding school.

In order to comprehend the rationale for inculcating Indigenous people, including the Comanche, with a western education, this chapter explores the early history of these efforts. Efforts to provide an education for the Indigenous inhabitants of what would become the United States began long before anyone conceptualized that political entity. In early seventeenth century Virginia, plans emerged for the tutelage of Indigenous youth in English homes. A little after the mid seventeenth century a colonial legislature in Virginia passed a measure providing for the education of Indigenous hostages. By 1693, William and Mary College was chartered and partially dedicated to the education of Indigenous students.

In seventeenth and eighteenth century New England the education of Indigenous peoples went hand in hand with Christianity. In the eighteenth century the Reverend Eleazor Wheelock was instrumental in educating young Algonquian, and Iroquois converts, including Samson Occom, who later journeyed to England, Wales and Scotland in order to raise funds that would benefit the opening of Dartmouth College. The Dartmouth charter included a pledge for the instruction of youth of Indian tribes. In the post-Civil War years in the American West the general feelings amongst reformers was that in order for the Indigenous peoples to escape complete decimation they would need to assimilate into American society. This chapter examines the position of reformers who felt that communally held lands had to be broken up and Indigenous youth were forced to receive a western based education.



This chapter also examines the early educational efforts of Richard Henry Pratt, who organized classes for Indigenous prisoners of war at Fort Marion, Florida. His experiments would eventually spark the idea for federal Indian boarding schools. Beginning in 1879, these schools sought to remove Indigenous youth from all that was familiar to them, especially their culture, in order to facilitate the assimilation process. The legacy of Pratt's efforts and the Indigenous experiences in federal boarding schools still reverberate through contemporary tribal populations. Utilizing Fort Sill Indian School quarterly reports and other government documents, I made a thorough examination of John's time at Fort Sill is conducted. John Tippeconnic began his education in these institutions but he did utilize the Fort Sill Indian School to catapult him to additional educational endeavors, including Bacone College. Many Indigenous peoples wanted to forget their harrowing boarding school life. However, John thrived there and Fort Sill Indian School would play a part in catapulting him to heights no other Comanche had ever achieved.

Chapter four- *Finding His Place On the Rock: Bacone 1918-1922* -As the title suggests, this chapter deals primarily with John's four year career at Bacone College. However, before John's stint at Bacone is explored this chapter examines the removal of the Cherokee people from their ancestral homelands to Oklahoma. It also examines Almon C. Bacone's journey to Oklahoma. Both of these would have a tremendous impact on the life of John Tippeconnic. The Cherokee Nation hired Bacone to teach in one of their schools after removal. Bacone left the auspices of the Cherokee Nation to form Baptist educational institution, in part because he wanted more of a Christian emphasis in the education of Indigenous youth. Bacone, as this chapter reveals, is where John became a man. The Cherokee story is important to John's

narrative for yet another reason. If the Cherokee had avoided removal, it is possible that this story might not be told because the removal provided John with the woman he would marry.

This chapter argues that at Bacone John was influenced by strong institutional leadership. And while his time there did much to shape the man he was becoming, this chapter contends that the moral attributes Bacone sought to instill in Indigenous students were already firmly ingrained in John because of his educational foundation in the Comanche ethos. This chapter continues the assertion that he possessed this ethos when he arrived at the school. This chapter also discusses the contention that the positive attributes of Christianity translated easily to John Tippeconnic because the Comanche ethos and Christian beliefs emphasize similar positive characteristics. For John, as for other Comanches the acceptance of Christianity was facilitated by common moral guidelines. Once again, I must be careful to note that I am not advancing the idea that Comanche culture and Christianity were one and the same, only that there were certain positive guidelines that were translatable. Differences certainly existed. Therefore, this chapter asserts that by accepting Christianity John did not give up what it meant to be Comanche, it reinforced what it meant to be Comanche.

Chapter five- *A Warrior of Education* -This chapter primarily explores the history of Ottawa University, the Ottawa people and John's college career at Ottawa University. Before delving into John's educational experiences at this post-secondary institution the chapter provides the dubious motivations behind the individuals involved in the formation of Ottawa University. While this had no impact on the education John received at Ottawa it is necessary to discuss the contextual origins of the place he would secure his degree because it mirrors the manner in which outside forces viewed Indigenous lands. The strategists behind the University

were involved in a scheme to defraud the Ottawa people from their land. After years of government investigations the compensation that the Ottawa people received did not match what they ultimately were forced to give up. Ultimately the Ottawa people ended up, as many tribes did, in Oklahoma, hundreds of miles from their home. The chapter also provides the reader with the historical background of the Ottawa people, who originated near the Great lakes region. Finally the chapter turns to John's post-secondary career at Ottawa where he brought with him the educational foundation he procured at Bacone. In addition to exploring John's matriculation at Ottawa University, this chapter briefly touches on John's graduate degree from Arizona State Teachers College as well as his early professional life. He emerges as the first Indigenous person to procure a master's degree in the state of Arizona. Moreover, this chapter asserts that John set a historical precedent, through graduating from two post-secondary institutions and in doing so paved the way for Comanches who would follow. In achieving a bachelor's and master's degree I contend that John Tippeconnic put himself in the category of great Comanche leaders that preceded him. While his accomplishments did not come in the political arena, he accomplished in education what no other Comanche had done before him and in doing so he successfully transferred the method in which Comanches might gain social prestige and status. In order to argue for these points, Ottawa University quarterly reports and yearbooks are utilized throughout. Utilizing biography is the most effective manner in which to approach this chapter and by thoroughly examining publications from Ottawa University it is possible to learn what it was like at Ottawa University in the 1920s. Like the great Comanche leaders, John continued the Comanche legacy on the back of his metaphorical horse, education.

Further, this chapter delves into the story of the Deyo Mission. The founder of this mission in Comanche country, like the men who founded Ottawa University, had ulterior motives in mind when he arrived in Oklahoma. While the stated goal of Deyo was to bring Christianity to the Comanches, many tribal members responded to this by taking advantage of religious gatherings and church camp meetings to form new Comanche communities. This was a way to retain the tribal ties that the U.S. government and reformers tried to sever. This mission provided the Tippeconnic family with the opportunity to retain Comanche communal relationships. It can also be argued that Deyo steered John to attend Bacone as well as Ottawa University. Comanches were able to successfully utilize the mission to re-establish tribal communities and John was able to successfully use this system to secure prestige amongst his people. Primary documents such as the Deyo Mission history and cemetery records are utilized to help bring this story to life.

Chapter Six- *A Comanche in Canoncito* This chapter examines briefly John's professional career at Mexican Springs before turning to his career at Canoncito. At Canoncito John was free to implement his educational policies. Utilizing John's papers and reports as the primary documents that shape this chapter, it is evident that John called for community involvement and student empowerment in order to relay to the people of Canoncito the importance of education. This chapter demonstrates that John believed that he had to secure community support and involvement in the implementation of his educational methods. Furthermore, his papers make it clear that he believed that in order for the Canoncito community to fully participate and ultimately benefit from the educational process he had to implement a system that made the knowledge relevant to their culture. In his own life John had in one generation

successfully shifted gears and transformed the type of vehicle for gaining social status amongst his own people. At Canoncito, as this chapter argues, he successfully adapted an educational methodology that convinced these Navajo people to invest in the educational process. His papers indicate that he was able to accomplish this by structuring the curriculum to include Navajo cultural aspects. Moreover, John managed to navigate the turbulent world of U.S. federal Indian policy, which sought to destroy the cultural connections of Indigenous peoples. He accomplished this by remaining true to the Comanche ethos ingrained in him by his family. He successfully retained a Comanche identity, while appropriating from the euro-American society the tools he saw appropriate for survival. He truly was what his headstone in the Deyo cemetery reads, "Pioneer Indian Educator led by example in God's way."<sup>12</sup>

Chapter seven- *A Comanche in Indian Country* This chapter deals with John's eldest son Norman Tippeconnic. It begins with an examination of Norman's childhood and focuses on his time on the "home place" or allotment lands held by the family. Just as John was inculcated with the Comanche ethos by his father, Norman would receive a similar traditional educational upbringing in Oklahoma. Just as Bacone proved to be the place where John found his gift, the Navajo Methodist Mission in Farmington, New Mexico would help Norman find his. Therefore, this chapter provides a thorough examination of the history of the Navajo Methodist Mission before delving into Norman's educational career. This chapter advances the idea that Norman was the beneficiary of a Comanche cultural shift from the utilization of the horse to the appropriation of western education. Furthermore, the assertion here is that this shift made it possible for Norman to make his own unique mark on the Indigenous world as a Comanche

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<sup>12</sup> Barbara Goodin, "Deyo Mission Cemetery" (Distributed by Deyo Baptist Church, 1994), 14.

man. Norman benefited from this cultural shift that John had established through education and secured employment with the federal government. Norman worked for thirty years in various positions of leadership in the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Norman's career took him across Indian country to Indian lands and reservations in New Mexico, Arizona, Alaska, and California, and while he did not specialize in education, he followed in his father's footsteps. I assert that it was the foundation in the Comanche ethos that allowed Norman to succeed professionally. Throughout his career he carried with him the Comanche values that connected him back to his grandfather Tippeconnic. Through the examination of primary documents, this chapter concludes that, like his father, Norman's generosity and humility ensured that he became a traditional Comanche man.

## CHAPTER 1

### Finding “God Dog” – Early Comanche Cultural Evolution

One winter day in 1839 a group of Comanche and their allies the Kiowas and Kiowa-Apaches camped on the Southern plains. Not far away, a group of their enemies, the Cheyennes and Arapahos made camp. Just a short time prior to this day an Arapaho man had married a Kiowa-Apache girl. Consequently, a general mood of peace pervaded. A group of Comanche messengers relayed word to their enemies that they desired peace. Therefore, these traditional adversaries gathered facing each other on each side of a river, and the headmen met to smoke and exchange gifts acknowledging the peace. The Comanche summoned their young boys to bring down the horse herds from the hilltop. The Comanche then presented horses to their former adversaries. Multiple horses were even gifted to individual Cheyenne and Arapaho women and children. The Cheyenne and Arapaho were amazed with their foe’s ability to give away so many horses. Horses on the northern plains were not abundant and often the Cheyenne and Arapaho had to borrow horses just to move camp. So many horses were given to them that they did not possess enough rope to lead them all away and they had to move them in clusters. This give away exhibited both the generosity and the power of the Comanche.

From the first quarter of the eighteenth century to the last quarter of the nineteenth century the Numunu (human beings or people) were a dominant force in the southern plains region of North America.<sup>13</sup> Some scholars have suggested they were the most dominant force.

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<sup>13</sup> Numunu is the Comanche word utilized by Comanches to describe themselves, and it simply means “human” or “human beings”. The word “Comanche” is an Anglicization of the Ute phrase “Kho-Mats”, which means, “one who

This chapter explores the early evolution of the Comanche from Numic speaking Shoshone to their transformation as the dominant Indigenous southern plains people. Kinship ties with Ute peoples initially exposed the Comanche to Spanish horses in New Mexico. Comanches swiftly capitalized on, what was for them, a new technology in order to rapidly migrate and extend hegemony over a vast region on the southern plains, designated Comancheria. While it was their kin who exposed the Comanche to the horse, it was Numunu ethos that enabled them to take full advantage and transform this gift into the vehicle that ensured their ascent. Without the acquisition of the horse, as well as the ambition to fully exploit this resource, the Comanche cultural and historical narrative would be vastly different.

The Comanche were originally Shoshone people who had resided in the Rocky Mountain region before they separated and migrated to the Southern plains during the seventeenth century. The most significant aspect of the Comanche culture that enabled their dominance was the horse. Comanche horsemen had few peers on the battlefield, largely due to their mastery of the horse. Their skill can be attributed partially to the extremely young age that a Comanche youth was taught to ride. Shortly after a boy could walk, he was introduced to riding the God Dog (horse) and while girls started at a slightly more advanced age, they were also trained to become skilled riders.

The horse did more for the Comanche than enable them to be fierce combatants on the battlefield; it completely transformed their culture. The horse permeated most aspects of Comanche society, while transforming them into the dominant Indigenous peoples on the

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“fights me all the time”. When Spaniards pronounced the word it became Komantcia and subsequently, when the English-speaking Euro-Americans anglicized the word, it became Comanche.



Southern plains during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The horse enabled the Numunu to expand the boundaries of their territory, Comancheria. In addition to martial use, territorial expansion, and population replacement, the horse was utilized as currency in Comanche society. It also proved to be the vehicle through which young men gained prestige and status. Furthermore, the God Dog allowed the Comanche to expand their hunting range in order to secure the vital game that enabled their sustenance. Simply stated, the horse, initially reintroduced to the Western Hemisphere by the Spaniards, was more than just another item in the Columbian exchange; it exemplified what it was to be Comanche. While the horse did not create the Comanche ethos, it certainly was one of most significant tools utilized to express it. In pre-reservation years the horse was also a valuable part of the educational process. This educational process differed significantly from the western brand of education that Comanche people experienced during the early reservation years as well as during the boarding school era. Before attaining the horse, Numunu people lived in a vastly different world.

Prior to being known as Comanches, the people called themselves Numunu and were part of the Shoshone Numic speaking people who resided in the Rocky Mountain regions of Idaho and Wyoming. Before emerging from the mountains onto the Southern plains, Willard H. Rollings notes, in *The Comanche*, "There is no doubt that the Shoshone and the Comanche are related to one another and were at one time a single group of people. The Shoshone as well as the Comanche recall that the two groups were together a long time ago and acknowledge that they are related. The languages spoken today by the two peoples are very similar – so similar in fact that they still can understand each other." <sup>14</sup> Today the Comanche still recognize this

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<sup>14</sup> Willard H. Rollings, *The Comanche* (New York: Chelsea House, 1989), 14.

relationship, once described by Dr. Ronald Burgess, former Comanche tribal chairman, “We started as Shoshone people, as snake people and originated in the Snake River area in Wyoming”.<sup>15</sup> Some scholars have advanced the idea that Comanche people had inhabited the plains for many years prior to European contact and that the similarity between languages is due to a longstanding contact between the Shoshone and Comanche and not because they were once one people.<sup>16</sup> I believe that it is not only possible but probable that Comanche people moved through the plains on foot prior to European contact. However, both Comanche and Shoshone oral narratives relay that we were one people before the final split.

Several accounts told among the Comanche explain why they split from the Shoshone. One account says that two bands were camped together and some boys from both camps were playing. A boy from one camp kicked another and the victim ultimately died from the injury. The two bands were about to fight because the victim’s family sought revenge. However, the two camps agreed that it was wrong to fight amongst each other and went their separate ways. The band that went to the north was the Shoshone and the band that went south and onto the plains became the Comanche. Another version claims that the discord was between hunters who were disputing game from a kill. The dispute grew so intense they (the two groups) decided to separate. The first account is a definite possibility. In the 1940s Tahah, a Comanche elder, recalled, “The large boys liked to play the kicking game. Two teams played this game, there was no limit to the number; all on hand were chosen to play. Two players chose sides to start the game. Sometimes the game was very rough, and kicking someone in the stomach or

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<sup>15</sup> Ronald Burgess, interview with author, November 10, 2004.

<sup>16</sup> Morris W. Foster, *Being Comanche: A Social History of an American Indian Community* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press), 32.

the kidney proved dangerous. Kicking someone in a place that would cause injury was prohibited and frowned upon by the players. The side that knocked the most players down was the winner.”<sup>17</sup> Another Comanche, Andrew Per du so pah, “said that he was a good player in this game, and mentioned that it was just as rough as the football game of today.”<sup>18</sup>

Young girls, perhaps keeping an eye out for a future union, watched these kicking games with much interest.<sup>19</sup> Securing a physically strong partner was optimal, given the demands of everyday life in Numunu society. It is also possible that the Numunu decided to permanently leave behind the security of the Rocky Mountains in order to secure horses. Regardless of the reason, the Numunu division separated these people. According to one Shoshone narrative, this departure took place at an encampment west of present day Muddy Gap, Wyoming in a location that bears the name Split Rock. “For white settlers this geographic location is called Split Rock because of its geographical feature but for the Shoshone it is named so because this is where a group of Shoshone left and moved to the plains.”<sup>20</sup> This connection is more than just a historical event; in recent years it has taken on new life. In the year 2000, planning began for a Shoshone language reunion that was officially initiated in 2003 and continues each year, alternating between Comanche and Shoshone locales. Before further discussion of reunion and the modern era occurs, it is imperative to examine the Comanche departure from their mountain home.

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<sup>17</sup> Tippeconnic, “Comanche Indian Customs With Educational Implications”, 7.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Darwin St. Clair, Jr. Interview with author, January 26, 2008.

The horse herds in New Mexico appealed to the Comanche, and these future pastoralists capitalized on this new technology. The first Comanche documented appearance in the western record occurred in 1706, when Sergeant Major Juan de Ulibarri of the Santa Fe presidio reported to Governor Cuervo y Valdez that Taos was preparing for an attack by the Utes and Comanches. "After we had been welcomed by the Reverend Father Fray Francisco Ximenez, its minister and the rest of the Indians, the inhabitants who came to see me, the Governor (Taos Pueblo Chief) Don Juan Pacheco, and the rest of the chiefs then informed me that they were certain that the infidel enemies of the Ute and Comanche tribe were about to come and make an attack upon this pueblo, which information they wished to send to the governor and captain-general."<sup>21</sup> While this is generally accepted by scholars as the first time the Comanche made an appearance in New Mexico, the only thing that is certain is that it is the first time the Comanche made an appearance in the western record. Certainly, Numunu traveled to this region prior to their detection by the Spanish radar in 1706. It is unlikely that the Comanche were noticed by Spanish officials upon their initial forays into New Mexico, even though the latter often relied upon intelligence gathered from their Pueblo neighbors.

The Comanche were drawn to the New Mexican horse herds introduced by the Spaniards in the sixteenth century. The Spaniards first re-introduced horses to New Mexico beginning in July of 1540, when Francisco Vasquez de Coronado led an expedition of conquest with ". . . close to three hundred European soldiers and more than eight hundred Mexican Indian auxiliaries pushing herds of a thousand horses and five hundred head of livestock. . . "<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Betty, *Comanche Society: Before the Reservation*, 49.

<sup>22</sup> Andrew L. Knaut, *The Pueblo Revolt of 1680: Conquest and Resistance in Seventeenth-Century New Mexico* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), 23.

Most assuredly some of those horses did not make the trek back to Mexico City less than two years later when Coronado abandoned his fortune hunting foray. Additional Spanish expeditions ventured north of the Rio Grande in 1581, 1583 and 1590, before Don Juan de Oñate led a contingent of colonists and soldiers in April 1598, in an attempt to establish a fixed presence in New Mexico. The Spaniards named this region north of the Rio Grande “New Mexico.” During Francisco Sanchez Chamuscado’s expedition of 1581, as historian John Kessell observes: “Because they were constantly reminded of the sedentary Mexican Indians-and because they were quite naturally maximizing the importance of their exploration-the members of the expedition began calling the province of the Pueblo Indians “the new Mexico.””<sup>23</sup>

After his arrival in New Mexico, “. . . Oñate moved swiftly up the Rio Grande valley and halted at the Tewa pueblo of Ohkay Owingeh, where the town’s inhabitants vacated their homes and offered no resistance as the Spaniards occupied the village and renamed it San Juan de los Cabaleros.”<sup>24</sup> Here Oñate governed New Mexico and established the first Spanish capital. “By 1610, tensions with those Indian neighbors would force his successor, Pedro de Peralta, to move the Spanish capital to Santa Fe.”<sup>25</sup> Roughly every two years between 1598 and 1680, Mexico City resupplied New Mexico with horses, livestock, and soldiers. While horses first trod on New Mexican ground as early as 1540, it was not until the early seventeenth century that the Spaniards regularly supplied their northernmost outpost in the Americas with horses. It can be argued that these animals provided one reason for Comanche migration. Between the

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<sup>23</sup> John L. Kessell, *Kiva, Cross, & Crown: The Pecos Indians and New Mexico, 1540-1840* (Tucson: Western National Parks Association, 2014), 38.

<sup>24</sup> Knaut, *The Pueblo Revolt of 1680: Conquest and Resistance in Seventeenth-Century New Mexico*, 33.

<sup>25</sup> James F. Brooks, *Captives & Cousins: Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 48.

early years of the seventeenth century and 1680, Spanish horses made their way into New Mexico along El Camino Real as part of the lumbering Spanish caravans that also delivered oxen and other domesticated animals, implements, weapons, tools and people. The Pueblo Revolt of 1680, the only successful native expulsion of a colonizing force in the Americas, halted the northern flow of horses for a little over a decade. However, by the mid-1690s horses were a fixed part of the New Mexican landscape.

Undoubtedly the horse proved to be a major draw for Comanche incursions into New Mexico. However, one scholar provides a plausible and convincing explanation for why the Comanche were perhaps already in position to capitalize on this new technology. In *Comanche Society: Before the Reservation*, Gerald Betty claims that this explanation is not sufficient to explain the southern Comanche migration. "In the seventeenth century, Utes occupied the territory just to the north of New Mexico. Pre-contact the Comanche generally lived to the north of Ute lands. Consequently, as individuals of each tribe intermarried they would, theoretically, have been free to live with either of their families. This type of behavior set the foundation for the Comanches' movement toward New Mexico and beyond."<sup>26</sup> Betty does not dispute that the Spanish horse herds provided an obvious attraction to Comanche people. Instead he suggests that through previously established kinship networks with the Ute some Comanche were already in place to capitalize on the arrival of this Spanish technological addition to the Americas.

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<sup>26</sup> Betty, *Comanche Society: Before the Reservation*, 56.

Intermarriage certainly took place between the Comanche and Ute and it is also a certainty that each group engaged in raids upon the other in order to secure female captives to sustain their populations. Over the centuries, Comanche relationships with the Ute undulated from peaceful coexistence to open warfare. However, from the early eighteenth century through mid-century, the Comanche and the Ute cemented a military and political alliance. This alliance was further strengthened through kinship ties and marriage. Once these ties had been solidified, the Comanche provided martial aid to the Ute against encroaching Apaches to their west and in campaigns against the Pueblos of the Rio Grande valley to the south. The Comanche benefitted immensely from Ute kinship alliances. Initially, the Ute alliance provided them access to the Spanish horse market, which they quickly exploited to become successful horse breeders. Finally, they capitalized on their initial success and monopolized the market. Historian Pekka Hämäläinen notes that this special relationship appears in the Ute name for their Comanche neighbors and relatives, and he provides what can be viewed as evidence for Betty's argument.

. . . *Kumantsi*, the Ute name for the newcomers. By conventional reading, the word means 'enemy,' or 'anyone who wants to fight me all the time,' suggesting that the first contact was a violent one. However, a more recent interpretation holds that *Kumantsi* refers to a people who were considered related yet different, and it suggests an encounter of another kind: rather than a clash between two alien peoples with sharp reflexes for violence, it was a reunion of two Numic-speaking peoples, who probably originated from the same Sierra Nevada core area, had taken different routes during the sprawling Numic expansion, and

now, despite centuries of physical separation, found a unifying bond in their persisting linguistic and cultural commonalities.<sup>27</sup>

Betty also argues that “Once Comanches began closely associating with Utes through intermarriage, they became part of a greater New Mexican social ‘network,’ with which the latter Indians had already become a part sometime earlier during the seventeenth century.”<sup>28</sup> As previously discussed, oral accounts provide two events in Numunu history that explain the split and the moment of departure. However, the people who would become Comanche left their mountain home for an area that they knew through kinship ties. It is also possible that the Comanche departure from Shoshone homelands occurred in waves over a prolonged period of time and was fostered by the development of these intertribal kinship ties. Betty argues that “The larger migration of Comanches into the southern plains was not a continuous push into the region; rather, it consisted of many smaller migrations associated with nomadism within local areas. This type of gradual movement is consistent with many transhumant herding societies worldwide. By the end of the eighteenth century, these movements had culminated in a widespread geographical expansion extending throughout the southern plains as enemies became displaced and new social relations established.”<sup>29</sup> In *Captive & Cousins*, James Brooks echoes this premise, “Early in the eighteenth century, Shoshonean-speakers whom their Ute cousins termed Komantcia, or ‘enemy,’ completed their centuries-long migrations out of the Great Basin and onto the buffalo plains.”<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Pekka Hämmäläinen, *The Comanche Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 24.

<sup>28</sup> Betty, *Comanche Society: Before the Reservation*, 58.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

<sup>30</sup> Brooks, *Captives & Cousins: Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands*, 59.



These kinship ties fostered a military and political alliance between the Ute and Comanche that persisted from the early to the mid eighteenth century. While it is likely that Numunu people were introduced to the horse through earlier kinship ties with the Ute, it was during these early years that the Comanche honed and refined their knowledge of horses and the markets that provided them. Hämäläinen notes that “Utes also introduced Comanches to New Mexican markets, and soon the two allies were regular visitors at Taos and San Juan where, under temporary truces, they bartered robes, meat, and Navajo slaves for maize, horses, pottery, and cotton blankets at great fall fairs.”<sup>31</sup> The Comanche and Ute attended these fairs as peaceful participants, then they returned later to collect horses and humans through their raids. The Comanche-Ute alliance was so powerful in the early years of the eighteenth century that they displaced other indigenous peoples, such as Apaches, who had customarily raided in New Mexico. During this alliance the Comanche made their home with the Utes on lands that extended across Colorado from the Great Plains to the Rocky Mountain foothills and down to the Sangre de Cristo and Jemez mountain ranges in New Mexico. In this vast landscape the Comanche spent the fall and winter seasons, living in smaller groups or bands and hunting smaller game, gathering nuts, berries and roots. As the cold weather lifted and the days grew longer, the small groups combined to form larger bands that moved east to the upper Arkansas River valley where they hunted bison. Hämäläinen notes “Summer was the main season for warfare and raiding, witnessing Ute- Comanche squadrons moving into Navajo country and northern New Mexico. . . . Although most Utes and Comanches followed this

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<sup>31</sup> Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire*, 25.

general yearly pattern, there were significant variations among different bands.”<sup>32</sup> In *Violence Over the Land* historian Ned Blackhawk notes that “Utes and Comanches together soon dominated New Spain’s northernmost hinterlands. In response to the displacement of colonial violence upon their societies, these related Indians formed the region’s most powerful alliance.”<sup>33</sup>

New Mexican markets introduced the Comanche to additional economic opportunities. The Comanche quickly discovered that they could benefit economically by thrusting themselves into the slave trade. “Since there was a ready supply of Apache captives at hand, the Comanches were content to supply them to enterprising Nuevo Mexicanos, who had already come to a cynical realization that the richest commodities to be had in New Mexico were not mineral but human.”<sup>34</sup> Although slavery was forbidden according to Spanish colonial law, the demand from the Spanish elite in New Mexico was enough to drive an industry that the Comanche willingly participated in, and they enjoyed the economic benefit. Officials in New Mexico frowned on the enslavement of the Indigenous Pueblo people because of their perceived conversion to Christianity, however, a religious loophole allowed the trading of *indios barbarous* or savage Indians under the guise that both the secular and religious elite in Spanish society were rescuing them from their heathen existence. By the late seventeenth century, just prior to Comanche participation in the trade, twenty one percent of the colony’s subjects were non-pueblo slaves and more than half of the Spanish heads of family in New Mexico held at

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ned Blackhawk, *Violence Over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 35.

<sup>34</sup> Enrique R. Lamadrid, *Hermanitos Comanchitos: Indo-Hispano Rituals of Captivity and Redemption* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2003), 32.

least one Indian captive.<sup>35</sup> “The Franciscans were similarly eager purchasers but cloaked their commerce in the notion that Christian charity required the redemption of young captives from the heathen.”<sup>36</sup> The alliance served both parties well. The Ute and their allies, the Comanche, kept the Navajo and Apache peoples at bay, which gave them more open access to New Mexican markets for trade and plunder. For their part the Comanche procured the trade items they desired but most importantly they gained access to horses. In addition to trading for horses, the Comanche made so many raids into New Mexico that Hämäläinen notes “By 1716 Ute and Comanche raiders had so exhausted northern New Mexico’s horse reservoirs that the settlers were not able to ‘march out in defense.’”<sup>37</sup> By the beginning of the third decade of the eighteenth century the Comanche made their way onto the southern plains east of New Mexico.

Once they had arrived on the southern plains, they quickly moved themselves into an advantageous position near the rich horse herds of New Mexico. Historian Gerald Betty advances the claim that the Comanche developed kinship networks with the Utes, who then introduced them to the abundant trade networks and eventually the horse supply in New Mexico. Regardless of how they were introduced to the area, the Comanche frequented the areas near the trade routes to Mexico, which in turn enabled them to steal thousands of horses. Comanche raiding in New Mexico apparently became progressively more frequent, for in 1719 the governor of the province sent a punitive expedition against the Comanche in an

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<sup>35</sup> Brooks, *Captives & Cousins: Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands*, 50.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>37</sup> Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire*, 27.

attempt to check the forays.<sup>38</sup> Comanche raiding in New Mexico reached alarming levels and on occasion the governor of New Mexico appealed to the Viceroy in Mexico City for additional horses to combat Comanche forays.

As Comanche bands acquired significant numbers of horses, they began to push farther east and south and in the process they encroached on other tribes' territories. Comanche horse herds were multiplying at such an advanced rate that they had to move to a geographical location that could foster the massive herds. However, this was not the only reason the Comanche migration continued southeast. The Comanche still actively engaged in the slave trade and it is probable that procuring human captives was an impetus for this move.

"Comanches had discovered unexpected riches and opportunities in their adopted homeland, but the same forces that helped them prosper in the valleys and mountains of the southern Rockies also pushed them out of the region. The more tightly they geared their lives around mounted hunting, slave trade, and European markets, the more they felt the pull of the great eastern grasslands."<sup>39</sup> The horse provided the Comanche with the mobility needed in order to pursue the Apache as they retreated deep into the southern plains.

Pushing into the plains during the first three decades of the eighteenth century, the Comanche encroached on numerous Apache groups including the Jicarillas, Lipans, Pelones, Sierra Blancas and others. After a second Pueblo uprising in 1696, many Apache groups expanded into the plains and when they did they developed a more complex agricultural based

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<sup>38</sup> Ernest Wallace and E. Adamson Hoebel, *The Comanches: Lords of the South Plains* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1952), 8.

<sup>39</sup> Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire*, 28.

existence. Apaches moved into the central plains, into the Red River country and farther south near the big bend of the Arkansas River. However, the main area of Apache expansion took place south of the Red River, where they themselves encroached on Jumano territory. While the Comanche and Ute were raiding in New Mexico during the first years of the eighteenth century, the Apache were warring with the Jumanos. "By entering the southern plains, therefore, Comanches set themselves on a collision course with another expanding people, entangling themselves in a war that raged for more than half a century across the entire southern plains."<sup>40</sup>

Both groups competed and warred over control of river valleys. Apache groups coveted these areas because of their need to access the stream bottoms to irrigate their fields of maize, a skill they had picked up from the Pueblo groups farther west. The Comanche coveted these same areas because of the ample supply of grass and low-saline waters that satisfied the needs of their ever expanding horse herds. During the winter these same river valleys provided shelter. "The contest became even fiercer in winters when both groups became utterly dependent on the river valleys, the only places on the open plains that offered relief from the harsh elements. The bluffs and cutbanks gave shelter against blizzards, the dense groves of cottonwood yielded fuel for heating and supplementary forage for horses, and the streams provided reliable water at a time when the rains often dwindled almost to nothing."<sup>41</sup> Often the Ute returned the favor the Comanche had bestowed upon them in previous years when fighting against the Navajo by combining forces to make war upon the Apache, who remained

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

fragmented and even warred with each other. In addition, the Apache were tied to their land during the growing seasons, which made them an easy target for Comanche raiders.

Relentless Comanche forces soon dominated the various Apache groups. In 1719, the Jicarillas fled to Taos, where they asked the Spaniards for protection. Their willingness to accept Christianity in exchange for protection against the Comanche indicated their desperate state. Spanish authorities seized this opportunity to form an alliance with the Apache that they believed would serve as a buffer between them and the Comanche and their Ute allies. In the fall of 1719, New Mexico Governor Valverde personally led a military expedition against the Comanche and Ute into the Arkansas River valley. It was here that he encountered numerous Apache bands fleeing from the Comanche. Continuing eastward, the Governor personally witnessed “. . . a wasteland of deserted Apache villages and burned maize fields the Comanche-Ute invasion had left in its wake.”<sup>42</sup> After spending two months on the plains, Valverde returned to Santa Fe. Spain soon realized that putting money and resources into aid for the Apache was not the best course of action. It was now only a matter of time before the Comanche seized total control of the southern plains.

In November of 1723, a delegation of Jicarilla and Sierra Blanca chiefs petitioned the Spaniards to build a garrison at La Jicarilla, 110 miles Northeast of Santa Fe. In January of 1724, hoping to block the possibility of war with both Apache and Spaniard, Comanche forces attacked La Jicarilla for four nights and five days and in the process captured numerous women and children.<sup>43</sup> The Comanche and Utes continued the attack “. . . in a ferocious nine day battle

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 35.

at El Gran Sierra del Fierro in the present-day Texas Panhandle. Beaten by the Comanche and Utes and abandoned by Spain, the Apaches vacated all the lands north of the Canadian River, which became the southern border of the Comanche-Ute domain."<sup>44</sup> Historian T.R. Fehrenbach notes, "By 1725, most of those lands east of the southern Rockies that the Spaniards had called Apacheria had become Comancheria, the domain of the Comanche. The terrible, buffalo-horned warriors on horseback had seized an enormous new empire. This territory was comprised of all the lands between the Spanish frontier and the Arkansas River, lying between the Gran Cordillera and the Cross Timbers of Texas. Its core covered six hundred miles from north to south, four hundred miles from east to west, lying entirely on the southern portions of the Great Plains from the ninety-eighth meridian to the foothills of the Rockies."<sup>45</sup> However, Comanche expansion on the southern plains did not end with their conquest of the upper Arkansas basin in the 1720s. In the 1730s, the Comanche pushed into Apache lands south of the Cimarron River valley. By this time the Comanche had accumulated vast quantities of horses. The Comanche had also enjoyed population growth, which, coupled with their need to sustain their herds, provided the impetus for further southward expansion. They simply outgrew their current home and needed to expand their territory. While they were expanding south, the Comanche also found it necessary to sustain their ties with the slave markets in New Mexico. By raiding Apache villages farther south, the Comanche procured the slaves they required to exchange in the New Mexico markets and the horses they required for domestic use. By collecting horses from the Apache, as opposed to raiding in New Mexico, the Comanche

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>45</sup> T.R. Fehrenbach, *Comanches: The Destruction of a People* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989), 139.

ensured they would be welcome in Spain's colonial markets. For several years the Comanche enjoyed peaceful trading in New Mexico until hostilities erupted in the 1740s.

Once again Comanche and Ute war parties launched debilitating attacks into New Mexico. The Spaniards responded by sending out military expeditions against the Comanche and banning the Numunu from the Taos trading fairs. They also discouraged Taos traders with the promise of the death penalty if they ventured out onto the plains to trade with the enemy. In 1747 the Comanche attacked and devastated Abiquiu, New Mexico and the surrounding region. The Spaniards responded by sending out a force of more than five hundred men who killed over one hundred Comanche and captured almost one thousand horses.<sup>46</sup> Just prior to this humbling encounter at the hands of the Spaniards, the Comanche entered into an alliance with the Taovayas, the most powerful group in the Wichita confederacy. When the Comanche moved farther east into the plains, they inherited the old Apache enemies, the Pawnee. To top it off, expansion also put them in direct contention with the Osage. Hämäläinen notes, "As a military union, the alliance allowed Comanches and Taovayas to join their forces to repel the unrelenting Osage forays from east to north; as a commercial partnership, it complemented the resource domains of both groups. Comanches offered Taovayas horses, bison robes, and Apache captives, the bulk of which Taovayas resold to Louisiana, and Taovayas supplied Comanches with guns, powder, ammunition, and iron tools they obtained from French traders as well as with maize, beans, and squash they cultivated in their riverside fields."<sup>47</sup> One of the benefits the Comanche enjoyed during the years when they frequented the Taos trade fairs was

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<sup>46</sup> Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire*, 42.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.



access to foods, specifically vegetables and carbohydrates, that complemented their meat heavy diets. Before they drove many of the Apache groups from the upper Arkansas basin, they could rely on raiding their crops. Therefore the Taovaya alliance provided a much needed and valued food source.

With the firearms and materials to construct metal tipped lances picked up through French contacts, the Comanche put themselves in an advantageous position vis à vis the Spanish. Additional Comanche attacks occurred in the New Mexican colonial communities of Abiquiu, Ojo Caliente, and Quemado. The Comanche were relentless in their attacks on Pecos and Galisteo. In addition to dealing with the constant assaults on New Mexican colonial and Indigenous communities, the Spaniards grew deeply concerned that the Comanche Taovaya alliance might mean the opening up of the southern plains to French merchants and influence. "In the late 1740s and 1750s Spanish officials nervously monitored French activities on the plains and especially among the Comanches, whom Cachupin described as a 'powerful tribe that dominates the others.'"<sup>48</sup> Tomas Velez de Cachupin, who was the Governor in Santa Fe, had to play a tricky balancing game, and he could not risk alienating the Comanche from New Mexico, which in his eyes would open up even more French access to the southern plains. In short, while the Comanche were a challenge, to Cachupin they were the lesser of two evils when compared with the threat of French Imperialism. While the Comanche could be and were a great nuisance to Spanish colonial New Mexico, they provided vital economic benefits

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 44.

through trade. Therefore the Spanish governor sought to secure Comanche loyalty by offering more trade goods and better terms of exchange at Taos.

Relentless Comanche attacks on Apaches led groups of Apaches to relocate near Spanish colonial holdings in New Mexico or migrate farther south and east into Texas in order to free themselves from Comanche persecution. "With the Apaches either clustered near Pecos or relocated south, the Comanches now controlled the entire western plains from the Arkansas valley to the Red River."<sup>49</sup> During the 1850s, the Comanche Taovaya alliance led both groups to participate in a type of triple alliance that included the Pawnee as the third member. Because the Taovaya geographic reality placed them in a natural alliance with the Pawnee against the Osage, once the Comanche and Taovaya linked, it suited Comanche interests to partner with two Pawnee bands in order to secure the northern border to Comancheria against a common enemy. During the mid-eighteenth century, when the Comanche began negotiating a peace with New Mexico, their half-century alliance with the Ute deteriorated. With most of the Apache removed from positions that might impede Ute access to New Mexico markets and Comanche access to plains resources, one of the most important reasons for the alliance was removed from the equation. In addition, the same New Mexican markets that led the Comanche and Ute to form an alliance were now a point of contention. New Mexican markets had fewer valuable commodities to trade with the Comanche and Ute due in large part to raiding by both groups. In addition, as the Comanche extended their camps more deeply into the plains and established new alliances with the Taovaya and Pawnee, they gained access to French trade goods. The teachers now found themselves bested by the students. After

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 48.

introducing the horse to the Comanche, Utes now found themselves unable to fully defend themselves against the Comanche without soliciting Spanish aid.

In the spring of 1752, the Comanche and the Spaniards negotiated a treaty that granted the Comanche unrestricted access to Pecos trading fairs as well as the right to resume trade with Taos. More importantly, “the treaty recognized the Comanches as a sovereign nation- thereby setting a precedent that Mexico, the Republic of Texas, and the United States would later follow.”<sup>50</sup> The peace was short lived, in part because of a change in leadership in Santa Fe. When Governor Francisco Marin del Valle succeeded Cachupin in 1754, he did not retain the ties to the Comanche and before long the Comanche had resumed raiding. The Spaniards formed a coalition with the Ute and some Apache bands that historian Peka Hämäläinen labels ‘anti-Comanche’. In a move that is a testament to the power the Comanche now wielded, the Spaniards kept their trade markets open to the Comanche in order to avoid disastrous consequences.

While some Comanche bands were involved in raiding in New Mexico and warring with the Utes, other bands like the Kotsoteka were pushing farther south into Texas. Historian Thomas W. Kavanagh notes, “Although the Comanches had been known to the Spaniards of New Mexico since the first decades of the eighteenth century, contact with Spaniards in Texas did not occur until much later, coming through both the Wichita alliance and attacks on the Lipan Apaches. The earliest known direct report dates from 1743, when three Comanches passed Bexar on their way to find Apaches.”<sup>51</sup> The Comanche’s expansion into Texas was both

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>51</sup> Thomas W. Kavanagh, *The Comanches: A History 1706-1875* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 79.

rapid and far reaching. One historian called it one of the most explosive conquests of any territory in North America.<sup>52</sup> Comanche peoples were soon “crossing the vast table of the Edwards Plateau to the Balcones Escarpment, where the high plains dissolve into the lowlands of Texas. It was one of the most explosive territorial conquests in North American history. In less than a decade, the entire Texas plains—a huge spread of undulating hill country and plains stretching from the Pecos River in the west to the Cross Timbers in the east and from the Red River in the north to the Balcones Escarpment in the south—became a Comanche dominion. This expansionist burst turned the Comanche into a territorial superpower. The Comancheria that emerged covered some quarter of a million square miles, casting a long shadow on European imperial designs in the continent’s center.”<sup>53</sup> Expansion certainly had something to do with the need to feed the growing horse herds as well as a reliance on buffalo herds for sustenance. In addition, the continued movement south might have been due, at least in part, to the Osage tension on the Taovaya. Osage pressure forced the Taovaya farther south, and in turn it is plausible that this outside burden had an effect on the Comanche, pushing them farther south into the southern plains. Moreover, the Comanche soon faced another Spanish Apache coalition in Texas. “Equally alarmed by Comanche expansion, Spanish officials seized the opportunity. By arming the Lipans, they reasoned, it would be possible to create a barrier between their young colony and the expansionist Comanches.”<sup>54</sup>

During this movement south Comanche came into contact with Tonkawas and Caddo peoples and rapidly entered into an alliance with these groups to counter the Spanish Lipan

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<sup>52</sup> Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire*, 55.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

alliance. Soon Comanches launched offensives against the Lipan Apache. The Lipan were in many ways similar to the displaced Apache groups because they were also involved in farming, which meant that they were tied to their fields. Comanche raids mercilessly dealt severe blows to the Lipan, who soon vowed to accept Christianity in exchange for Spanish protection. Past events in New Mexico repeated themselves in Texas when Spanish officials determined that the converted Apache could provide a buffer zone between valuable Spanish holdings in Mexico and the Comanche. To that end, in 1757, the Spaniards constructed a new mission and presidio in the San Saba valley. The San Saba valley sat south of the Colorado River and north of the Nueces in the Edwards plateau. In March of 1758, a large force of Comanche, Taovayas, Tonkawas and Hasinai arrived at the mission with the intent of killing the Apaches. The attacking alliance set fire to the buildings and destroyed livestock and church ornaments. Following this event, some Lipan families were convinced they should settle near the San Saba presidio. However the Comanche continued their constant attacks. Enraged by the construction of more missions to protect Lipans along the upper Nueces River, the Comanche and their allies increased the frequency of their raids. After they had targeted both Apache villages and Spanish settlements, "Within a year, all Lipans had retreated to the coastal plains of Texas, the deserts around the Rio Grande valley, and the mountains of Coahuila, where they joined their Natage cousins. . . . The Apache diaspora from the plains was now complete, and a largely depopulated hundred-mile wide buffer zone separated the Apache realm from the southern border of Comancheria." <sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 61.

The Spaniards in Texas had to accept the reality that their idea of utilizing Apache bands to create a buffer zone between their colonial holdings and the Comanche was an abject failure. Eventually, this policy also failed in New Mexico. On the southern plains the Comanche utilized Spanish technology to neutralize Spanish imperialism. By the 1760s, strategic alliances with other indigenous peoples had helped secure for them control of a vast region of the southern plains, stretching from the Arkansas River in the north to the Rio Nueces in the south. Furthermore, the Comanche utilized Spanish technology alongside French firearms that they secured through their indigenous alliances.

For years the Comanche played off the French against their Imperial Spanish rivals; however, the fear of possible French imperialist expansion was nullified with the Treaty of Paris in 1763, which ceded Louisiana west of the Mississippi River to Spain. During the 1760s and into the 1770s, the Comanche continued to descend upon New Mexico, raiding Spanish colonial settlements, including but not limited to Ojo Caliente and Taos and the Pueblo villages such as Pecos, San Juan and Santa Clara. On some occasions, bands of Comanche warriors arrived in New Mexico to engage in peaceful trade, while other Comanche bands were raiding various settlements in the same colony. By the summer of 1773 the Comanche were raiding throughout New Mexico including five attacks in Picuris. In addition, Pecos and Galisteo were targeted by Comanche raiders. June of 1779, the Comanche attacked the New Mexican village of Tome, killing thirty of its inhabitants. In 1775, the severity of Comanche raids led the Governor of New Mexico, Colonel don Pedro Fermin de Mendinueta, to plead for aid in a letter written to the Viceroy in Mexico City “. . . Most Excellent Sir, if the kindness of your Excellency and your strong desire to develop this province do not provide this unfortunate and valiant community with a

horse herd on the account of the king, perhaps to the number of fifteen hundred horses, I fear its desolation will follow. . . ”<sup>56</sup> Before more horses were delivered, the Comanche once again attacked the colony and in a single raid captured and killed over one hundred Spanish settlers.<sup>57</sup>

During this period one Comanche chief named Cuerno Verde, who was adorned with a single buffalo horn head dress, swept into New Mexico wreaking havoc. The original Cuerno Verde, or Green horn is believed to have been killed during a raid on Ojo Caliente in 1768. Following Cuerno Verde’s death his son exacted revenge on New Mexican settlements during the next decade until 1779, when New Mexico Governor Juan Bautista de Anza, and a force of seven hundred men, caught up with Cuerno Verde and killed him in a location where the plains meet the Rocky Mountains in present-day southern Colorado. Even though vastly outnumbered, Cuerno Verde displayed the valor that was intrinsic to the Comanche warrior ethos, “Cuerno Verde had known of the disaster that had overtaken his band. With a mere fifty warriors of his personal guard, he had been both fearless and rash enough to seek out and attack an army of six hundred men.”<sup>58</sup>

Ultimately the death of Cuerno Verde initiated the potential for a peace between the Comanche and the Spaniards. However, Cuerno Verde’s defeat alone did not force the Comanche to the treaty table. There still were other realities in Comancheria that made peace with the Spaniards a plausible and viable option for the Comanche. The expulsion of the Apache nations on the plains from the Arkansas River in the north to the Nueces River in the

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<sup>56</sup> Stanley Noyes, *Los Comanches: The Horse People, 1751-1845* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993), 66.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 79.

south enabled the Comanche to feed their growing population. The Comanche held sway politically and militarily over the entire southern plains region and enjoyed unrestricted access to the buffalo herds that served as their primary food source. In addition, they had gained ample room to feed their massive horse herds. Extensive horse herds provided the Comanche with the vehicles to procure vital food supplies, control commerce with other Indigenous groups as well as the ability to secure human chattel for the Spanish markets. Secure and confident within the borders of Comancheria, the Comanche seldom posted guards or scouts outside their mobile villages. For other plains tribes this precaution had become standard practice. In addition to the expulsion of the Apache, the Comanche had formed political alliances with other indigenous nations that served as a buffer between themselves and advancing tribes.

The Comanche also controlled a geographical region that was perfectly suited to foster the growth and breeding of large horse herds and achieved a level of economic prosperity that eclipsed all rival plains groups. "The spread of the horse frontier across the Great Plains revealed yet another natural advantage of the upper Arkansas basin: it marked the northern limit for intensive horse husbandry on the continental grasslands. The climate became increasingly adverse for horses above the Arkansas, turning noticeably harsher north of the Platte River and outright hostile above the Missouri. The long and cold northern winters took a heavy toll on foals and pregnant mares, and the vicious blizzards could literally freeze entire herds on their hooves. Such hardships kept most northern tribes chronically horse-poor: only a few groups beyond the Arkansas valley managed to acquire enough animals to meet basic



hunting and transportation needs.”<sup>59</sup> Capitalizing on this environmental reality, the Comanche controlled the dissemination of horses throughout the entire plains region.

Another reason why the Comanche were willing to come to terms with the Spaniards in the last quarter of the eighteenth century was the political reality of the European Imperial world. In the years following The Treaty of Paris in 1763, and the transfer of former French territory to Spain, the Comanche had to accept the reality that the Spaniards had emerged as their only source of European goods. However, because of their adoption of western technologies and their martial dominance and political acumen, they negotiated with Spanish leaders from a position of power and contracted a peace in 1786 that would allow them to grow economically, politically and militarily into the most dominant Indigenous nation in the United States.

Comanche control of the southern plains was facilitated by their social and political structure. The Comanche divided into small groups known as bands. These bands can also be classified as political organizations, as Thomas W. Kavanagh explains in *The Comanches: A History 1706-1875*, “Divisions were political organizations composed of local residential bands linked by kinship and sodality ties and recognizing a commonality of interest in group affairs, war, peace, and trade.”<sup>60</sup> Although the number of Comanche bands fluctuated, the Peneteka (Honey eaters), Nokoni (Wanderers), Kotsoteka (Buffalo eaters), Yamparika (Yap Eaters), Tanima (Liver eaters), and the Quahada (Antelope) held the greatest prominence. Comancheria was vast, totaling some 240,000 square miles and encompassing much of present-day central

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<sup>59</sup> Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire*, 71.

<sup>60</sup> Kavanagh, *The Comanches: A History 1706-1875*, 52.

and west Texas, Southwestern Kansas, Southeastern Colorado, eastern New Mexico, and all of western Oklahoma. Although they were separated by vast areas of open plains Comanche bands controlled this entire area from the first quarter of the eighteenth century well into the second half of the nineteenth century. The acquisition of horses and the subsequent monopolization of equine trade facilitated control of Comancheria.

Comanches acquired horses through trade, by capturing wild horses, and by raiding or stealing and eventually breeding. Rollings notes, "A particularly popular way of acquiring horses was to steal them from others. The Comanche were talented horse thieves . . . The Comanche raided and stole from their Spanish and Pueblo Indian neighbors in New Mexico and the Spanish settlements in Texas and northern New Mexico."<sup>61</sup> In some cases, Comanche men or young men seeking status among the people attacked entire settlements and relieved them of all the horse. In other cases, they snuck into an enemy's camp in the dead of night and silently captured all their horses. The Comanche became quite adept at stealing horses. In *Comanches: The Destruction of a People*, T.H. Fehrenbach notes, "The fact that the Nermernuh or Comanches possessed more horses and greater horse knowledge than any other people is well attested. Dodge stated that they were the finest, and in fact only successful, horse breeders on the entire Great Plains. They were the most skilled horse stealers."<sup>62</sup> Even for skilled horse stealers, acquiring new mounts could be a dangerous business that required great patience. "Sometimes when a raiding party had gone too far from the encampment of the tribe, their horses would get lame and they would turn them loose and continue on foot until they

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<sup>61</sup> Rollings, *The Comanche*, 17.

<sup>62</sup> Fehrenbach, *Comanches: The Destruction of a People*, 94.

would secure some fresh horses. It was not a very easy task to secure horses and sometimes they would walk for days. Although their feet would get very sore, they would continue until they would secure horses from a hostile tribe.”<sup>63</sup> Another Comanche recalls “. . . that to get horses from a hostile tribe they would usually be on the lookout for an opportunity to take the horses for days. This was considered an act of real bravery and sometimes included the risk of getting killed.”<sup>64</sup>

By the end of the eighteenth century, when the Comanche had amassed their massive horse herds, it had become common for an average Comanche man to own two hundred and fifty horses. By comparison, a Dakota chief might own fifty horses. It had become typical for a rich Comanche man to own anywhere from five hundred to fifteen hundred head. Wallace and Hoebel note, “In horses they were the richest of all tribes; in fact they introduced the horse into the plains and they were the medium through which most other Indians received their mounts (at the expense of the Texans and Mexicans).”<sup>65</sup> Access to a significant number of horses had not always been a reality for the Comanche.

Like most plains tribes who were nomadic peoples prior to the acquisition and widespread proliferation of the horse, the Comanche had once utilized dogs to haul their possessions and transport their goods. By attaching two poles tied together and harnessing them to a dog, the Comanche had traveled from one hunting ground to the next. They utilized this technology on a larger scale, once the horse became available. Due to the fact that a

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<sup>63</sup> Tippeconnic, “Comanche Indian Customs With Educational Implications”, 31.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>65</sup> Wallace and Hoebel, *The Comanches: Lords of the South Plains*, 34.

Comanche word for horse did not exist before the arrival of the Spaniards, their horses became known as the God Dog, connoting its cultural impact on the people. Although the following description includes vernacular from an earlier period in western historiography, the point Walter Prescott Webb made in, *The Great Plains*, is well taken, "Steam and electricity have not wrought a greater revolution in the ways of civilized life than the horse did in the savage life of the plains."<sup>66</sup> Indeed, following the arrival of the horse, the Comanche were no longer compelled to track and stalk buffalo, on foot.

A Comanche named Ta qua ker, who was likely born in 1860 during the pre- reservation era, reveals the importance of the horse to the Comanche: "The horse was our best friend, for our way of living depended so much on him. If it were not for this useful animal it would have been very hard for us to live happy and contented in our various activities."<sup>67</sup> The horse enabled the Comanche to be a more proficient hunter and provider for his family, by allowing him greater access to buffalo, antelope and other vital game that provided ample food, clothing and shelter. In addition, the Comanche utilized horses to mount swift raids of Apache and Pueblo agricultural crops and food stores. Comanches possessed horses specifically trained for various activities including horses to use in buffalo hunts and on raids. Comanche warriors also developed a characteristic battle tactic that exemplified their skill. John Tippeconnic, Sr. noted that Ta qua ker stated in a personal interview: "The Comanche hunters could shoot a buffalo while the horse was running very fast; or use him for a shield by dropping at the side and lying in a horizontal position, and so be protected from his enemies by the horse's body. The heel of

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<sup>66</sup> Walter Prescott Webb, *The Great Plains* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981), 53.

<sup>67</sup> Tippeconnic, "Comanche Indian Customs With Educational Implications", 39.

the rider would be hanging over the horse's back, from this position the rider could regain his usual riding position or change to the other side, and use his bow and arrow from under the horse's neck. This method of riding is very difficult, but very young braves had to learn how to ride in this manner for his own protection and to win battles."<sup>68</sup>

Prior to the acquisition of the horse, few Comanche men could enjoy the luxury of more than one wife; it was beyond their economic ability. With the horse came a more abundant food supply, and consequently the ability to support more than one wife. Since the women in Comanche society did most of the work in and around the camp, multiple wives effectively diversified their workload. Comanche men also took on additional wives under dire circumstances, such as when a sister of a current wife lost a husband. In order to provide for new familial acquisitions, it was imperative that a Comanche man possess ample wealth in horses. In addition to the Spanish mount, the Comanche acquired all the accoutrements that went with it. The Comanche copied Spanish bridles, lances and saddles and they even adopted the way Spaniards mounted the horse from the right side. It is probable that Comanches had acquired some horses no later than the 1650s. Wallace and Hoebel state that, "They certainly had them by the time they moved onto the South Plains. They were raiding in New Mexico by 1705."<sup>69</sup> The same authors also detail how the Ponca credit the Numunu as the first Indigenous peoples they observed with horses, and also the first to teach them how to ride and utilize the horse as a beast of burden.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>69</sup> Wallace and Hoebel, *The Comanches: Lords of the South Plains*, 39.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

Horses provided the Comanche with a way to measure wealth and status as well as serving as a form of currency. Wallace and Hoebel note, "Horses constituted the most important type of property and staple form of wealth . . . Horses served also as an informal medium of exchange. They could be presented as gifts in reciprocity for services rendered and as fees to medicine men."<sup>71</sup> Horses were also used to pay for a bride. A father of a Comanche girl would not likely give his daughter to any man who could not prove, through the offering of many horses, that he could properly provide for her. John Tippeconnic's interview of Ta qua Ker echoes this point, "Because I was an expert horseman, I had no trouble in securing a good wife and family and living in happiness."<sup>72</sup> If a man had many quality horses to give away, he was obviously a capable warrior who, on the one hand had to have proven himself in war in order to acquire the horses and on the other hand would be able to hunt for the game that would sustain the prospective father-in-law's daughter. Ronald Burgess notes, "If the horses were not satisfactory or there were not enough offered for his daughter, a Comanche would refuse to deliver the daughter to her suitor."<sup>73</sup>

It would be very difficult to venture a guess as to the overall numbers of horses that he possessed at their zenith. However, it can be safely assumed that probably no Indians were more richly supplied. The Comanche were certainly rich when it came to horses. At one point in the mid nineteenth century the Quahada, or antelope band, had a population of slightly

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>72</sup> Tippeconnic, "Comanche Indian Customs With Educational Implications", 38.

<sup>73</sup> Burgess. Interview with author. November 10, 2004.

fewer than two thousand people. However, their horses collectively numbered fifteen thousand.

The horse was the vehicle that transformed the Comanche from humble mountain people to the richest of the plains cultures. Fehrenbach wrote that the Comanche were once poor Shoshone people of the mountains, and with the horse blazed a trail across the mid-continent.<sup>74</sup> Poor might be too strong a description for an entire people but certainly if one is basing wealth on the quantity of horses a tribe possessed, then it would apply. In *Los Comanches: The Horse People, 1751-1845* Stanley Noyes echoes similar sentiments, “Yet these upstarts from the Basin and the backwoods had made themselves powerful and rich by the middle of the eighteenth century. Their peers among Plains tribes – Dakotas, Blackfoot, Crows, Cheyennes, Arapahos, and so on respected and sometimes envied them. Most smaller tribes feared them.”<sup>75</sup> Since the Comanche were in possession of more horses than any other Indigenous peoples, it is logical to surmise that they were quite adept as horsemen.

Both outside observers and foes alike were dazzled by Comanche horsemanship. According to outside sources, the Comanche were not overly impressive people in appearance and the majority of them were short and thick, even bordering on corpulent. Like all peoples, Comanche body types varied. This is not surprising considering the adoption of outside peoples as tribal members. However, if these outside sources are true, just as the horse transformed the Comanche from humble mountain people to Lords of the Southern Plains, the horse

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<sup>74</sup> Fehrenbach, *Comanches: The Destruction of a People*, 95.

<sup>75</sup> Noyes, *Los Comanches: The Horse People*, 35.

transformed the individual Comanche from a short, corpulent and generally physically unimpressive specimen to a warrior with few peers.

The Comanche and the horse moved fluidly and were in sync to the point that they appeared to outside observers to maneuver as one being. Indeed from the early years of the eighteenth century forward, the horse and the Comanche became synonymous with each other. Fehrenbach notes, "Contemporary authorities agreed that the people made the finest horsemen of them all. The artist, (George) Catlin, who had sketched both Dakotas and Comanches, admired the Sioux but wrote that the Dakotas were no match for the squat Comanches on horseback."<sup>76</sup> Europeans, including the Spaniards, Euro-Americans and other Indigenous peoples who witnessed various feats of Comanche horsemanship, generally formed the consensus that Comanches were the most skilled horsemen of all the Indian nations. Some witnesses go so far as to say the Comanche were among the best horseman the world has produced.<sup>77</sup>

Comanche women were also skilled riders. They spent much of their lives on horseback. Compared to their counterparts among northern plains tribes, few Comanche women had to walk when they moved the location of their camp. Historian Stanley Noyes notes "Daring young women- and sometimes older ones, too- frequently accompanied war parties, where they not only guarded the extra ponies and plunder during battles, but formed a line of defense, backing

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<sup>76</sup> Fehrenbach, *Comanches: The Destruction of a People*, 94.

<sup>77</sup> Wallace and Hoebel, *The Comanches: Lords of the South Plains*, 47.



the men with bows and arrows. The Texas Rangers found them as dangerous as the warriors and killed them without compunction during combat.”<sup>78</sup>

One reason the Comanche were expert riders was simply due to the fact that they spent so much time on their horses. Ronald Burgess stated that, “In the old days, for our people riding a horse was a natural progression in a child’s life that followed walking and talking.”<sup>79</sup> While Comanche females’ proficiency made them formidable combatants, their most important role on the back of horses occurred when the Comanche moved camp. “The girls that were riding horses usually led the pack horses. They stayed back of their mothers and fathers. They kept their eyes on the packs, to avoid having them come loose and falling to the ground to thus delay the journey.”<sup>80</sup> Most women and children even had their own riding mounts to transport them from one camp to the next, although for young children, the horse selected was usually an older more reliable mount. Ta qua ker describes the process and age of introducing Comanche children to horses, “Our fathers made us get acquainted with the horses in a mild way when we were three years old. They would put us on one, lead us about the encampment and out into the fields. In this manner we would learn to be unafraid of horses. After we got a little older, about five or six years old, we could ride one and guide him around by ourselves.”<sup>81</sup> Noyes echoes the previous statement, “by around the age of five, the boy was riding his own pony and practicing with his toy bow and arrows.”<sup>82</sup> Indeed, from their early years in life, through their prime, and until their death, Comanche people spent their entire lives on horses.

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<sup>78</sup> Noyes, *Los Comanches: The Horse People*, 97.

<sup>79</sup> Burgess. Interview with author. November 10, 2004.

<sup>80</sup> Tippeconnic, “Comanche Indian Customs With Educational Implications”, 20.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>82</sup> Noyes, *Los Comanches: The Horse People*, 36.

The omnipresence of horses in the lives of the Comanche people is clearly evident and cannot be overstated in relation to its overall impact on their culture.

In Comanche society, as in many Indigenous societies in the Americas, the practice of procuring captives was commonplace. Collecting individuals from other cultures served several purposes. These included: replenishing population bases, enhancing labor bases, achieving prestige, procuring wealth, and securing women for marriage. The Comanche sought captives to fill all of the aforementioned roles, and the horse enabled them to do so with proficiency. For a young Comanche man, adulthood and warrior status were synonymous.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the horse was the vehicle the Comanche male utilized to achieve adulthood. In order to become an adult, a Comanche youth had to demonstrate his ability to be free of his family's care. He could attain this independence by procuring his own horses, usually through warfare or raids. A male Comanche's ability to achieve success in war, on raids, and in hunting depended on the individual's proficiency with a horse. However this was only part of the equation. Vital to the male quest for manhood were female gender roles that included organizing the labor in his household. In *Captives and Cousins: Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands*, James Brooks explains this social structure, "Since marriage, by supplying man the labor to assume his independence, proclaimed his adulthood, a man's capacity to claim women stood at the very center of Comanche power relations. This system promoted the individual pursuit of wealth by young men, . . . Thus, prestige, acquired through feats of arms and hunting excellence, as well as the

capture of horses and human beings represented the 'cultural capital' for which all Comanche men strove."<sup>83</sup>

One reason for the Comanche's preference for female captives over males was because of their trade value on the slave market. A Comanche man could trade a female captive and receive two quality horses in the exchange. This exchange enabled young males to secure more horses to increase their prestige and social standing among their own people. Therefore, the horse permeated most aspects of male Comanche society, including his independent status, his prestige and his trade relations with outside peoples. This practice, along with Comanches' ferocity in battle, explains why they were feared in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This practice also had tragic consequences for some communities, as Brooks demonstrates, "The need to meet both internal labor demands and external market demands shifted Comanche captive raiding to New Mexico targets as well as to Apaches, Utes, and Pawnees. In August 1747 Comanches . . . swept down upon Spanish settlements in the Rio Chama valley. At Santa Rosa de Lima de Abiquiu, established in 1737, the raiders carried off twenty three women and children, forcing abandonment of the village until 1754."<sup>84</sup>

Although the practice of captive taking had to be a frightening and disturbing experience, the Comanche often treated these individuals with great kindness once they were fully assimilated into Comanche society. In fact, many of the captives essentially became Comanche. In addition, many captives, once granted their freedom or returned to their original communities, left those communities in order to return to live as Comanche. Perhaps the best-

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<sup>83</sup> Brooks, *Captives & Cousins: Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands*, 60.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

known Anglo captive, Cynthia Ann Parker was captured in 1836 in Texas as a young girl. Parker is an example of this phenomenon. Cynthia Ann married Peta Nocona, a leader of the Noconi band of Comanche, and she was re-captured twice by Texans only to run back to the people she had come to consider her own. After her initial capture in the mid 1840s, In *The Last Comanche Chief: The Life and Times of Quannah Parker*, Bill Neeley notes, “She is unwilling to leave the people with whom she associates.”<sup>85</sup> Certainly there were many cases in which the process of captivity was both psychologically and physically painful as well as life threatening for those captured. I am not suggesting that it was anything other than a horrifying experience for many captives. However, there are multiple examples of captives essentially “becoming Comanche” and preferring their life with the Numunu to their original homes. While this reality is thoroughly documented, one has to consider that for captives taken at a young age, the Comanche life was all they knew and thus when given a choice or an opportunity to return to their adopted people, they would do so. The acquisition of slaves is yet another way in which the horse permeated Comanche culture.

Among the Comanche the horse was the most significant acquisition leading to a voluntary lifestyle change. In addition, the Puuku enabled the Comanche to emerge as the dominant plains horse culture. The horse transformed the Comanche people from a mountain people to a people who controlled a vast expanse of territory called Comancheria, a name acknowledged from the middle of the eighteenth century to the middle decades of the nineteenth century. The horse, or God Dog, permeated almost all aspects of Comanche society,

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<sup>85</sup> Bill Neeley, *The Last Comanche Chief: The Life and Times of Quannah Parker* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1995), 12.

including the expansion of their domain, hunting, warfare, captive procurement, trade, wealth, prestige and the education of their youth. The ability of the Comanche to capitalize on the acquisition of large numbers of horses was embedded within their Numunu ethos. Without the horse, the Comanche would not have influenced the region they made their own.

## CHAPTER 2

### Involuntary change-From Comancheria to the Reservation and Allotment

In 1786 New Mexico Governor Juan Bautista de Anza traveled into Comancheria to meet with the principal chiefs of Jupes, Yamparikas and Kotsotekas to ratify a treaty negotiated the previous year. That year, 1786, the Comanche had ventured to Pecos pueblo where they entered into a peace agreement with Spanish leaders that would last until the latter were succeeded by the Americans in the mid nineteenth century. "De Anza, as a token that war had ended, presented Chief Ecueracapa with a saber and banner. The Comanches responded by digging a hole in the earth in which they symbolically buried the war. . . From this time on the province would be, with minor interruptions, at peace with the Comanches."<sup>86</sup> This treaty linked the Spaniards and the Comanche in continual war against the Apache. Although outright war no longer existed between the Comanche and the Spaniards, the former continued to harass and raid Spanish settlements in Texas.

After Mexican Independence in 1821, and again in 1836, following Texas independence from Mexico, the one constant on the southern plains, amidst all the change, was that the Comanche would gravitate to the horse herds that accompanied the various groups in or near Comancheria. Noyes explains this reality, "The two Comanche war trails to the haciendas south of the Rio Grande ran through Texas. Traditionally, war parties en route raided through the region, often picking up horses as they came or went. So the Anglo-Texans, once good relations with the People had broken down, inherited thirty years and more, off and on, of bad

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<sup>86</sup> Noyes, *Los Comanches: The Horse People, 1751-1845*, 81.

precedents that had finally hardened into a tradition and a habit nearly impossible to break. The Tejanos fell heir to the same troubles that had plagued Spanish and Mexican Texans before them."<sup>87</sup> It was during this era that the traceable lineage to my family emerges on the Texas plains.

This chapter will examine the Comanche ethos and the methods utilized in the integration of that ethos into the education of Comanche youth. The assertion here is that the Comanche ethos was ingrained in most aspects of rearing children from an extremely early age. This chapter contends that simple activities like storytelling and swimming and playing with one's peers, as well as hunting and learning how to be proficient on horseback, were all crucial in order to instill youth with the Comanche world view. From the late seventeenth century to the reservation era, the horse remained a vital part of the Comanche code. During this period the horse was more than a form of/type of technology that facilitated the migration and expansion of Comanche people. This chapter proclaims that the horse was both an educational implement and a conduit for knowledge transference that enabled the Comanche to survive, thrive and expand. In addition, this chapter explores the involuntary changes the Comanche experienced with the introduction of the reservation era as well as the additional modification forced upon them during the allotment period.

In 1854, a Comanche woman named, Ho-Vah- wert- te-ah (aka Wah-hah- wer-ta- quah) the wife of Wau- ny-e-o-how-pith (Yellow Fox) gave birth to a son.<sup>88</sup> Little is known of Ho-Vah-

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 167.

<sup>88</sup> Indian Archive Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society Archives Manuscripts Division, Census of Kiowa, Comanche, Apache, Caddo and Wichita Affiliated Bands: Roll KA 2, 1895-1899 Kiowa Agency Census, p. 50, line 1189, 1897.

wert-te-ah except that the Kiowa Agency Census lists her as being eighty-eight years old. If this is accurate, it means that she was born in 1807. Subsequently, her son was born somewhere on the Southern plains in what is now the state of Texas.<sup>89</sup> This male Comanche, born free prior to the reservation era, is my paternal great grandfather Tippeconnic, aka To-Wick-Ah.<sup>90</sup> He was only thirteen years old when Ten Bears and a handful of other Comanche headman signed the Medicine Lodge Creek Treaty in 1867. By the time To-Wick-Ah was thirteen, he would have already been introduced and immersed in the Comanche ethos. By ethos, I am referring to, “the fundamental character or spirit of a culture; the underlying sentiment that informs the beliefs, customs or practices of a group or society’s dominant assumptions of a people or period.”<sup>91</sup>

By Comanche ethos, I am specifically referring to what my grandfather John Tippeconnic advanced as the “old Comanche plan of educating children by advice and precept inculcated certain desirable attributes in the children which stayed with them through life.”<sup>92</sup> The desirable attributes are cooperation, consideration for others, self-denial, courtesy, reverence, self-reliance, conservation, alertness, prestige, courage, respect, loyalty, perseverance, responsibility, neatness, reliability, honesty, trustworthiness, utilization of the environment, birth control, kindness, and love for one another. Furthermore, I am asserting that this knowledge transference or Comanche ethos remained intact even after the involuntary transition from living free on the plains to the confinement of reservation life in the late nineteenth century. I am also asserting the idea that the Comanche ethos persevered through

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<sup>89</sup> U.S. Department of Commerce and Labor-Bureau of the Census. Thirteenth Census of the United States: 1910-Indian Population. Roll T624 1248. P 18A, Enumeration District 0049, FHL microfilm 1375261.

<sup>90</sup> Goodin, “*Deyo Mission Cemetery*”, 5.

<sup>91</sup> Dictionary.com, “ethos,” accessed January 2, 2016, <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/ethos?s=t>

<sup>92</sup> Tippeconnic, “Comanche Indian Customs With Educational Implications”, 57.



the allotment era and into the twentieth century. The most important ingredient in the instruction of the fundamental character or spirit of Comanche people was the adult. However, prior to 1875, one of the most important tools that Comanche people utilized to convey knowledge was the horse. To-wick-ah would have certainly been introduced to riding a horse by the age of three, per Comanche tradition. It is also likely that he would have taken part in most, if not all, of the practices typical Comanche children were involved in during pre-reservation years, such as foot races.

In the evenings, we had foot races. The small boys and large boys ran matched races, arranged by the leader, usually some big boy who was a fast runner. The races for the small boys were for a distance of about seventy five yards. The large boys ran races from a distance of about a hundred yards. The boys liked to display their ability to run fast and the endurance they had built up by practice. All the races were just for fun, and for the purpose of learning how to play together. It gave us a chance to yell, laugh and holler encouragement to our friends and little brothers when they were running in some of the races.<sup>93</sup>

In addition to foot races, another important aspect of a child's education occurred when Comanche boys were introduced to the bow and arrow. All male Comanche needed to know how to use a bow on a horse in order to become a warrior and hunter. It was compulsory for Comanche warriors to discharge their arrows while racing at high speeds on their mounts during combat or while hunting. Although the training initially began with the bow and arrow,

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<sup>93</sup> Tippeconnic, "Comanche Indian Customs With Educational Implications", 8.

the horse was the conduit that allowed the transference of traditional education and knowledge after an individual had mastered the bow and arrow. However, children had to begin their education on the ground. Young children between the ages of six and ten years old made bows and arrows out of grass stems and practiced by shooting at grasshoppers. Andrew Per du so pah said, "They would spend hours in the open hunting the grasshoppers. They had to learn how to get close to the grasshopper without making any notice in order to get a good shot. This required much practice, patience, and steadiness. When the boys developed a little skill, they would shoot at them from a distance of about fifteen feet."<sup>94</sup> By training with safer materials, accidents were minimized, while the younger children also developed patience and skill. Once they were a little older, Numunu children graduated to using bows made from Mulberry and arrows carved from Dogwood. Tahah notes "The older boys found this sport a very interesting pastime. This gave them an opportunity to develop their skill with the bows and arrows to a higher stage of marksmanship."<sup>95</sup>

Not only did the older Numunu boys graduate to more sophisticated tools, they also pursued slightly larger game, such as rabbits and squirrels. It is likely that To-wick-ah learned to use the bow and arrow in the same manner and to search out game by going into the woods. It took keen observation skills to find a rabbit that was lying down and great stealth to get close enough to let loose a shot without startling the prey. Tahah stressed that "In order to become good shots, they had to study the habits of the rabbits. Squirrels were harder to hunt than rabbits, for one's arrows usually got stuck on the limbs of the trees. It was more fun to shoot at

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 9-10.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 10.

the squirrels for they were harder to hit, and one had to take careful aim to kill one. The boys from eleven to fifteen indulged in this sport. The bow and arrows used to hunt these animals were the same size as those the men used for hunting wild game.”<sup>96</sup>

Comanche boys gradually became adept at using the same implements used by men. Traditional Comanche knowledge was conveyed, without being expressly stated, while young boys learned to hunt and how to use the bow and arrow correctly. This was only one step in an educational process that eventually led to utilizing the bow on a horse. Comanche boys were instructed to watch their arrows very carefully after they were shot so that they could find them without much trouble. With this in mind the boys were told to try and shoot at their targets from positions that enabled the easy retrieval of their arrows and never to shoot from a position in which they might lose the arrows in water. “Every boy took pride in taking care of his equipment, and the most important of all his equipment was usually his bow and arrows. When a boy came home with most of his arrows missing, the father would say, ‘you must not be too careless with yourself’”.<sup>97</sup> While corporal punishment was not commonly practiced, young people experienced a degree of pressure throughout their education.

Swimming was another enjoyable pastime practiced by all ages. However, not everyone swam in the same location. Women, young children and the older girls all swam together near the encampment. The older boys and the men understood clearly that they were to stay away from this location out of respect. Mothers and sisters often swam or walked along the creek with children on their backs. “Mrs. Tahah and Mrs. Andrew Per du so pah, said that swimming

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 10-11.

was really enjoyed especially after a day of hard traveling. They also mentioned that the girls and the younger women played tag games in the water, but not as strenuously as did the boys."<sup>98</sup> Comanche men and older boys typically ventured a mile or so away from the encampment to swim in order to avoid being seen by the girls and women and out of respect for the females. The boys engaged in water games that would build stamina, strength, courage and resolution, and encourage a fighting spirit that could be useful in later real life situations. "The boys played tag games in the water, and the last one to get tagged was usually considered the best swimmer. Diving from tree branches and swinging on grapevines into the water was one of the favorite sports enjoyed by the boys. The boys also liked to display their ability to swim under water to see who could go the greatest distance. All these games played in the water gave the boys endurance and the one's that showed the most ability to do these things were respected by the others".<sup>99</sup>

Comanche boys also engaged frequently in wrestling games. "Post Oak Jim stated that wrestling was his favorite sport for he was a husky lad and was capable of holding his own with most of the boys that were much older and threw him down. 'This activity gave us a lot of fun, and the opportunity to help us make our bodies strong, and have confidence in ourselves. We would respect the boys that were good wrestlers for the strength they had developed".<sup>100</sup>

Physical activity as an aspect of Comanche education persevered through the reservation era

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 7-8.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 34.

and continued into the boarding school experiences of many Comanche children. Both boarding schools and athletics will be addressed in a subsequent chapter.

From riding horses at an extremely young age to engaging in swimming, running, wrestling or kicking games, each activity was preparing young people for the future response that might save their lives, while instilling the Comanche ethos. “Playing with mud was another favorite pastime of the children. They would make figures of people, animals, teepees, and portray the camp life in all its activities. When someone yelled, a raid by the enemy tribe, they would scatter their playthings, and run into the woods to seek safety. The boys would come running to meet the imaginary enemy, and drive them away. This game was played by the boys and girls up to eleven years of age.”<sup>101</sup> These games and similar working practices paid off during raids by enemy tribes; while the Comanche themselves raided a great deal, Comanche women and children had to be prepared when the tables were turned. “In time of raids by enemy tribes, a hole was dug big enough for them to hide in by covering themselves with buffalo robes. These holes were usually dug in the middle of the tepees by the women, children, and the old people. In this manner they would keep from getting shot or getting hurt.”<sup>102</sup>

Previous studies have discussed the fact the Comanche were fierce warriors. This can be called the Comanche “warrior ethos,” and while I agree that this is true, it is only a single part of the whole, which is the Comanche ethos. By this I am advancing the idea that soon after children were old enough to walk and talk they were immersed in the Comanche ethos but

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 22.

becoming a warrior was only one part. Even before they could walk or talk, Comanche babies were brought along, regardless of the activity that involved their mothers. Comanche babies were transported in their cradleboards and they remained in cradleboards where they could watch the events and activities of the day. "The mothers often would stand the cradles with their babies in them against the trees, and gather wood. The babies were no trouble for they would watch the trees and leaves moving back and forth. Sometimes the mothers would carry them on their backs in cradles and carry on their work."<sup>103</sup> Propped up and bundled tightly in a cradleboard allowed the baby to feel secure and content while visually stimulated. "The cradle board was either a sort of basket made of rawhide fastened to a flat, angular board or a soft buckskin sheath that laced up the front and was anchored to a back board."<sup>104</sup> This tradition continues for many Comanche people and both of my own children spent many days in a cradleboard as infants.

Once Comanche babies became toddlers they were occupied, like children from all cultures, with toys made by family members. "The children played with dolls, cradles and teepees made from scraps of buckskins. The older sisters, mothers, and grandmothers would make these playthings for them."<sup>105</sup> To-Wick-Ah's mother Ho-Vah-wert-te-ah would have certainly been raised with the Comanche ethos. As a young girl in the early nineteenth century she would have learned how to sew with sinew, tan hides and make moccasins and clothing out of buckskin. In addition she would have been taken out into the woods and into the fields in order to become cognizant of the various herbs, roots, and berries utilized both as food and

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 32-33.

<sup>104</sup> Wallace and Hoebel, *The Comanches: Lords of the South Plains*, 120.

<sup>105</sup> Tippeconnic, "Comanche Indian Customs With Educational Implications", 8.

medicine. Comanche girls were also taught that “To be industrious in your family was to the girls advantage, for the people would say, ‘that girl is a good worker’ and to have this sort of reputation was an honor of much significance to the mothers and the girls.”<sup>106</sup> Young boys and girls were also encouraged to create items to entertain themselves out of scraps of material. While the girls busied themselves with crafting clothing items as well as cradles and miniature tepees and hairbrushes, boys fashioned bows and arrows, drums, shields, quivers, rope and miniature bridles.<sup>107</sup> Older children were expected to be companions to their younger siblings as well as helping to look after them. Children were also praised for playing well with their playmates. Historians and ethnographers like Wallace and Hoebel, Kavanagh, and Fehrenbach as well as others who have produced work on the Comanche have focused on the ferocity of the people in battle and of their prowess in warfare, and while aspects of this are certainly true, those studies have been written from the outside looking in. Looking from the inside out through a Comanche perspective, the focus shifts to the Comanche ethos, and warfare was only one part of this ethos.

The Comanche certainly had a code of ethics that guided their behavior. While this code was not spelled out or codified, it assuredly was ingrained as part of the Comanche ethos from a very early age and continued through the advanced stages of life. “Whatever the people disapproved was refrained from by the whole tribe. This created a strong public sentiment against stealing, fighting, killing within the tribe, lying, cheating, and any acts of ill nature.”<sup>108</sup> Comanche people stressed the importance of telling the truth and of being trustworthy as well.

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 45.

“We were trained by our grandparents, mothers, and fathers to always tell the truth for to fool somebody by telling a lie was hard to overcome. You were given the reputation of being unreliable and were looked upon as a person not capable of doing anything in honesty. Your parents and relatives would question your remarks and would say ‘he is not telling the truth, he can not tell the truth.’”<sup>109</sup> Most earlier histories written about Comanche focus on the warrior ethos and the fierceness, and at times, cold cruelty of the people. While this most assuredly is the position held by Comanche enemies, one must consider the context in which these assessments were made. Conversely, within Comanche society the Comanche ethos required the people to be kind, generous and compassionate to their own.

Once Comanche children reached the age of six, they understood the necessity of being honest regarding their actions. In addition, they understood the importance of being reliable. In the Comanche world of the early to mid-nineteenth century a favorable reputation was vital in order to procure and then sustain the prestige sought by individuals like To-wick-ah. Wallace and Hoebel,

. . . he was shown by word and example that the respect and approbation of his fellow tribesman were to be desired, and their condemnation and contempt were to be dreaded and avoided. He saw that the men who were brave and generous were applauded and respected. In Comanche society it was impossible to live a secluded life. The members were aware of the conduct of each person. Each were eager for the approval of his fellows and greedy for their

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 34.



praise, and public opinion promised the reward he hoped for and threatened the punishment he feared-lack of esteem among The People.<sup>110</sup>

Disapproval from your peers was something each Comanche tried to avoid at all costs. In a community where most of life was essentially transparent, one's reputation was paramount for the proper recognition and prestige required to advance in this society. This idea was ingrained in children and it was through the Comanche ethos that youngsters were taught to avoid disapproval.

If one did not do it one's reputation was lowered in the minds of the people. It was anti social for a boy or a girl, or anybody, to cheat or steal for the people. Look upon these acts with great disapproval. Anyone that was guilty of such acts was considered very untrustworthy by the tribe. The parents would tell their children to do exactly what was told, to be accustomed to doing it, and to build up a habit of being trustworthy. To be on your honor and to be true to your friends and parents would make one strong in mind and brave in heart.<sup>111</sup>

Certainly most cultures, if not all, strive to bring their children up to be respectful and obedient. In addition, as we all know children make mistakes; however, it was not customary to utilize corporal punishment to punish mishaps. "They were not whipped or punished in any way"<sup>112</sup> Wallace & Hoebel's research reinforces this fact, "The Comanche did not whip or

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<sup>110</sup> Wallace and Hoebel, *The Comanches: Lords of the South Plains*, 124.

<sup>111</sup> Tippeconnic, "Comanche Indian Customs With Educational Implications", 34-35.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

otherwise bodily punish their children but directed them by persuasion and object lessons.”<sup>113</sup> Instead of corporal punishment teasing was utilized and brought the type of recognition Comanche children hoped to avoid. During the boarding school era Comanche children, like all Indigenous students in federal schools, were exposed for the first time to corporal punishment. This practice would alter Indigenous communities for generations to come and will be addressed in a subsequent chapter.

Comanche children learned through observation the appropriate conduct when greeting others. When children saw adults meeting an acquaintance they would notice that they would say “Ha hi chee” (hello my friend) followed by “ho na su yay” (what do you want), or they might hear someone enquire “ha ca pu mia” (where are you going). If an individual were walking past another, out of respect it was customary to say “passing in front of you.” When an individual called on another inside of his lodge, it was customary before entering to say “I am coming to see you.” If there was no response, the individual continued along his way. If there was an invitation to come in, the visitor was seated, provided water and a pipe to smoke. Conversation ensued until the visitor stated, “I am ready to leave.”<sup>114</sup>

Comanche children like To-wick-ha were encouraged to explore their environment and express themselves freely. Parents provided the instruction necessary at home but during down time kept out of the children’s way. The people trusted their children because they were taught to take care of themselves at an early age. Children knew how to avoid dangerous situations and places where snakes or insects were typically found. “One very seldom heard of any one

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<sup>113</sup> Wallace and Hoebel, *The Comanches: Lords of the South Plains*, 124.

<sup>114</sup> Tuppeconnic, “Comanche Indian Customs With Educational Implications”, 11.

drowning or getting hurt very seriously in play.”<sup>115</sup> It was also ingrained in Comanche children from an early age to revere the head of the family. When a Comanche father spoke, it was understood that all should remain silent until he was through. This lesson was cemented at a young age and manifested itself in Comanche adults in their respect and reverence for band leaders later in life. Once advice was doled out, children responded appropriately by saying “I will do it that way” or “I will remember what you have said to me.” A father’s influence was secure by the time children reached the age of twelve and remained strong well into adulthood. Like most cultures, the Comanche recognized that training in the tribe’s ways was vital at this stage in a child’s development.<sup>116</sup> To-wick-ah, like all Comanche born free in the pre-reservation era, would have been trained in this manner. In addition to lessons in respect and behavior, one activity that most children looked forward to was story telling.

Story telling typically took place before bedtime. Scholars Earnest Wallace and E. Adamson Hoebel have advanced the notion that story telling only occurred during the winter months.<sup>117</sup> Among the Comanche story telling most assuredly occurred year round. During story telling sessions children learned quickly that if they showed any signs of not paying attention the story would cease until their attention was again secured. “All the children would soon learn how to be attentive and quiet; for they always wanted to hear as many as they could, before they would get really sleepy. The stories usually embodied some sort of moral lesson, for us to think about and want to do in life. Some stories were funny, and they were

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 21-22.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>117</sup> Wallace and Hoebel, *The Comanches: Lords of the South Plains*, 129.

used to make us laugh and be happy. The majority of the stories were about animals, and the heroic deeds of brave warriors, who were noted for their fighting or hunting.”<sup>118</sup>

The stories relayed to the children in the form of entertainment were crucial to inculcating Comanche children with inspiration for their own future achievements. In addition, stories reinforced elements of the Comanche ethos, while motivating the young to continue the tradition. One story that tried to relay the Comanche ethos and the importance of being honest features a young girl who visited a neighboring camp. While she was playing with another young girl, she decided that she liked a doll that belonged to her host. She liked it so much that when it was time for them to go she took it without the knowledge of the owner. Knowing full well that she would not be able to play with it once she arrived home without having to explain her actions, she hid it in a hollow of a tree while she traveled with her mom back to her camp in the dark. The young girl committed an offense against another Comanche by stealing. Moreover, since her dishonesty would be discovered if she took the doll home, she hid it in the hollow of a tree and by doing so denied herself the pleasure of playing with the doll. The lesson here is that her theft not only hurt another Comanche’s feelings, she unknowingly denied two people the pleasure of playing with the doll ever again.<sup>119</sup> Many stories included brave deeds in which the horse was a crucial element. For Comanche people the horse was a conduit in which to pass along the Comanche ethos. Another story relays an occasion after a Comanche war party stole horses from Mexico and came upon a hacienda as they were driving the herd north. The war party decided to go in. Once inside they captured a women and departed after tying

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<sup>118</sup> Tippeconnic, “Comanche Indian Customs With Educational Implications”, 9.

<sup>119</sup> G.M., Buller (May, 1977). “Comanche Oral Narratives” (PhD dissertation, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Lincoln, 1977), (77-18,721) 174.

her up and placing her on a horse. This story, was not meant as a way to relay a moral lesson. Instead, it was meant to provide information for young men to use when the time came for them to participate in raids and war. <sup>120</sup> To-Wick-ah spent his early years growing up amongst his band on the southern plains and was introduced to the horse by age three. By the time of the Medicine Lodge Creek Treaty To-wick-ah would have been getting close to the age in which young men were brought along on raids. On October 21, 1867, seventy miles south of Fort Larned, at the council camp on Medicine Lodge Creek, in the state of Kansas representatives from the Kiowa and Comanche tribes entered into an agreement with U.S. commissioners that would alter their lives forever<sup>121</sup>

In the years immediately preceding and following the end of the Civil War hostilities between numerous Indigenous nations and Americans escalated. In 1864, Colonel John Chivington led a large group of Colorado militia troops that attacked and killed 130 Cheyenne and Arapaho. Most of the victims were the elderly or women and children. <sup>122</sup> In *The Indian Frontier of the American West 1846-1890*, historian Robert M. Utley notes, “At daybreak on November 29, 1864, Chivington deployed his column of seven hundred men and charged into Black Kettle’s sleeping camp, which sheltered about five hundred Indians. Black kettle hoisted an American flag and a white flag over his lodge and tried to calm his startled people...Men, women, children, and even infants perished in the orgy of slaughter, their bodies then scalped

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 158.

<sup>121</sup> “Treaty with the Kiowa and Comanche, 1867” (Medicine Lodge Treaty). 15 Stats. 581, Oct. 21, 1867. Ratified July 25, 1868; proclaimed Aug. 25, 1868. In Charles J. Kappler, compiler and editor, *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties – Vol. II: Treaties*, p. 977-982. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1904. <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/kappler/vol2/treaties/kio0977.htm> (accessed January 20, 2016).

<sup>122</sup> Brent Learned. 2014. *One November Morning*. Acrylic on Canvas, Pueblo, Colorado.

and barbarously mutilated.”<sup>123</sup> In the same month, November 1864, south of the Arkansas River both Comanches and Kiowas engaged in a battle at Adobe Walls against Kit Carson and his New Mexico volunteers. Carson was sent to end the Comanche harassment of Americans crossing the Santa Fe Trail. <sup>124</sup> Following the Confederate surrender at Appomattox Courthouse, Americans in the East flocked west by the thousands. Migrating Americans traversed directly through the homes of native plains inhabitants. “The federal government made only token efforts to negotiate with the powerful nomadic Indian nations of the western plains for right-of-ways across their lands. Overlanders became trespassers and killings became routine. In some instances Americans triggered the bloodshed; in others they stepped into pockets of long existing violence.”<sup>125</sup> By 1867, the Comanche intensified their attacks in Texas from the Red River in the north to San Antonio in the south. To make matters worse for Texans, Lipans attacked them from south of San Antonio. In this vast area of Texas settlers fled Comanche attacks and several counties reported population losses. “As a half century earlier, in the late Spanish and Mexican eras, Texas was disintegrating under Comanche pressure” <sup>126</sup>

Events like these pushed the Indian question to the forefront of the post-Civil War American agenda. This, coupled with the fact that a transcontinental railroad was already under construction, helped motivate U.S. efforts to come up with an answer to the Indian question. The U.S. Congress created an Indian Peace Commission in order to negotiate treaties with Indians in the west. Among other goals, the Indian Peace Commission intended to clear a large

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<sup>123</sup> Robert M. Utley, *The Indian Frontier of the American West, 1846-1890* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984), 92.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>125</sup> Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire*, 321.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 320.

region of the plains for development. With that in mind, “. . . the commissioners set out to relocate Indian nations in two out-of-the-way reservations. The Lakotas, Northern Cheyennes, Northern Arapahoes, and Crows would share a reservation in the Black Hills country of Dakota Territory, and the Comanches, Kiowas, Naishans, Southern Cheyennes, and Southern Arapahoes would be collected and confined in Western Indian Territory.”<sup>127</sup> With this goal in mind, the U.S. government convened a great gathering in Kansas on Medicine Lodge Creek.

Although five thousand native people gathered at this site, the Kiowas and Comanches led the discussions on the Indigenous side. “A brush arbor erected in a grove of trees shaded the negotiations. It resounded with the eloquent and sometimes pointed oratory of the chiefs, resplendent in their best finery, and the labored explanations of the white peace talkers, also imposing in frock coats and full military uniforms.”<sup>128</sup> The Chief Commissioner representing the U.S. government was Nathaniel G. Taylor.<sup>129</sup> Treaty articles authorized a residence for a physician on the reservation as well as buildings for a carpenter, blacksmith, miller and an engineer.<sup>130</sup> Yet another article required children between the ages of six and sixteen to attend school.<sup>131</sup> While another article stipulated that gender appropriate clothing would be doled out,<sup>132</sup> still another article revealed U.S. motives, by requiring the Comanches and other tribes represented to withdraw all of their opposition to the construction of railroads.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 322.

<sup>128</sup> Utley, *The Indian Frontier of the American West, 1846-1890*, 114.

<sup>129</sup> “Treaty with the Kiowa and Comanche, 1867” (Medicine Lodge Treaty). 15 Stats. 581, Oct. 21, 1867. Ratified July 25, 1868; proclaimed Aug. 25, 1868. In Charles J. Kappler, compiler and editor, *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties – Vol. II: Treaties*, p. 977-982. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1904. <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/kappler/vol2/treaties/kio0977.htm> (accessed January 20, 2016).

<sup>130</sup> “Treaty with the Kiowa and Comanche, 1867” (Medicine Lodge Treaty), article 4, 978.

<sup>131</sup> “Treaty with the Kiowa and Comanche, 1867” (Medicine Lodge Treaty), article 7, 979.

<sup>132</sup> “Treaty with the Kiowa and Comanche, 1867” (Medicine Lodge Treaty), article 10, 980.

<sup>133</sup> “Treaty with the Kiowa and Comanche, 1867” (Medicine Lodge Treaty), article 11, 980.

Tippeconnic was born in 1854, while the Comanche still lived free on the plains.<sup>134</sup> He was only thirteen years old when Ten Bears and a handful of other Comanche headmen signed the Medicine Lodge Treaty in Kansas. Since representatives from every Comanche band were not present at the signing of the Medicine Lodge Treaty, many Comanche felt that they were not bound by the agreement. However, this Treaty initiated the appropriation of Comanche land. The U.S. government's intention was to end the hostilities between indigenous nations and white settlers. They attempted to do so by trying to civilize the Indian. The United States government wanted plains people to settle down and live in one place and cease their nomadic lifestyles, which the government believed contributed to the tension between races. The U.S. Peace Commission, which negotiated several treaties at this time, included the Civil War general William T. Sherman. Kavanaugh notes that President Andrew Johnson authorized the peace commission to provide, ". . . comfortable homes upon our richest agricultural lands...to build...school houses and churches, and provide teachers to educate his children. We can furnish...agricultural implements to work, and domesticate cattle, sheep, and hogs."<sup>135</sup>

One of the provisions of the Medicine Lodge treaty provided that the Comanche settle on a reservation. Yet only ten Comanche men signed the treaty and not all bands were represented at the council. The Yamparika chief Ten Bears appeared to speak for all the Comanche but this interpretation of his importance contradicted traditional Comanche political organization. "The powerful Meat eaters and Antelopes did not sign. Probably a third of the

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<sup>134</sup> Goodin, "Deyo Mission Cemetery", 5.

<sup>135</sup> Kavanaugh, *The Comanches: A History 1706-1875*, 413.



Comanche were not represented at all, but in the end they had to accept the inevitable. They all became reservation Indians.”<sup>136</sup>

Regardless of the absence of some of the Comanche headmen at the treaty negotiations, the U.S. government recognized Paruasemena (Ten Bears) as the authority for all Comanche bands. As stipulated in the Medicine Lodge Creek Treaty, the reservation boundary began “. . . at a point where the Washita River crosses the 98<sup>th</sup> meridian, west from Greenwich; thence up the Washita River, in the middle of the main channel thereof, to a point thirty miles, by river, west of Fort Cobb, . . . due west to the north fork of the Red River. . . thence down said north fork, in the middle of the main channel thereof, from the point where it may be first intersected by the lines above described, to the main Red River.”<sup>137</sup> These boundaries were outside Texas, where bands like the Quahada generally resided. Efforts to assimilate the Comanche on the part of the United States soon began. Each Comanche family head was expected to reside in a government constructed house. Thus, with a stroke of a pen at the Medicine Lodge treaty council, the U.S. government expected the Comanche to transform from an independent nomadic hunting people to a sedentary farming society. The reservation was composed of 2,968,893 acres of land. In the pre reservation era Comancheria was 153,600,000 acres. Comanche land holdings were massively decreased.

The Comanche and the U.S. commissioners both interpreted the treaty differently. From the point of view of the U.S. government “. . . Comanches, by accepting a reservation, had given up all claims to the lands that had been determined as their reservation in the 1865 Little

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<sup>136</sup> Wallace and Hoebel, *The Comanches: Lords of the South Plains*, 312.

<sup>137</sup> “Treaty with the Kiowa and Comanche, 1867” (Medicine Lodge Treaty), article 2, 977.

Arkansas Treaty.<sup>138</sup> According to this earlier treaty, the Comanche retained hunting privileges below the little Arkansas River as long as buffalo remained. In other words, from the Comanche perspective, agreeing to terms at Medicine Lodge Creek did not cancel out their hunting rights from a previous agreement. In addition, as one historian notes, “But for Comanches, that hunting privilege *was* ownership. Whereas Americans made a clear distinction between the use and ownership of land, Comanches regarded them as inexorably linked; they saw themselves as custodians, looking after the land for their future generations simply by living on it. As long as there were Comanches residing on a piece of land, the generational cycle would continue, and the land would remain theirs. By guaranteeing Comanche’s right to hunt and dwell on the open plains below the Arkansas Valley, the treaty seemed to sanction rather than alter the existing territorial status quo.”<sup>139</sup>

All but one of the Comanche chiefs spurned houses on the reservation. The manner in which the Comanche viewed the reservation differed greatly from the American perspective. The position of the U.S. government was clear; by accepting the terms of the treaty the Comanche, would now permanently reside within the borders of the reservation. However, Comanches saw the reservation differently; from their perspective they had only agreed to make it their permanent home while not making a permanent settlement elsewhere. What this meant was that the Comanche would simply work the reservation into their annual nomadic

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<sup>138</sup> Treaty of Little Arkansas River, October 14, 1865. (Ratified Indian Treaties #341, 14 STAT 703) between the U.S. and Arapahoe and Cheyenne Indians (Black Kettle Band); General Records of the United States Government, Record Group 11. [https://www.docsteach.org/document/treaty-of-little-arkansas-river-october-14-1865-ratified-indian-treaties-341-14-stat-703-between-the-us-and-arapahoe-and-cheyenne-indians-black-kettle-band-granting-lands-in-reparation-for-the-sand-cr-\(accessed January 20, 2016\)](https://www.docsteach.org/document/treaty-of-little-arkansas-river-october-14-1865-ratified-indian-treaties-341-14-stat-703-between-the-us-and-arapahoe-and-cheyenne-indians-black-kettle-band-granting-lands-in-reparation-for-the-sand-cr-(accessed%20January%2020,%202016).).

<sup>139</sup> Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire*, 324.

patterns. They would utilize the reservation as a supply base. “In a sense, Comanches incorporated the reservation into their traditional yearly cycle as a different kind of river valley: like river bottoms, the reservation provided food and shelter during the cold months, and like the river valleys, it never held the appeal of the open grasslands.”<sup>140</sup>

Two Comanche bands ended up settling permanently within the parameters of the reservation. However the majority of Comanche bands, including the band Tippeconnic belonged to, the Yamparika, still resided on the Texas plains. Although the reservation era for the Comanche had begun, it would not immediately accomplish the desired effect of settling all tribal members.<sup>141</sup> Young warriors still ventured into Texas, as Noyes notes, “Because of the Comanche warrior ethos and because the people had never become convinced that their old enemies the Texans were really Americans and therefore parties to the treaty, young warriors, seeking prestige, loot, captives, and horses, soon began raiding again.”<sup>142</sup>

Tippeconnic learned to ride a horse as all Comanche youth did at an extremely young age. “By around the age of five, the boy was riding his own pony and practicing with his toy bow and arrows”.<sup>143</sup> The horse was a tool in which traditional Comanche education was transmitted. Succinctly put, from the late seventeenth century to the reservation era, the horse was the most vital element that enabled the Comanche to reach their zenith as a people. The

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<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 326.

<sup>141</sup> Tippeconnic family oral narratives contend that To-Wick-ah aka Tippeconnic, belonged to the Quahada band however, US Government census roles list To-Wick-ah under Cheevers Yamparika band. It is very possible that To-Wick-ah did belong to the Quahada and simply chose to live with the Yamparika after the reservation era commenced or that he switched bands prior to the reservation era. Another possibility is that US census recorders made an error. Regardless, he is listed under Cheevers and the Yamparika.

<sup>142</sup> Noyes, *Los Comanches: The Horse People*, 5.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 36.

horse was both an educational tool and a conduit for knowledge transference that allowed the Comanche to survive, thrive, dominate and expand. The horse provided my great grandfather with an opportunity for social advancement.

Tippeconnic was between seventeen and eighteen years old when he embarked upon the mission that inspired the name bestowed upon him. Although the reservation era began with the ratification of the Treaty of Medicine Lodge Creek, Numunu warriors continued to slip beyond the boundaries of the reservation seeking to advance their social status by stealing horses from the enemy. Tippeconnic was still a young warrior and was most likely exercising his right to establish himself not only as a viable adult but to elevate his standing within the tribe. For the Comanche male a horse was a multipurpose vehicle. With it one could achieve prestige and gain the independence needed to become a productive adult. To achieve this, an individual needed to prove his ability to be free of his family's care. The horse provided the Comanche male with all of these things. However this was only part of the equation. Securing a wife, who would only agree to the union if she deemed her partner worthy, was essential in the quest for prestige. Furthermore, a woman was free to leave her husband at any time if she felt he was not living up to his responsibilities.

By 1875, the Quahada band of Comanche had made their way to the Ft. Sill reservation. Eight years after the Treaty of Medicine Lodge Creek was negotiated, the final band had peacefully surrendered to the United States. Prior to the Quahada surrender it was not uncommon for Comanche warriors from other bands to slip off and join their Quahada kin and

or engage in raids and return to the reservation.<sup>144</sup> However the arrival of the Quahada, signaled the end of an era. The Comanche and Tippeconnic, now at the ripe age of twenty-one, along with the rest of his tribe, had to adjust to lives confined to a reservation. For the Comanche this amounted to a geographical prison. One June evening, a group of young Comanche men decided to break out of this “prison,” with every intention of returning. The scorching heat, coupled with the humid air, marked the night and attached itself like a heavy oppressive layer of additional clothing to the bodies of these Comanche men as they moved calmly and intently toward the quartermaster corral at Fort Sill. These *Numunu* men arrived at the corral with the advantage of total acclimation to the climate conditions that often immobilized intruders into a lethargic state of apathy during the unforgiving summer nights. Perhaps these conditions led the soldiers to introspectively ponder the logic of their decision to join the military that assigned them to this inhospitable environment. The Numunu warriors belonged to a people who had long been known as the dominant horse culture on the southern plains.<sup>145</sup> The young Numunu men on this night simply continued a tradition of horse stealing from their enemies, and they successfully liberated over fifty horses and mules from the United States Military.

The name of one of the Numunu men who led this mission is To-Wick-Ah, my paternal great grandfather. Prior to 1875, when the last band of Quahada peacefully marched into Ft. Sill, or as the Comanches called it, Pu-hi-ti-pinab, a Comanche could receive a new name several times over the course of his lifetime.<sup>146</sup> Usually this occurred when that person achieved a feat

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<sup>144</sup> Hagan, *United States-Comanche Relations: The Reservation Year*, 119.

<sup>145</sup> For explanation of “Numunu” see page 28.

<sup>146</sup> Meaning, where the soldiers live at Medicine Bluff

that distinguished him from his peers. Once something noteworthy marked this person, such as the horse raid at Ft. Sill, a name was bestowed upon him and it might or might not stick. Once an individual Numunu gained a new name his previous one was rarely spoken again.<sup>147</sup> After the raid, when To-Wick-Ah was taken into custody, U.S. troops placed him in the guardhouse erected at Ft. Sill to imprison hostile Indians. The guardhouse is a formidable structure constructed with large sandstone blocks. The individual walls of the cells are between two and three feet thick. No word exists in the Comanche language for guardhouse, so they described it as *Tupi-Kuni*, meaning rock house. Since he had spent some time within the confines of this structure, this was the name (Tupi-Kuni) given to this young Yamparika man. The Comanche did not possess a written language at this time. By the time To-Wick-Ah's new name (Tippeconnic) appeared on the census, it is apparent that it had been phonetically sounded out and recorded. When Tupi-Kuni's name made it onto this list, it was spelled Tippeconnic.

A letter addressed to Indian Agent Lawrie Tatum in 1872, and written with glorious penmanship notes, "Sir, Last year the Indians were numbered as follows Kiowas 1896 Apaches 375 Comanches 2742 Affiliated bands 1916. Please send me the corrected numbers of these bands at the present time to enable me to make a report called for by the Division Commander. I would like to have this statement this evening. Very Respectfully B.H. Grierson." The Violin playing cavalry officer was known to have invited Indians to his house for meals.<sup>148</sup> "When they complained that their women and children were hungry, he gave them an order on the post

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<sup>147</sup> This is referring to everyday conversations between Comanches, To-wick-ah appears again on various government documents after the name Tippeconnic appears on the official record.

<sup>148</sup> Colonel W.S. Nye, *Carbine and Lance: The Story of Old Fort Sill*, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1969, 106.

bakery for bread.”<sup>149</sup> If this population count is accurate it implies that the first few years of reservation life (1878-1885) were challenging for the Comanche. Hagan notes, “These were difficult years for the Indians: the buffalo disappeared, the United States attempted to coerce them into becoming self-supporting farmers and stock raisers, and white men encroached upon the reservation. For the first time, reasonably accurate census figures were available revealing the Comanche population to be about 1550, perhaps a 50 percent decline in the decade since the Treaty of Medicine Lodge.”<sup>150</sup> The vanishing buffalo herds only made matters worse during the reservation years as the Comanche had to rely more on rations doled out by the Indian Agent. Foster notes, “Within the reservation, Anglos controlled the distribution of nearly all the economic resources upon which the Comanche depended. Rations were handed out at Fort Sill once every two weeks or when available until 1879, when the agency was relocated to what is now Anadarko.”<sup>151</sup> In order to supplement their government rations the Comanche participated in a winter buffalo hunt until 1879.<sup>152</sup> “The amount of rations allowed the Indians under the terms of the Medicine Lodge treaty was based on the theory that the principal part of their sustenance would be provided by hunting buffalo, or, when the wild game was gone, that the Indians would be able to support themselves by farming and stock raising. Unfortunately the buffalo were exterminated much sooner than had been anticipated, and the Indians in the

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<sup>149</sup> Indian Archives Collection, Archives Manuscripts Division Oklahoma Historical Society, Kiowa Agency Census, Letters Sent and Received February 15, 1872-August 29, 1914. Colonel H. B. Grierson to Lawrie Tatum, February 15, 1872.

<sup>150</sup> Hagan, *United States-Comanche Relations: The Reservation Years*, 62.

<sup>151</sup> Foster, *Being Comanche: A Social History of an American Indian Community*, 79.

<sup>152</sup> No buffaloes were spotted during the 1879 winter buffalo hunt bringing this short-lived tradition to an end.

short period intervening had not become farmers or stockmen. Hence by 1878 they were practically starving.”<sup>153</sup>

At first glance the surrender in 1875 appears to be an acknowledgement of defeat. However, by defying the terms of Medicine Lodge for eight years, the Antelopes managed to surrender on their own terms. Ultimately, through legislation such as the Dawes Act (1887) and, subsequently, through education, the Comanche would assimilate, but they would do so on their own terms and they would never abandon their culture. An example of this can be seen in the Comanche’s approach to the allotment process. Allotment was more devastating to the Comanche than the previous transition from a life in Comancheria to a life on the reservation because the purpose of the act was to dissolve tribalism. Before allotment, while the Comanche had to adjust to reservation life, groups still resided in close proximity to each other. It is clear that the horse would no longer have the place in Comanche life that it had held before the reservation era. Comanche children began attending school and would continue to do so as the allotment period kicked in for the Comanche, beginning in 1901. The transference of the Comanche ethos required a new method.

I contend that the conduit for this conveyance was facilitated through education. Just as the Comanche had utilized a European animal, the horse, to voluntarily change their culture, I contend that through the involuntary changes incurred by the Comanche during the reservation and allotment eras, the people would once again adapt and adopt new methods for cultural transmission that continue to this day. Before this study explores the boarding school

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<sup>153</sup> Nye, *Carbine and Lance: The Story of Old Fort Sill*, 236.



experience for the Comanche, and specifically, the schooling of John Tippeconnic, it is imperative to discuss the Dawes Act, also known as the General Allotment Act.

Massachusetts Senator Henry Dawes was part of an Indian reform movement that went back to 1867. Albert K. Smiley, a member of the Board of Indian Commissioners and part owner of the Lake Mohonk Lodge in upstate New York, initiated the idea of holding an annual meeting where wealthy philanthropists met to discuss American Indian Policies and to make recommendations to the government. This idea came to fruition in 1883. Lake Mohonk hosted annual gatherings at a resort within a satellite range of the Catskill Mountains about a hundred miles up the Hudson River from New York City. Each autumn representatives for the Indian Rights Association, the Boston Indian Citizenship Committee, the Board of Indian Commissioners, the Women's National Indian Association, the Ladies' National Indian League, various members of Congress and other federal officials, and Protestant leaders met to discuss the Indian problem. This gathering of reformers dubbed themselves the Lake Mohonk Conference of the Friends of the Indian. The gatherings also attracted a former U.S. President and military brass as well as the U.S. Commissioner of Indian Affairs. "Lake Mohonk brought together people who had the agenda for the Indian's future as well as the political power to impose it."<sup>154</sup> Three events involving Indigenous peoples received national attention and served as rallying points for the Friends of the Indian in their quest for policy change. First, the Ponca's fight to return from Indian Territory to their home in Nebraska. Second, Chief Joseph's plea that the U.S. allow the Nez Perce to return to their homelands in Oregon, and third an

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<sup>154</sup> Utley, *The Indian Frontier of the American West, 1846-1890*, 207.

attempt that met with tragic consequences in 1878, when a group of Northern Cheyenne fled Indian Territory in an undertaking to return to their homeland in Montana.

Indian reformers in the late nineteenth century were concerned that Indigenous people would cease to exist as a people unless their current situation on reservations was remedied. The Friends of the Indian met to formalize an agenda in order to push for legislation like the Dawes Act. Anthropologist Wilcomb Washburn notes that, “The conference went on to resolve that the organization of Indian tribes is, and has been, one of the most serious hindrances to the advancement of the Indian toward civilization, and that every effort should be made to secure the disintegration of all tribal organizations. . . . That to all Indians who desire to hold their land in severalty allotments should be made without delay; and that to all other Indians like allotments so soon as practical.”<sup>155</sup>

Since initial European contact with Indigenous Americans, the native population had proved to be a barrier to expansion and the subsequent westward movement. The stated intentions of the Friends of the Indian, Senator Dawes included, were ostensibly benevolent, especially with regards to protection of Indian land. Reformers believed that continued encroachment on Indian land would lead to the usurping of the entire Indigenous land base. Therefore, they perceived the Dawes Act as a benign piece of legislation. Samuel Morison and Henry Commager note the intent of the act was, “to protect the Indian in his present land holding. They were confident that if every Indian had his own strip of land, guaranteed by a

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<sup>155</sup> Wilcomb Washburn, *The Assault on Indian Tribalism* (Robert E. Krieger Publishing Company, 1986), 13.

patent from the government, he would enjoy a security which no tribal possession could afford him.”<sup>156</sup>

The Friends of the Indian, “all brought to Lake Mohonk a deep and abiding interest in the Indian and an inflexible commitment to giving him a bright future. They saw nothing worth saving from his past, and they had not the slightest doubt of the rightness and righteousness of their vision of his destiny.”<sup>157</sup> If Indigenous peoples were going to have a future in the United States, the Friends of the Indian believed that U.S. policy should force them to give up their tribal ties. Indigenous peoples must move away from communal customs and move towards individually held plots of land. In short, for Indigenous individuals to survive, they must assimilate and their tribal system must be abandoned. From the perspective of the Indian reform movement, “Once the individual had broken free of his tribal heritage, the reformers’ program would power the final stage, the leap into the mainstream of American life.”<sup>158</sup> In order for this to happen, reservations were to be broken up and Indigenous people forced to own land in severalty. This policy became law with the passage of the Dawes General Allotment Act on February 8<sup>th</sup>, 1887.

For many tribes the impact of the Dawes Act was immediate, however it would take years before it was adversely felt among the Comanche. During this time, some Comanches took to stock raising and participated in a cash economy. “By 1892 reservation herds numbered more than 25,000 head, or five for every Indian.”<sup>159</sup> In addition, between 1885 and 1906, the

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<sup>156</sup> Samuel E. Morison and Henry S. Commager, *The Growth of the American Republic* (London: Oxford University Press, 1942), 13.

<sup>157</sup> Utley, *The Indian Frontier of the American West, 1846-1890*, 210.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 211.

<sup>159</sup> Foster, *Being Comanche: A Social History of an American Indian Community*, 80.

Comanche entered into lease agreements with Texas ranchers. These agreements provided some Comanche with semiannual “grass” payments. Ill equipped to farm on the reservation themselves, this venture gave some Comanche a much needed income. Still other Comanche turned to joining the Indian Police, who ironically spent much of their time chasing off Texas cattle from unleased reservation land. Further, some Comanche participated in the religion that utilized peyote.

For Indigenous Americans in general, the Dawes Act remains the most devastating piece of legislation enacted by the U.S. Congress. By 1887, Indigenous tribes like the Comanche were for the most part subdued and placed on reservations separated from mainstream American society. One of the motivating factors influencing federal Indian policy reformers was strikingly Jeffersonian in origin. A tactic used by Euro-Americans to achieve their version of civilization was private ownership of land. This approach to land was the antithesis of the belief and practices of many Indian nations, including the Comanche, who believed that land should be held communally. Reformers believed that Indians should abandon their “outmoded views” and adopt the western philosophy of individually held lands in order to achieve what they deemed a civilized status, and ensuring their ultimate survival. “The supreme aim of the friends of the Indian was to substitute white civilization for his tribal culture, and they shrewdly sensed that the difference in the concepts of property was fundamental to the contrast between the two ways of life. That the white man’s way was good and the Indians way was bad, all agreed. So on one hand, allotment was counted on to break up tribal life.”<sup>160</sup> It was a commonly held belief that as long as the Indians remained in a communal setting, they would continue to share

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<sup>160</sup> D.S. Otis, *The Dawes Act and the Allotment of Indian Lands* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1934), 177.

their food and engage in what reformers perceived as heathen ceremonies and dances.

Senator Dawes himself held civilization to be the key to Indian survival. “They have got as far as they can go, because they own their own land in common. . . there is no enterprise to make your home any better than that of your neighbors. There is no selfishness, which is at the bottom of civilization. Till this people will consent to give up their lands, and divide them among their citizens so that each can own the land he cultivates, they will not make much more progress.”<sup>161</sup> Comanche were not subject to the Dawes Act until 1901, however in an attempt to break up Comanche bands (tribalism), ration disbursement on the reservation to residence band leaders were halted. Instead, “In a move to accelerate the breakup of those bands, rations were henceforth to be issued to heads of families.”<sup>162</sup>

The Dawes Act provided for the allotment of Indian lands in severalty and intended to extend to allottees the protection of the laws of the United States and the Territories over the Indians. <sup>163</sup> Initially, each head of family received one quarter section, which equaled one hundred sixty acres. <sup>164</sup> On reservations that contained land exceeding the total acreage of allotments, the remaining land could then be sold to non-Indians for development. A common intentional practice was to separate Indian allotments from those of other Indian people in order to discourage tribalism. This practice was accomplished by selling property adjacent to

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid.,11.

<sup>162</sup> Foster, *Being Comanche: A Social History of an American Indian Community*, 87.

<sup>163</sup> Loring Priest, *Uncle Sam’s Stepchildren: the Reformation of United States Indian Policy, 1865-1887* (New York: Octagon Books, 1969), 197.

<sup>164</sup> “General Allotment Act (or Dawes Act), Act of Feb. 8, 1887 (24 Stat. 388, ch. 119, 25 USCA 331), Acts of Forty-ninth Congress-Second Session, 1887”  
[http://digital.library.okstate.edu/kappler/vol1/html\\_files/ses0033.html\\_files/ses0033.html](http://digital.library.okstate.edu/kappler/vol1/html_files/ses0033.html_files/ses0033.html) (accessed January 20, 2016).

Indian allotments to non-Indians, making it difficult for continued relations with other tribal members. Consequently, the lands held by American Indians were decreased considerably.

In 1887, critics of the Dawes legislation who sat on the Committee of Indian Affairs of the House of Representatives argued that the act simply provided justification for non-Indians to procure more Indian land, while overcoming the Indigenous barrier to westward expansion. Conversely, reformers contended that the legislation was a necessary step in the process of civilizing Indigenous peoples. The European American viewpoint on civilization emphasized individual ownership of property. For the reformers who met at the Lake Mohonk conferences to discuss Indian policy, this formula for civilization offered the only hope for Indian survival.

Opponents of the Dawes Act who served on the Committee of Indian Affairs of the House of Representatives, including Pennsylvania Republican Russell Errett, Mississippi Democrat Charles. E. Hooker, and Arkansas Democrat Thomas Montague Gunter, noted in their dissenting opinion to H.R. 5038 that, “The main purpose of this bill is not to help the Indian, or solve the Indian problem, or provide a method for getting out of our Indian troubles so much as it is to provide a method for getting at the valuable Indian lands and opening them up for white settlement”<sup>165</sup> These opinions proved to be consistent with the aims of timber companies, land grabbers, and railroads seeking to procure Indian lands. Indeed there were land grabbers ready to usurp Indigenous lands for their own benefit. Many powerful interests behind allotment were clearly not philanthropic. Dissenters to the proposed Dawes legislation said as much,

The real aim of this bill is to get at the Indian lands and open them up to

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<sup>165</sup> U.S., Congress, House, Committee on Indian Affairs. *Lands in Severalty to Indians: Report to Accompany H.R. 5038, 46<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2d sess., May 28, 1880, H. Rept. 1576, 7-10.*

settlement. The provisions for the apparent benefit of the Indian are but the pretext to get at his lands and occupy them. With that accomplished, we have securely paved the way for the extermination of the Indian races upon this part of the continent. If this were done in the name of Greed, it would be bad enough; but to do it in the name of Humanity, and under the cloak of an ardent desire to promote the Indian's welfare by making him like ourselves, whether he will or not, is infinitely worse. Of all the attempts to encroach upon the Indian, this attempt to manufacture him into a white man by act of Congress and the grace of the Secretary of the Interior is the baldest, the boldest, and the most unjustifiable.<sup>166</sup>

Certainly white homesteaders and railroad company executives had an interest in having the Dawes Act implemented amongst the Comanche people in order to secure their land for their own interests. "About the same time, the boomers found a powerful source of support in the Rock Island Railroad, one line of which ran along the northern limit of the reservation, with another along its eastern edge. Naturally, it was advantageous to the railroad to have heavily populated communities along its routes. Consequently the railroad added its voice to the lobbying in Washington for opening the region and Fort Sill to white homesteaders."<sup>167</sup>

Indeed, the Dawes Act proved to be a method to break up the reservation system but few people in power in the nineteenth century anticipated the dilemma posed by reservations. Supporters of the legislation agreed that it was enacted with the best of intentions aimed at

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Noyes, *Comanches in the New West* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999), 23.

civilizing the Indian. Otis notes, “Let it be said that allotment was first of all a method of destroying the reservation and opening up Indian lands: it was secondly a method of bringing security and civilization to the Indian. . . the allotment system was established as a humane and progressive method of making way for westward movement.”<sup>168</sup> Evidently, reducing the overall land holdings of Indian people by two-thirds was perceived as a humane gesture.

In order to demonstrate that the United States government sanctioned the appropriation of Indigenous lands with the best of intentions, the legislation itself must be examined. The Dawes legislation was, “An act to provide for the allotment of lands in severalty to Indians on the various reservations, and to extend the protection of laws of the United States and the Territories over the Indians, and for other purposes.”<sup>169</sup> In short, the law proposed to divide the existing Indian reservations into allotments that would then be granted to individual tribal members. The legislation reads,

To each head of a family, one quarter of a section; To each single person over eighteen years of age, one eighth of a section; To each orphan child under eighteen years of age, one eighth of a section: and to each other single person under eighteen years now living, or who may be born prior to the date of the order of the President directing an allotment of the lands embraced in any reservation, one sixteenth of a section<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Otis, *The Dawes Act and the Allotment of Indian Lands*, 32.

<sup>169</sup> “General Allotment Act (or Dawes Act), Act of Feb. 8, 1887 (24 Stat. 388, ch. 119, 25 USCA 331), Acts of Forty-ninth Congress-Second Session, 1887” [http://digital.library.okstate.edu/kappler/vol1/html\\_files/ses0033.html\\_files/ses0033.html](http://digital.library.okstate.edu/kappler/vol1/html_files/ses0033.html_files/ses0033.html) (accessed January 20, 2016).

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*



On reservations that contained land exceeding the total acreage of allotments, the remaining land could then be sold to non-Indians for development. The U.S. Government had to deal with the ever expanding need for land for its Euro-American population. "The real aim of this bill is to get at the Indian lands and open them up for settlement. The provisions for the apparent benefit of the Indian are but the pretext to get at his lands and occupy them."<sup>171</sup> Still, there were non-Indians who were willing to advocate for the American Indian. In fact, the words of the House Committee on Indian Affairs not only opposed the bill, but also advocated in their own way for the tribal system. Francis Prucha notes, "Whatever civilization has been reached by the Indian tribes has been attained under the tribal system, and not under the system proposed by this bill."<sup>172</sup>

Proponents of allotment utilized dubious tactics to begin the allotment process. Some form of agreement was usually procured from the Indians, whether by persistent persuasion, fraud, or even intimidation. Once the legislation was enacted, the outcome was the loss of Indian land and serious damage to tribal identities. "And so it went as tribe after tribe fell before the onslaught, the allottees became citizens of the United States. . . but they suffered an unreckoned damage in the liquidation of their own community organizations."<sup>173</sup> The Comanches were fortunate to hold off allotment until the next century, but the coveting of their land by Euro-American groups made the breakup of their reservation inevitable. This reality for Indigenous peoples ran counter to the reformer's benevolent aim of civilizing the

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<sup>171</sup> Francis Prucha, *Americanizing the American Indian: Writings by "Friends of the Indian" 1800-1900* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 128.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, 128-9.

<sup>173</sup> Angie Debo, *A History of the Indians of the United States* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1970), 257.

Indian for his own good, especially if the focus was the quantifiable reality rather than the intentions. The reality was the loss of a considerable land base. In 1887 the Indian land base was 138,000,000 acres; by 1934 it had been reduced to a paltry 47,000,000. Historian Angie Debo notes, "Thus the allotment policy may be traced in Indian office statistics, on maps, in land records, and in the extension of new white frontiers. The account of what actually happened when a specific tribe was liquidated is the real story."<sup>174</sup> Although the loss of their land base was detrimental to Indian people, even more tragic was the loss of tribal identity that resulted from the breaking up of Indigenous communal systems.

Although, Indigenous tribes were required to give up their land base and become farmers, proponents of the Dawes Act failed to find out from Indian people whether or not this adjustment might be beneficial to them. In fact, little attention was given to the desires of Indian people at all and they were spoken of as if they were incapable of reason and therefore should be subjugated as if they were children. "Although the proposal won almost unanimous acclaim from the humanitarian reformers, a few isolated critics feared that the Indians were being pushed into a situation they did not understand, did not want, and could not easily adjust to."<sup>175</sup> Surprisingly the U.S. Congress appears to have at least considered the Indian position, as evidenced in a House Committee on Indian Affairs report. "How many Indians have availed themselves to its provisions? Manifestly, very few; and yet we are told, with great pertinacity, that the Indians are strongly in favor of that policy, and will adopt it if they get a chance. It is surpassing strange, if this be true, that so few have availed themselves to the privileges open to

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid., 267.

<sup>175</sup> Prucha, *Americanizing the American Indian: Writings by "Friends of the Indian" 1800-1900*, 77.

them.”<sup>176</sup> Furthermore, in order to strengthen their opposition to allotment this report drew upon the failed case of the Catawbas, who were assigned lands in severalty, and still saw their lands fall prey to white encroachers. Succinctly put, an Indian does not become a farmer when he is assigned a quarter section of land.<sup>177</sup>

“Boomers and their followers hungered for free land, complaining that the Comanches were not using all of the land deeded to them in perpetuity by the Medicine Lodge Treaty and arguing that reservation acreage should be opened up to white settlers who could improve it.”<sup>178</sup> Following the creation of Oklahoma Territory in 1890, Boomers pressured their congressmen to debate and authorize bills to expedite allotment for the Comanche in order to secure lands for themselves. The absence of the Indigenous voice and the failure to ask what Indigenous people thought of allotment is clearly tragic and resulted in the loss of both culture and land. Indigenous American history demonstrates that while the intentions of the original Friends of the Indian might have been benevolent in their own minds, the act itself soon provided an avenue for the usurping of Indian land. The result was not civilization but pauperization. Historian Ronald Takaki notes,

Forty years after the Dawes Act, the Brookings Institute reported that 55 percent of all Indians had a per capita income of less than two hundred dollars, and that only 2 percent had incomes of more than five hundred dollars per year. In 1933, the federal government found that almost half

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<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>178</sup> Noyes, *Comanches in the New West*, 20.

of the Indians living on reservations that had been subjected to allotment were landless. By then, the Indians had lost about 60 percent of the 138,000,000-acre land base they had owned at the time of the Dawes Act.

Allotment has been transforming Indians to a landless people.<sup>179</sup>

Historian Francis Paul Prucha's analysis enforces the position held by the opponents to the Dawes Act, "The allotment policy was a failure. The Indians, for the most part, did not become self-supporting farmers or ranchers."<sup>180</sup> This certainly was true for most Comanches as noted by Noyes, "The Comanche did not convert from hunters and warriors to happy farmers."<sup>181</sup>

In the early 1890s white squatters illegally occupied the strip in the bend of the Washita River. In addition, railroads put increased pressure upon Washington to break up the reservation. The Comanche were successfully able to hold off allotment until 1900, following the ratification of the Jerome Commission Agreement by Congress. Comanches argued that the land that they would receive in the form of allotments was not suited for farming. Therefore, the allotments needed to exceed the standard one hundred sixty acres because the Comanche would have to raise cattle to survive. In addition, three quarters of the male members of the tribe, according to the Medicine Lodge Creek Treaty, needed to approve the breakup of the reservation. While the breakup of the reservation appeared to be inevitable, the Comanche did their best to delay the process. For the Numunu this process proceeded in July 1900, and was

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<sup>179</sup> Ron Takaki, *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1993), 236.

<sup>180</sup> Prucha, *The Indians in American Society: From the Revolutionary War to the Present*, 48.

<sup>181</sup> Noyes, *Comanches in the New West*, 19.

completed within one year.<sup>182</sup> White squatters and railroad interests eventually secured Indian land through legislation.

In 1889, the non-Indigenous population on lands bordering the Comanche climbed to more than 5,000 inhabitants, who soon called for the allotment of the reservation where the Comanche resided. In March of 1889, the U.S. Congress created a three-man commission to negotiate with the Cherokee tribe as well as other tribes holding land west of the ninety-sixth degree longitude in the Indian Territory. The Chairman of this committee was David H. Jerome. The Comanche were not in favor of allotment, however, the official Comanche position was, "They did not oppose allotment; they merely wanted to delay any sale of their land until they were in a better position to strike out as independent homesteaders."<sup>183</sup> The Comanche were one of the last tribes to be confronted by the commission.

By 1892, the details of the Jerome Agreement had been worked out; however, it would take another eight years before Congress passed the legislation.<sup>184</sup> "In the end, in the spring of 1900, Congress ratified the Jerome Agreement under the terms that provided each individual Indian with 160 acres of land. Another 480,000 acres was to be owned in common by all Comanches, Kiowas and Kowa-Apaches."<sup>185</sup> Tippeconnic's allotment was deposited in the General Land Office of the United States on June 4, 1901. It was issued by the commissioner of Indian affairs and approved by the secretary of the interior the very next day. In Tippeconnic's allotment, which was issued to him under the name To-Wick-Ah, he is described simply as "a

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<sup>182</sup> Hagan, *United States-Comanche Relations: The Reservation Years*, 264.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 204.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, 215.

<sup>185</sup> Noyes, *Comanches in the New West*, 25.

Comanche.”<sup>186</sup> One of Tippeconnic’s wives, Wimmerchy, gave birth to my paternal grandfather John Tippeconnic on August 6, 1901, just nineteen days before President William Mckinley made Tippeconnic’s aka To-Wick-Ah allotment official. McKinley signed the document on August 25, 1901.<sup>187</sup> John was born exactly one month before President Mckinley was assassinated on September 6, 1901 by anarchist Leon Czolgosz, while he was attending the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York. President McKinley was gunned down while the United States was in the midst of its own Imperial expansion in which it gobbled up many peoples, including Cuba, the Philippines, and Hawaii. It can be argued that the allotment process was just an extension of the imperialistic expansion of the United States since the end result was that more land left Indigenous hands and wound up in Uncle Sam’s pockets. Haunani-Kay Trask notes, “The overthrow of the Hawaiian government with American military support in 1893, the subsequent diplomatic and military support given by America to the haole Provisional Government (1893-1894) and to the Republic of Hawai’i (1894-1898), and the eventual appropriation of Hawai’i by the United States through forced annexation in 1898 were the result of America’s imperial desire to control lands and peoples not her own.”<sup>188</sup>

The land held in common by the Comanche, Kiowa and Kiowa Apache was soon coveted by Euro-Americans. Unsatisfied with the 13,000 homesteads that the boomers gained through the opening of the reservation to whites, they set their sight on the common lands. “In late winter 1906 a bill to open the 480,000 acre tract reached the presidents desk. But Roosevelt

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<sup>186</sup> To-Wick-ah (Oklahoma) patent no. OK1130\_.336; “Land Patent Search,” digital images, *General Land Office*. <http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/search/default.aspx> (accessed December 1, 2015).

<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

<sup>188</sup> Haunani-Kay Trask, *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawaii* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999), 27.

sent it back to Congress threatening a veto unless it included more favorable terms for the three tribes. The amended bill. . . stipulated an allotment for each Indian child born after 1900...in June of 1906 President Roosevelt signed the rewritten bill into law.”<sup>189</sup> On the seventh day of December 1908, in the one hundred thirty third year of U.S. Independence, President Theodore Roosevelt signed John Tippeconnic’s 160 acre allotment.<sup>190</sup> Seven years earlier on August 25th, Ni-ni, or Abbie Tippeconnic received 160 acres as did Ni-ve or Irene Towickah. The paperwork for each of their allotments was signed by President William McKinley.<sup>191</sup> Further, Moetad, one of Tippeconnic’s wives received her allotment on the same day.<sup>192</sup>

The Comanche generally selected homesteads south of the Wichita Mountains.<sup>193</sup> Tippeconnic selected one of the allotments south of the present -day town of Cache, Oklahoma. He chose a tract of land that Cache Creek runs directly through. On the west end of his allotment rises a conical shaped hill about forty feet high. Tippeconnic had become a medicine man by this time, an event that had most likely occurred during the pre-allotment reservation years between 1875 and 1900. Rising steeply out of the Oklahoma plains, this landmark is known as Medicine Hill, and it is the location where Tippeconnic performed many ceremonies. It is logical to surmise that Tippeconnic selected his allotment site with this unique geographical feature in mind. In 1900, Tippeconnic was forty-six years old and well known in Comanche

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<sup>189</sup> Noyes, *Comanches in the New West*, 25.

<sup>190</sup> John Tippeconnic (Oklahoma) patent no. 32893; “Land Patent Search,” digital images, *General Land Office*. <http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/search/default.aspx> (accessed July 1, 2015).

<sup>191</sup> Ni-Ne Tippeconnie (Oklahoma) patent no. OK1130\_.339; “Land Patent Search,” digital images, *General Land Office*. <http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/search/default.aspx> (accessed July 1, 2015). Ni-ve, or Irene Towickah, a Comanche (Oklahoma) patent no. OK1130\_.338; “Land Patent Search,” digital images, *General Land Office*. <http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/search/default.aspx> (accessed July 1, 2015).

<sup>192</sup> Mo-e-tad, or Annie, a Comanche (Oklahoma) patent no. OK1130\_.337; “Land Patent Search,” digital images, *General Land Office*. <http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/search/default.aspx> (accessed July 1, 2015).

<sup>193</sup> Hagan, *United States-Comanche Relations: The Reservation Years*, 265.

circles as a medicine man. From 1900 until his death in 1934, his Comanche brethren traveled by horse, wagon, and later by motor vehicle to procure his medicinal services. One man who visited Tippeconnic was the principal Comanche Chief, Quanah Parker.

During his lifetime forty to fifty head of horses had free reign on Tippeconnic's land, providing evidence of his status as a Comanche man and a testament to his wealth. In addition, the horses provided Tippeconnic with a connection to the era in which his people had roamed the southern plains. Moreover, some of these horses undoubtedly were procured as payment for his medicinal services. Tippeconnic, like all Comanche, ultimately succumbed to the reservation and then to allotment; however, he did so on his own terms.

Throughout these turbulent years of change Tippeconnic remained adamantly opposed to certain markers of white civilization. While he constructed a house on his land for his legal wife and children, he almost certainly lived in a tepee made of canvas fabricated from material that, prior to 1900, was routinely part of the rations Comanche received from the Indian agent. Furthermore, he refused to learn English, or adopt western clothing. Tippeconnic continued throughout his life to wear traditional leggings and peyote button moccasins. He also wore until his death the traditional wrap around his mid-section, and most telling of all, he rejected western fashion, and persisted in wearing long braids until his death (fig. 1). Moreover, Tippeconnic refused to give up his Comanche spirituality, evidenced by the fact that he continued to practice his medicine until his death. It is also known that Tippeconnic practiced polygamy, which was strictly forbidden during the reservation era but remained a Comanche





**Figure 1: Tippeconnic and John Tippeconnic, Courtesy of The Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma.**

tradition. He had four children with Wimmerchy and two additional girls and one boy from his wife Moetad. Tosie Tippeconnic was baptized at Deyo Mission on May 10, 1903.<sup>194</sup> Irene Tippeconnic lived to the age of twelve and died on June 27, 1907, and Abbie Tippeconnic lived to be twenty-two and died on December 4, 1908.<sup>195</sup>

Evidence of Tippeconnic's refusal to abandon his culture is apparent in a family photograph. The image shows Tippeconnic as an elderly man seated next to his son John Tippeconnic. This is a revealing photograph that reflects the changing historical eras. Tippeconnic is dressed in his traditional leggings and peyote button moccasins. He also wears the traditional wrap around his mid-section, the scarf and long braids. John Tippeconnic, his youngest son, possesses a first and last name, reflecting the changing times and assimilation, as does his hairstyle and clothes. John is wearing a suit and necktie and has very short hair. Since John was born in 1901, and in the photograph appears to be in his mid-twenties, this would place the date of the photograph somewhere around 1926 (fig. 2).

John Tippeconnic was born when Tippeconnic was forty-six years old. While Tippeconnic adamantly refused to learn English, it is apparent that by 1901, he realized that in order to successfully survive in the twentieth century his children would have to shift gears and adopt certain Euro-American cultural traits, such as English and a formal education. Tippeconnic was raised in the vastly different environment of the pre-reservation era and was instilled with the Comanche ethos in an era when the horse was a key ingredient of that code. As the reservation period ended and allotment arrived, shortly after the turn of the twentieth century, it was clear

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<sup>194</sup> Harry Wahhahdooh ed., "*Deyo Mission 1893-1980*" (Lawton: C & J Printing Company), 16.

<sup>195</sup> Goodin, "*Deyo Mission Cemetery*", 4.



**Figure 2. Top left, Tippeconnie aka To-Wick-ah, top right, Pah-Do-Pony, bottom left, To-Poh, bottom center, Perkaquanard, bottom right, Pia-Kiowa.**

that the horse would no longer be the primary conduit to relay the Comanche ethos. Although John Tippeconnic was not the first Comanche to begin a western based education, he would be the first tribal member to earn a college degree and a master's degree as well. John Tippeconnic set the standard and paved the educational road that many of his people would follow. His accomplishments during this era are as significant, in terms of influencing and guiding his people, as the earlier achievements of Cuerno Verde, Ten Bears, and Quannah Parker. This study does not advance the notion that a young John Tippeconnic consciously set out with the goal of shifting the primary method for conveying Comanche knowledge from the horse to education. However, this work contends that this is exactly what he did.

## CHAPTER 3

### **Armed only with the Comanche Ethos and Sweet Potatoes in his pockets**

The dramatic and rapid cultural change Tippeconnic and the Comanche lived through during the last quarter of the nineteenth century cannot be understated. He was born on the plains in the mid nineteenth century as a member of an autonomous Indigenous people; then, as a young adult, he experienced warfare with the United States that ultimately led to the forced relocation of all Comanche bands onto a reservation. The reservation amounted to a geographical prison, as the Comanche could not venture beyond the parameters without permission from the Indian Agent. This mandate severely altered traditional Comanche mobility. Tippeconnic and all Comanche were restricted specifically from crossing the border into Texas.

For Subsistence of the Arapahos, Cheyennes, Apaches Kiowas, Comanches, and Wichitas, and transportation of the Same, who have been collected upon the reservations Set apart for their use and occupation, two hundred and fifty thousand dollars. And the Secretary of the interior is hereby directed and required to prohibit the Kiowas, Comanches, Apaches, Kickapoos, Cheyennes, Arapahos, Wichitas, and bands affiliated with them, from crossing Red River from Fort Sill reservation into Texas, and rations shall only be issued to said Indians for only one week at a time, and then only to Such of them as shall be present. And no arms or ammunition shall be issued, Sold or given to any of the Indians above named; and all arms and

ammunition shall be taken from any Indian who may be proven to have committed any depredation on the whites or friendly Indians.<sup>196</sup>

However, Comanche families on the reservation still lived in close proximity to each other, and this allowed them to retain some semblance of tribal unity and identity. Beginning in 1901, Tippeconnic and his Comanche people experienced the attempted break up of tribal relations with the implementation of the allotment process, which ended the reservation period, and ushered in the twentieth century.

All of this occurred within a span of roughly twenty five years, which historically speaking, is a blink of an eye. John Tippeconnic was born on August 6 1901, just as the Comanche first participated in the allotment process. Little is known about his birth but he does appear on the historical record in 1908, when he received a one hundred sixty acre allotment just one year after Oklahoma Territory and Indian Territory transitioned into the state of Oklahoma. President Theodore Roosevelt signed John's allotment document on December 7, 1908.<sup>197</sup> The document granted to John Tippeconnic individual title to a parcel of land, but it is ironic that the most devastating legislation in the history of the United States, cites above Calvin Coolidge's name, the one hundred thirty third year of Independence for the United States of America.<sup>198</sup> The juxtaposition of U.S. Independence and this Indian allotment document serves as a reminder that the expansion of one nation, the United States, depended on the subjugation and removal of numerous sovereign Indigenous nations.

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<sup>196</sup> Law Prohibiting Indian Migration into Texas, 1875-76. Texas Indian Papers Volume 4, #236, Archives and Information Services Division, Texas State Library and Archives Commission.

<sup>197</sup> Tippeconnic, John (Oklahoma) patent no. 996557; Land Patent Search," digital images, *General Land Office*. <http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/search/default.aspx> (accessed January 2, 2016).

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

While the Comanches, like all Indigenous nations residing in territory held in trust by the United States, temporarily lost their independence as sovereign peoples. John Tippeconnic utilized the western institution of education as a way to retain Comanche culture. Scholar Noenoe K. Silva, research suggests that subjugated peoples who are apparently assimilated into the dominant culture, simultaneously resist domination and retain and reproduce their traditions. Furthermore, studies assert that new forms of cultural expression while appearing to function as a mechanism for deep acculturation to the larger society reveal important degrees of cultural revitalization as well.<sup>199</sup> Of course this is not a goal John Tippeconnic consciously set out to accomplish. The crystallization of his educational experiences was only revealed in adulthood. John Tippeconnic was raised with the Comanche ethos. This chapter asserts that the Comanche ethos itself fostered the development of the attributes that John Tippeconnic would need in order to succeed during his initial years of exposure to western education, including a stint of six years at a federal boarding school.

The idea of providing Indigenous children with a western brand of instruction began long before John Tippeconnic was introduced to western education. In order to comprehend the rationale for inculcating Indigenous people, including Comanches, with a western education, it is imperative to explore the early history of these efforts. Historian Margaret Connell Szasz explains that shortly after the English arrived on the eastern seaboard in the early seventeenth century conversations involved the tutelage of Indigenous youth. “The plan for

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<sup>199</sup> Silva, *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism*, 7. The studies Silva refers to here are, Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Trans. Steven Renall. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984) 23. and, Lawrence W. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 12.

educating Indian children in English homes was repeated in published tracts and official correspondence. As late as 1619, Governor George Yeardley received instructions to ‘procure their (Indian) children in good multitude to be brought upp and to worke amongst us.’ . . . From 1607-1622 and, to a lesser degree, throughout the rest of the century, policymakers in England pressed for Indian education in Virginia.”<sup>200</sup> For various reasons these conversations did not lead to implementation however, “. . . one colonial legislature in the 1660s passed a measure providing for the rearing of hostage Indians, authorizing an annual allowance of twelve hundred pounds of tobacco for ‘the maintenance and education of each when necessary.’”<sup>201</sup> Even with legislative backing, few concrete steps were taken until 1693, when William and Mary College was “partially dedicated” to the education of Indian students.”<sup>202</sup> Indigenous students did not attend William and Mary until the early years of the eighteenth century and while Indigenous student numbers were not significant, eight to ten students enrolled each year, and the college provided an education for more Indians than any other institution of higher education in colonial America. During the early years of the eighteenth century William and Mary College was the only college in colonial America located south of Pennsylvania.<sup>203</sup> Virginia’s English colonial counterparts in New England were also involved in the instruction of Indigenous peoples.

European settlement in Virginia differed from New England in that the motivation for the latter’s emigration was immersed in their religious faith. This motivation was written into

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<sup>200</sup> Margaret Connell Szasz, *Indian Education in the American Colonies, 1607-1783* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988), 54.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.



the Massachusetts Bay Colony charter. In New England, religion and educational instruction went hand in hand. At the end of the third decade of the seventeenth century the Massachusetts Bay Company founded the Massachusetts Bay Colony, named after the Algonquian people of the region. Both took their name from an Indigenous people inhabiting New England. The Company was granted a charter by King Charles 1 on March 4, 1629. The charter did not stipulate that the company members remain in England. As a result of this omission, the entire company, including stockholder John Winthrop, moved to New England. Before departing Southampton, England, Cotton Mather opined in a sermon that the Puritans were on a holy mission and urged them to convert the Indigenous people to Christianity.

In seventeenth century New England educational instruction was interwoven with Christianity and the desire of leaders of the fledgling colonies to secure funding from England. Connell Szasz notes that, "Both (Neal) Salisbury and Francis Jennings argued convincingly that economic motivations were the most powerful influence guiding the leaders of Massachusetts Bay toward a sudden upsurge of interest in the conversion of Indians."<sup>204</sup> In the initial years the theory did not match reality. Puritans had engaged Indigenous people on the battlefield but little conversion was occurring. In addition, the colony suffered economic hardships and faced mounting criticism from England, as Connell Szasz notes, "But the economic depression that Massachusetts faced in the early 1640s was compounded by the impact of several tracts, published in England, attacking the colony for its lack of concern for the Indians; and together, these factors provided the colony's leaders with an incentive for action."<sup>205</sup> In 1641,

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<sup>204</sup> Ibid., 101.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

Massachusetts Bay sent two agents to England in order to procure money for the company, and the agents promoted the Indian cause to justify the request for funding. In addition to funding, another direct result of this mission was the publication of a tract that was designed to obtain financial support for fledgling Harvard College.<sup>206</sup> Soon, efforts to convert and educate the Indigenous populations in Massachusetts were enhanced.

Just as the educational instruction of Algonquian people aligned with Christianity aligned in seventeenth century New England, a similar set of common interests dictated the education of the Native youth in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Comanche country. Anthropologist Sally McBeth points out that, “There were no clear distinctions between the separation of church and state with respect to Indian education...The Southern Plains area was predominantly Baptist and Methodist, although Catholics and other denominations were present.”<sup>207</sup> Federal funding for sectarian schools dried up beginning in 1897, however, “Many missionary schools survived through private and denominational contributions. . .”<sup>208</sup> In Comanche country the Methvin Methodist (1890-1910) and Saint Patrick’s Catholic mission (1891-1915) educated Comanche students.<sup>209</sup> At the Kiowa, Comanche, and Wichita Agency, between 1885-1893, two schools, the Wichita school and the Kiowa school provided education for Indigenous agency children. Prior to the opening of Fort Sill Indian school most Comanche children that attended school were at the Kiowa school.<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>206</sup> Ibid., 103.

<sup>207</sup> Sally J. McBeth, *Ethnic Identity and the Boarding School Experience of West-Central Oklahoma American Indians*, Washington D.C.: University Press of America, 1983, 75.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>210</sup> Hagan, *United States-Comanche Relations: The Reservation Years*, 195.

Just as religion and education partnered in colonial New England to promote the Indian cause for economic incentives, financial benefits would soon see several denominational schools open in Comanche country. “During this period six religious groups were granted the use of 160 acres of Indian land each for the purpose of establishing missions and schools. In 1890 Reverend J.J. Methvin began the operation of his Methodist boarding school under contract with the government, and in the spring term of 1891 he had enrolled sixteen Kiowas and five Comanches.”<sup>211</sup> Bacone College opened outside of Comanche country but through denominational channels the institution recruited and educated Comanches like John Tippeconnic. Before this study examines John’s experiences at Bacone, we will look at seventeenth century New England.

The Cambridge educated Reverend John Eliot, who arrived in Massachusetts Bay, played a significant part in the attempts to move the colony’s rhetoric to action. Documentation of Eliot’s work with the Algonquian people, coupled with his personal letters, provided the substance for propaganda pamphlets and tracts. These secured the passage of a bill in Parliament that provided financial support for New England’s missionary efforts and led to the creation of an English corporation that became known as the New England Company. “From 1649 to the end of the seventeenth century, the New England Company served as the major source of funds for missionaries in Massachusetts Bay, Plymouth, Connecticut, and New Haven (until it was swallowed by Connecticut in 1665). Thus, the history of the New England Company provides a political and financial framework for Indian Education in seventeenth-

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<sup>211</sup> Ibid., 199.

century New England.”<sup>212</sup> Briefly looking west and into the future in Comanche country, a parallel scenario would play out as a similar political and financial framework became rooted in Christian denominational schools that benefited economically through land grants. Meanwhile back in seventeenth century New England, Eliot’s work paid dividends for the Company.

The Nipmuc leader Waban embraced Christianity and its spokesperson, John Eliot. By 1650, early New England Algonquian Christian converts began moving to Natick, in present-Massachusetts, where they formed the first of the villages known as praying towns. In these praying towns the Puritans anticipated that the Algonquian people would renounce their own language, beliefs and customs. Natick would also serve as the base from where Algonquian converts were trained and sent out as missionaries to convert additional natives as well as to establish additional praying towns. Connell Szasz notes that the desire to convert the Algonquin people to Christianity stemmed from the perceptions of New England’s religious leaders, “Most of the Puritan missionaries believed that Algonquian culture was totally devoid of “civilization.””<sup>213</sup> She goes on to note the words of John Eliot, ““(T)hese poor Indians,’ John Eliot wrote, ‘have no principles of their own nor yet wisdom of their own.’”<sup>214</sup> This general attitude in regards to Indigenous peoples and their own spirituality remained well into the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as this study will show.

Whether in Calvinist New England or in Protestant dominated Oklahoma Territory, the common thread of Christian groups was the core belief that Indigenous peoples from the

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<sup>212</sup> Ibid., 104.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid., 106.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid.

Algonquian to the Comanche were devoid of civilization. “Because the philanthropic movement drew its moral energy from the reformers quest to create a Protestant America and because their ethnocentrism caused them to look upon native religious practices as primitive and barbaric remnants of a pre civilized existence, it is not surprising that the Indians’ religious conversion should surface as a major educational objective.”<sup>215</sup> Both the New England Puritans and the nineteenth century Protestants that ventured to Comanche country, believed that their society was the zenith of civilization because it rested upon the foundation of Christian morality.

There were other efforts in New England to educate the Algonquian people that met with success, including those of Thomas Mayhew, Jr. Mayhew became the first pastor of the church in Great Harbor on Martha’s Vineyard. Connell Szasz notes that, “Mayhew was eager to establish schools, and by the fall of 1652, a decade after settling the Vineyard, he had enrolled thirty children in the island’s one-year old school for Indian pupils.”<sup>216</sup> One of the attractions of the gospel in Martha’s Vineyard was literacy, which drew in the parents of pupils on lecture days.<sup>217</sup> Inculcating Algonquian students with Christianity might have been the goal for Mayhew but the parents’ desire to attain literacy motivated them to attend school sessions. Similarly, Tippeconnic and other Comanche parents were motivated to send their offspring to school to procure literacy, which would enable them to survive in a rapidly changing world. McBeth notes, “Indians in Oklahoma were perhaps more willing to allow and often encouraged

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<sup>215</sup> David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1995), 23.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*

their children to attend school. A few of the more important reasons given for why children attended...Parents and tribal leaders often felt that an education (especially reading, writing, and speaking English) would enable the child to better cope with changing cultures.”<sup>218</sup> Suffice it to say, religion went hand in hand with education in the British colonies. As this study will show, religion was often the partner of government in the efforts to educate Indigenous children. In the eighteenth century, a 1733 graduate of Yale, Eleazer Wheelock, founded a college for the education and instruction of Indian youth.

While serving as Congregational minister of the town church in Lebanon, Connecticut, Wheelock took into his home, in order to supplement his salary, a young Mohegan by the name of Samson Occom. Occom continued his studies with Wheelock for four years, and later he was ordained as a Presbyterian preacher. Inspired by his experience with Occom, Wheelock decided to create a school in order to educate more Indians with the hope that they would become ministers and spread Christianity to their people. He opened Moor’s Indian Charity school in 1755, where he worked to educate both Indian and English youth. According to James Dow McCallum in *The Letters of Eleazer Wheelock’s Indians*, “The Christianizing of the Indians was to Wheelock an obligation imposed from Heaven on God’s Covenant People.”<sup>219</sup> Just as Wheelock had a divine obligation, missionaries and policymakers who worked to educate plains peoples, including Comanches, in the American west, believed that civilization could only be found where the bible had been sent and the gospel taught. Therefore, Indians must have

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<sup>218</sup> McBeth, *Ethnic Identity and the Boarding School Experience of West-Central Oklahoma American Indians*, 108.

<sup>219</sup> Eleazer Wheelock, *The Letters of Eleazer Wheelock’s Indians*, ed. James Dow McCallum (Hanover: Dartmouth College Publications, 1932), 12.

Christian training as an essential part of their education, Christian training.<sup>220</sup> Further encouraged by his success, Wheelock sought funding to open a college. In 1766, Rev. Samson Occom came to the aid of Wheelock by journeying to England, Wales and Scotland with Rev. Nathaniel Whitaker in order to raise money for the enterprise. After two years they succeeded in attaining twelve thousand pounds, including a considerable donation from King George III as well as one from the Earl of Dartmouth.<sup>221</sup>

With funding in place, Wheelock chose to build his college in the Connecticut Valley of northern New Hampshire. He selected this location in part because it lay beside a direct route from the New England coast along a well traversed trail. Wheelock began construction on Dartmouth College in 1770 and the first class graduated in 1771. Dartmouth's charter stated that, ". . . there be a college erected in the province of New Hampshire, by the name of Dartmouth College for the education and instruction of youth of the Indian tribes in this land in reading, writing, and all parts of learning which shall appear necessary and expedient for civilizing and Christianizing children of pagans, as well as in all liberal arts and sciences, and also of English youth and others."<sup>222</sup> These early efforts to bestow education upon Indigenous youth were directly in line with the English position that viewed natives as uncivilized. From the perspective of the colonizers, two of the ingredients that separated them from their Indigenous counterparts, were Christianity and education.

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<sup>220</sup> Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928*, 164.

<sup>221</sup> Francis Lane Childs, "A Dartmouth History lesson for Freshmen" *Dartmouth Alumni Magazine*, December, 1957, [http://www.dartmouth.edu/~library/rauner/dartmouth/dartmouth\\_history.html?mswitch-redir=classic](http://www.dartmouth.edu/~library/rauner/dartmouth/dartmouth_history.html?mswitch-redir=classic).

<sup>222</sup> "Dartmouth College Charter" (Section 11) <https://www.dartmouth.edu/~library/rauner/dartmouth/dc-charter.html> (accessed April 1, 2016).

The language in Dartmouth's charter is quite similar to the discourse utilized in the mission of two schools that would open in the west, Bacone College and Navajo Methodist Mission. These two schools provided a western education for John Tippeconnic and Norman Tippeconnic respectively. The 1921 "Bacone Chief" notes that, "A Christian school, planted in the midst of people, becomes one of the most powerful agencies in the work of civilization."<sup>223</sup> The 1922 "Bacone Chief" recorded the words of its president B.D. Weeks, "Baptist progress then means the advancement of the kingdom. Therefore education is the first postulate of a Baptist."<sup>224</sup> It would be eight years before Norman Tippeconnic walked through the gates of the Navajo Methodist Mission in 1947. But in 1939, their annual noted that the school's focus was on the conversion and education of Navajos and, "The greatest need of this tribe is trained Christian leadership of their own race. Among the 50,000 Navajos there are not more than ten percent who are Christian. . . . But a steady stream of young people going out with hearts well trained in Christian truth and hands well trained in useful occupations will do more to break down pagan ignorance and fear, and raise the standard of living, than anything else we Christian missionaries might do."<sup>225</sup> By the time Norman arrived at the school it was willing to include the occasional Comanche.

As English colonial society merged into American society after the American Revolution, the conceptual image nineteenth century Americans held of their Indigenous hosts differed very little from the stance of their colonial predecessors. English monarchial hegemony in the

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<sup>223</sup> Bacone College, Bacone Chief 1921, (Muskogee, OK: Graduating Class of 1921, 1921), Oklahoma Historical Society Archives, Archives Reading Room.

<sup>224</sup> Bacone College, Bacone Chief 1922, 15.

<sup>225</sup> Navajo Methodist Mission, Mission Magnet 1939 Yearbook, (Farmington, NM: graduating class of 1939, 1939), p. NA, in private collection of Betty Dillman.



American colonies died in 1783, however God survived the revolution. Succinctly stated, Euro-Americans felt that they embodied civilization, while Indigenous groups occupied a lower rung on the evolutionary ladder. Historian David Wallace Adams notes, “Basic to all perceptions was the conclusion that because Indian cultural patterns were vastly different from those of whites, Indians must be inferior. Whether discussing the Indians’ worship of pagan gods, their simple tribal organization, or their dependency on wild game for subsistence, white observers found Indian society wanting. Indian life, it was argued, constituted a lower order of human society. In a word, Indians were savages because they lacked the very thing whites possessed—civilization.”<sup>226</sup> To those that subscribed to these beliefs, it is quite possible they believed that there were few more savage than the Comanche.

In the post- Civil War years, after most of the Indigenous nations in the United States and its territories had been subdued and resided on reservations, natives no longer appeared as a threat to Euro-American society and settlement. Therefore, In the 1870s, when the American public read about the desperate efforts of the Ponca, Northern Cheyenne and Nez Perce, who tried to return to their ancestral homes between 1877 and 1885, public sentiment began to question the moral principles of the current Indian policy. As previously alluded to in an earlier chapter, Indian reformers organized at Lake Mohonk to confront the Indian question. For reformers the question was whether the Indigenous population would survive or perish. From the perspective of Indian reformers their motives were benevolent. “When reformers gathered at Lake Mohonk, they had much more in common than their vision of Indian policy reform. Well educated and financially secure, almost to a person they came from the upper

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<sup>226</sup> Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928*, 6.

echelons of eastern society. Furthermore, while representing a number of religious denominations, they were almost universally guided by the tenets of evangelical Protestantism, never doubting for a moment that their effort to uplift Indians was a fulfillment of their Christian obligation to extend the blessings of Christianity to all peoples of the world.”<sup>227</sup> In order for Natives to endure they would have to assimilate into American society. The first step was to break up communally held Indian lands through allotment. The second step was to protect the Indigenous population under the U.S. legal system. Finally, the third thrust for reform was education.

Indigenous adults could not be the focus of reform. Adults might be able to adapt to allotment successfully, but they were too set in their ways to fully assimilate and they lacked a key catalyst for change, western education. Therefore, in order for Indian reformers to fully implement long term cultural change they would need to target Indian children. Certainly Comanche children were included in the cultural dragnet. “Another argument used by school advocates was that education would quicken the process of cultural evolution. Whereas white civilization had taken centuries to emerge to its present level, if Indian children could gain entrance to the common school, they would enter the struggle of life with roughly the same advantages as the children of their more civilized white neighbors.”<sup>228</sup> In other words, reformers believed, that education in the common school would enable Indigenous youth to jump directly from savagism to civilization and skip the intervening stages of social evolution.

<sup>229</sup> In addition, reformers felt that school would not only allow Indigenous youth to skip

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<sup>227</sup> Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928*, 110.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*

fundamental stages of cultural evolution, it would allow them to achieve civilization in record time.<sup>230</sup> Yet another reason government officials looked favorably upon educational instruction for Indigenous youth was that it made economic sense.

Reformers reasoned that providing Indian children with an education would prepare them for economic self-sufficiency, thus alleviating the federal government from the need to support the next generation. Pragmatically, from the government's perspective, educating young Indian children, some of whom would come under the auspices of various religious groups, would relieve the government from providing them shelter, food and clothing.<sup>231</sup>

"Another argument was that it was less expensive to educate Indians than to kill them.

Secretary of the Interior Carl Schurz, for instance, estimated that it cost nearly a million dollars to kill an Indian in warfare, whereas it cost only \$1,200 to give an Indian child eight years of schooling."<sup>232</sup> By consulting with government and military officials, philanthropists, and religious organizations for several years, organizers and Indian reformers of the Lake Mohonk conference, were on the same page in their assertion that education for Indigenous youth was fundamental for cultural transformation. David Wallace Adams notes, "And so, 'friends of the Indian' turned to schools as a solution to the Indian problem. Education would give Indians the knowledge and skills necessary for survival in a civilized world."<sup>233</sup>

While reformers viewed the education of Indigenous youth fundamental for cultural transformation, this study contends that western education provided an avenue that John

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<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid., 20-21.

Tippeconnic used for a type of Comanche cultural metamorphosis and renewal. John's career in education will be examined in the pages that follow, but this study advances the idea that his career demonstrated the traditional Comanche gift to transform, adapt, and thrive in the midst of both voluntary and involuntary cultural changes. It was because he had been ingrained with the Comanche Ethos during his early years that he was able to accomplish this and in doing so he ensured the continuation of that same ethos. The voluntary adoption of the horse as a tool helped facilitate education and the Comanche Ethos for centuries. The subsequent involuntary adoption of the western educational institution became a conduit for John to transmit the Comanche Ethos to his descendants. John Tippeconnic successfully navigated the world of western education in a way previously unmatched by any other Comanche. He concluded in his master's thesis that the values Comanche people utilized to rear their children were more beneficial to those children than western methods. However, he was free to proclaim this only after he had successfully navigated boarding school and college. This study does not advance the notion that he consciously set out to change a method to convey Comanche cultural knowledge. However, this study does advance the position that he certainly changed one method. John's educational career exemplify the core fundamental values of Comanche people and thus the Comanche Ethos. One of the core attributes of traditional Comanche education is perseverance. "From early childhood the children were trained to persevere, until what they were doing was finished."<sup>234</sup> John certainly persevered by becoming the first Comanche to receive a bachelors and master's degree. "Prestige was attained by outstanding

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<sup>234</sup> Tippeconnic, "Comanche Indian Customs With Educational Implications", 58.

achievement.”<sup>235</sup> Yet another core value was responsibility or knowing the meaning of mutual dependence and that no one person could stand alone and be a successful member of the tribe.<sup>236</sup> LaDonna Harris notes this very concept in what she calls an “ongoing community.” “Traditionally. . . one became a strong person in order to give back to the community. The community nurtured you while you were becoming strong, and once this was achieved, you looked for opportunities to give back to the community. . . . The community provides a structure that is greater than an individual, and within this unit are people who share your history, who understand you, know you, know your grandparents, have seen you grow up, love you.”<sup>237</sup> John was taught in western educational institutions that the antithesis was true; that individuality and selfishness were the keys to civilization. He persevered, and learned to play the game and succeeded because of the Comanche Ethos ingrained since childhood. He emerged with a graduate degree, a feat most Americans had not achieved. With that degree in hand, he now had the prestige amongst his own people and the credentials valued by the colonizer that allowed him to build his platform across cultures. For To-wick-ah’s (Tippeconnic) generation, the horse was a tool to transmit the Comanche Ethos. John’s horse was western education. Before this study examines John’s ride it is necessary to return to the ideology behind western efforts to educate Indigenous peoples.

Once reformers had targeted education as one of the key components of civilization, they addressed their concerns toward the curriculum. They saw clearly that educators must

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<sup>235</sup> Ibid.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid.

<sup>237</sup> LaDonna Harris, *LaDonna Harris: A Comanche Life*, ed. H. Henrietta Stockel (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 19.

strive to present to students the advantages of a civilized life as well as to instill in their minds distasteful feelings towards their native heritage.<sup>238</sup> The abandonment of Indigenous culture for a “civilized” existence appeared to be the only approach reformers could endorse. In *Scottish Highlanders and Native Americans: Indigenous Education in the Eighteenth Century Atlantic World*, Connell-Szasz notes, “Education forms the heart of any culture. For every society, the children represent the future: only the children can carry on the traditions; only the youth have the potential to become the repositories of the society’s world views. By teaching the old ways to children, the society ensures the persistence of its culture. When a society surrenders control of the education of its youth, the people relinquish much of their capacity to survive as a unique culture.”<sup>239</sup> Therefore, what Indian youth were taught was of the upmost importance if the desired results were going to be achieved.

First, it was imperative that students be provided with language instruction from which they could then branch off and learn history, math, science and the arts. Reformers did not believe that all Indigenous children could master these areas, however, these first steps were needed in order for the children to move away from their Indigenous cultural base and begin to form a western cultural foundation. In *Boarding School Seasons*, scholar Brenda J. Child describes federal Indian schooling, “The Institution was designed to separate children from all that was familiar to them-their families, tribes, languages, traditions, their very identities.”<sup>240</sup> Yet another antithetical direction Indian youth would need if they were going to achieve

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<sup>238</sup> Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928*, 21.

<sup>239</sup> Margaret Connell-Szasz, *Scottish Highlanders and Native Americans: Indigenous Education in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), 3.

<sup>240</sup> Brenda J. Child, *Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families, 1900-1940* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 6.

assimilation, was the adoption of an individualized outlook. Traditional tribal education had taught them that what was best for the community was paramount. From the reformer's perspective, Indigenous youth could learn individualism by cultivating a work ethic. If they absorbed industriousness by learning a trade, they would become producers as opposed to consumers. Moreover, through work natives would become self-sufficient. "But teaching Indians how to work was not enough. In the end, they must be inculcated with the values and beliefs of possessive individualism. They must come to respect the importance of private property, they must internalize the ideal of self-reliance, and they must come to realize that the accumulation of personal wealth is a moral obligation."<sup>241</sup> Lastly, reformers asserted that religion must play a significant role in all Indian education.

Adams notes, "The third aim of Indian Education was Christianization. Because the philanthropic movement drew its moral energy from the reformers' quest to create a Protestant America and because their ethnocentrism caused them to look upon native religious practices as primitive and barbaric remnants of a precivilized existence, it is not surprising that the Indians' religious conversion should surface as a major educational objective."<sup>242</sup> Indian reformers firmly held that Indigenous people must abandon their own spiritual beliefs and adopt Christianity, and by doing so, they would fully embrace the virtuous code that asserted the individual was not only responsible for his economic self but his spiritual self as well. Finally, in order to fully assimilate into American society the reformers expected Indians to be trained in U.S. citizenship.

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<sup>241</sup> Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928*, 22.

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

In order for Indian students to transition into self-sufficient, Christian Americans cognizance of the duties and privileges of American citizenship was essential. To accomplish this, the student must fully embrace the fundamental principles of democratic government and American political structure. Although this could be achieved by digesting American history, it could be problematic for objective instructors, "Teaching U.S. history to Indians, speaking of savages, civilization, and manifest destiny, convincing pupils that the subjugation of their race was in their own best interest, posed problems for the conscientious teacher."<sup>243</sup>

While the Indian Reform movement played an important role in both the ideological formation and methods used to implement Indian education initiatives in the nineteenth century, it is important to explore other events that would lead to key developments in educational implementation. Just as one can look back at colonial New England for the genesis of significant efforts to educate the Algonquian people, it is also important to examine the activities of a nineteenth century New Englander by the name of Josiah Wright Mooar. Mooar's activities on the Great Plains would eventually lead indirectly to schooling for Comanche youth. In 1870, Wright Mooar ventured west to the plains and opened a hunting business to collect buffalo hides. When Mooar first hunted buffalo, he took only the choice cuts of meat and left the rest of the animal on the plains to rot. At this time, in 1870, millions of buffalo blanketed the plains in massive herds.

Mooar hunted the buffalo with a man he befriended at Fort Hays, Kansas by the name of James White. Together these two entrepreneurs pondered a way to make a profit from the

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<sup>243</sup> Ibid., 147.



buffalo skins. James L Hayley notes, “Mooar and White often talked of the waste of skins, wondering if perhaps they could not be useful as leather. A market had been growing back east, for furry buffalo robes to use as sleigh blankets, for instance, and Indians had certainly tanned buffalo leather for centuries but their idea gained no impetus until an English firm contracted a Leavenworth, Kansas robe and meat trader for five hundred hides. They too were interested in experimenting on the skins for tanning, and a sub contract fell to a hunter named Charlie North, who in turn contacted his friends, among them Wright Mooar.”<sup>244</sup>

Mooar’s brother in New York worked out a deal with some tanners from Pennsylvania who were interested in purchasing 2,000 hides at \$3.50 apiece.<sup>245</sup> This was the boom the Mooars needed. Josiah’s brother, John Wesley Mooar, soon left New York to join his brother in hunting buffalo. Their business boomed. Haley notes the report of the Commander of the local military post, “The Commander at Ft. Dodge, Major Richard Irving Dodge: In 1873 alone, the three rail lines serving Dodge City carried away over 750,000 hides, . . . the figure for the three years 1872-74 totals an incredible 4,373,730 buffalo killed. That figure, said Dodge, was for the rail exports alone; other sources added at least 1 million more to the total.”<sup>246</sup> Suffice it to say, the Indigenous people on the southern plains were disgusted with the outrageous slaughter. However, the terms of the Medicine Lodge Creek Treaty kept them south of the Arkansas River.<sup>247</sup>

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<sup>244</sup> James L. Haley, *The Buffalo War: The History of the Red River Indian Uprising of 1874* (Abilene: State House Press, 2007), 21-22.

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>247</sup> “Treaty with the Kiowa and Comanche, 1867” (Medicine Lodge Treaty). 15 Stats. 581, Oct. 21, 1867. Ratified July 25, 1868; proclaimed Aug. 25, 1868. In Charles J. Kappler, compiler and editor, *Indian Affairs: Laws and*

The Wanton destruction was primarily taking place north of the Arkansas River. Due to the abundance of buffalo north of Kansas, white hunters respected this boundary for the most part. In the year following the Medicine Lodge Creek Treaty, observers noted that the massive unbroken buffalo herds could still be seen. Observers also noted that in just a few short years trains no longer were required to stop to allow large herds to pass, and that it was rare to witness few herds made up of just ten to twenty buffalo.<sup>248</sup> “The Mooars and the swarms of buffalo hunters who followed them were doing their business with unbelievable efficiency.”<sup>249</sup> Few hunters were bold enough to venture south of the Arkansas River during the first five years after the Medicine Lodge Creek Treaty because the presence of the tribes on the Southern plains made it too dangerous. However, by 1873, the buffalo herds north of the Arkansas River, had been slaughtered and the growing number of hunters began to poach in territory designated for Comanche, Kiowa, Kiowa-Apache, Southern Cheyenne and Arapaho peoples per the Medicine Lodge Creek Treaty.<sup>250</sup>

Cheyenne and Arapaho war parties were able to drive off a few of the hunters but soon this proved impossible because the hunters were too numerous and came too often. The federal government sent the United States Army to patrol the Kansas-Indian Territory boundary to keep hunters out, but the soldiers tended to look the other way when white buffalo hunting parties crossed over the threshold designated by the Medicine Lodge Creek Treaty. General Phillip Sheridan claimed that the buffalo hunters had accomplished more in the previous two

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Treaties – Vol. II: Treaties, p. 977, article 2. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1904.  
<http://digital.library.okstate.edu/kappler/vol2/treaties/kio0977.htm> (accessed January 20, 2016).

<sup>248</sup> Haley, *The Buffalo War: The History of the Red River Indian Uprising of 1874*, 23.

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>250</sup> “Treaty with the Kiowa and Comanche, 1867” (Medicine Lodge Treaty), article 2, 977.

years to settle the “Indian question” than the army had in the past thirty years. Sheridan emphasized that the buffalo hunters were, in effect, destroying the Indians’ commissary and that if Americans wanted Indians to adopt their civilization the buffalo herds should be exterminated.<sup>251</sup>

In 1874, white buffalo hunters planned for a hunt one hundred miles into Indian Territory on the “Staked Plains.” Once white buffalo hunters were illegally in place, one hundred miles into Indian Territory, devastation and slaughter ensued. Hunters used a .50 caliber octagonal-barreled cannon with 2,000 foot-pounds of muzzle energy. A proficient hunter was able to kill around fifty buffalo before a herd escaped the six hundred yard range of these devastating rifles. In March of 1874, a group of buffalo hunters and merchants constructed four buildings called “soddies” by standing logs on end in trenches and filling them in with sod. The roofs were also built from sod, and since this settlement was located by the ruins of Bent’s upper Canadian River fort, it was dubbed, Adobe Walls. Some two hundred professional buffalo hunters operated out of Adobe Walls, including the Mooars.<sup>252</sup>

To-Wick-Ah and his fellow Comanche were deeply affected by the massive slaughter taking place on their hunting grounds. “The devastation the Comanches faced that spring was more than material. The buffalo was the foundation of their economy and the centerpiece of their cosmology, and the wholesale slaughter shook their existence at its core. Facing

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<sup>251</sup> Haley, *The Buffalo War: The History of the Red River Indian Uprising of 1874*, 25.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

immediate economic, societal, and cultural collapse, the Comanche looked both backward and outward.”<sup>253</sup>

On June 27, 1874, a large group of Comanche warriors, including Isatai and Quanah Parker, attacked the complex at Adobe Walls. This type of action would have provided young men like Tippeconnic with the opportunity to advance themselves in Comanche society, and it is likely that he participated with that in mind. The hunters, under siege by the Comanche, were able to hold off the initial attacks largely due to their long range buffalo rifles. The fighting was inconclusive however, “The battle of Adobe Walls hardened the federal government’s resolution to break Indian resistance. President (Ulysses S. Grant) and the Interior Department abolished the last remnants of the Peace Policy on the southern plains and assigned hundreds of troops for a massive field operation. All Comanche and Kiowas were ordered to return to the agency by August 3 or they would be denounced as hostiles and hunted down. When the deadline passed, some two thousand Comanches and Kiowas were still on the plains.”<sup>254</sup>

On September 28, 1874, Colonel Ranald Mackenzie’s Fourth Cavalry attacked a Quahada Comanche village in Palo Duro Canyon, Texas. Very few Comanche were killed in the attack, however, Mackenzie was able to capture more than 1,400 horses. He gave a few to Tonkawa scouts and ordered that the remaining horses be shot. The following spring the last groups of Comanche hold outs, largely devoid of buffalo and their horses, came into the reservation at Fort Sill. Shortly before the Quahada arrived at Fort Sill, Kiowa and Comanche agent James M. Haworth, penned a letter to Commissioner of Indian Affairs Edwin P. Smith addressing the

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<sup>253</sup> Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire*, 337.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*, 339.

possibility of incarcerating some of the leading warriors at a distant location. He suggested that five to ten leaders from each tribe who had been involved in the recent troubles be removed to Ft. Leavenworth. In addition, he suggested that a teacher work with them during their imprisonment. Brad D. Lookingbill notes, "By separating resistance leaders from their homeland, Haworth's scheme for regime change ostensibly would end the hostilities."<sup>255</sup> In 1875, the U.S. Military supported Haworth's idea. On March 13, 1875, President Grant ordered the transfer of a number of Southern Plains leaders from Fort Sill to a military outpost in Florida. At this time the Quahada had yet to arrive at Fort Sill, so an alternate leader was selected to bear the punishment for the Antelope Band.

On April 28, 1875, more than seventy Comanche, Kiowa, Cheyenne, Arapaho and Caddo men left Fort Sill in shackles destined for Fort Marion, Florida, via Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. The Journey took nearly a month. The prison that would become their new home had been built in the seventeenth century by Spaniards, who dubbed it Fort Augustine. Brad D. Lookingbill notes, "Earlier in 1875, the War Department had begun refitting Fort Marion as a prison house for the Plains Indians."<sup>256</sup> First Lieutenant Richard Henry Pratt was placed in charge of the Fort Marion prisoners.

A Civil War Veteran, Pratt had commanded a regiment of African American Buffalo Soldiers in the Red River War. In addition, Pratt had also been charged with overseeing Indian scouts during the campaign. Pratt was certainly a product of his time and the views he held of

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<sup>255</sup> Brad D. Lookingbill, *War Dance at Fort Marion: Plains Indian War Prisoners* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006), 25.

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

the prisoners in his care reflected this perspective. Lookingbill notes, “While gaining respect for the martial spirit of the Plains Indians, the officer expressed disdain for their culture on the whole. He presumed that they were inferior to non-Indians in many respects. Their inferiority stemmed from the environment he posited but not from their race. Thus, a chief or a warrior could be reformed if exposed to the proper training.”<sup>257</sup> Therefore, Pratt’s objective at Fort Marion was clear. He set out to encourage the rapid assimilation of his prisoners.

In order to achieve this, Pratt issued uniforms and expected all warriors to polish their buttons, crease their pants and maintain a soldierly appearance. In addition, he organized the warriors in a structured manner with a distinct chain of command. Perhaps offering a preview of the regimen he would incorporate at Carlisle, Pratt readily encouraged the prisoners to participate in sports on the weekends. Considering their Indigenous upbringing, it was not surprising that sprints and foot races were a preferred activity for the prisoners at Fort Marion. “Foot racing became one of the popular pastimes in the courtyard.”<sup>258</sup> Pratt encouraged the prisoners to draw in ledger books that he provided. Moreover, Pratt organized some classes in the prison chapel where prisoners were introduced to spelling and exposed to maps and, of course, a bible.

Eventually Pratt organized some classes in an attempt to introduce western schooling to the plains warriors. Initially he introduced four classes that met five days a week with twelve to fifteen students in each but Pratt later expanded this number to seven classes. “After months of toil, the English language became the ‘common tongue’ for classroom discourse. Eventually, all

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<sup>257</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid., 92.

were able to understand and to make themselves understood, although their speech remained limited. In fact, their acquisition of English as a second language rendered the interpreter's services unnecessary. The Classroom pedagogy reflected the methodology of primary schools."<sup>259</sup> Many of the prisoners learned to read and write and read maps and they gained some math skills, however others refused to accept any western education. It appeared that the most serious cases of resistance came from the Kiowa and Comanche.<sup>260</sup>

By the end of the warriors' prison sentence, Pratt believed that some of the educational results at Fort Marion were sufficiently positive to explore other schooling opportunities. One institution Pratt negotiated with regarding this possibility was the Hampton Normal and Industrial Institute in Virginia, which was under the leadership of Samuel Chapmen Armstrong. The Hampton Institute had been created for freedmen by the American Missionary Association in 1868.<sup>261</sup> Armstrong agreed to accept some of the former prisoners of war. Hampton was a good candidate to accept Indigenous students because it had enrolled one Indian student in 1877.<sup>262</sup> After funding details were worked out, the Hampton Institute opened its doors to a remnant of these Southern Plains students. During the next three years, seventeen Indigenous students would attend the Hampton Institute. Pratt notes, "Early in April 1878 the War Department released the prisoners to the care of the Indian Bureau. I explained to the Bureau the provisions that had been made for the education of twenty-two, that seventeen were to go

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<sup>259</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>260</sup> *Ibid.*, 114-115.

<sup>261</sup> *Ibid.*, 163.

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid.*

to Hampton, and that it would be well if the route back west lay that way.”<sup>263</sup> Overall, Pratt worked out the details for a three-year course of study for twenty-two students at various institutions.<sup>264</sup>

At this time the Indian Office was increasing its funding for schooling, and the U.S. Commissioner of Education John Eaton wanted to establish an educational institution solely for Indians. Senator George Hunt Pendleton of Ohio introduced a bill to transform the abandoned Carlisle army barracks in Pennsylvania into a school for Indians. After congress passed the measure, Pratt was assigned to head the school. Initially, Pratt observed that he preferred to return to active duty, however his appointment could not have come as a surprise, given his past assignment and his position. “The Indians need the chances of participation you have had and they will just as easily become useful citizens. They can only reach this prosperous condition through living among our people. If you insist on my remaining in the Indian school work, give me 300 young Indians and a place in one of our best communities and let me prove it is easy to give Indian youth the English language, education, and industries that it is imperative they have in preparation for citizenship.”<sup>265</sup> Historian William T. Hagan notes, “To help prepare the Indian child for the rights and responsibilities of United States citizenship, patriotism was to be inculcated by display of the flag and celebration of national holidays.”<sup>266</sup>

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<sup>263</sup> Richard Henry Pratt, *Battlefield and Classroom: Four Decades with the American Indian, 1867-1904*, ed. Robert M. Utley (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), 191.

<sup>264</sup> Lookingbill, *War Dance at Fort Marion: Plains Indian War Prisoners*, 163.

<sup>265</sup> Pratt, *Battlefield and Classroom: Four Decades with the American Indian, 1867-1904*, 216.

<sup>266</sup> Hagan, *United States-Comanche Relations: The Reservation Years*, 194.



The Carlisle Indian School opened its doors to Indian students on November 1, 1879.<sup>267</sup> Carlisle offered an elementary education with vocational courses in agriculture, mechanics and nursing.

The Carlisle Indian School operated from 1879-1918. Compared with other notable American institutions this is not a significant life span. However, the impact of this school, as the original off reservation federal boarding school, still reverberates through Indigenous communities today. Throughout their existence the federal boarding schools expected to eradicate Indigenous cultures. It is a difficult task to locate an Indigenous family today that does not have a link to federal boarding schools. Carlisle left a firm legacy: it remains the mother of all federal boarding schools. This experiment, with its widespread influence, both, negative and positive, remains a significant part of Indigenous American history. Carlisle's athletic teams are legendary as are some of the athletes it produced, most notably Jim Thorpe. Indigenous women were introduced to the star of Bethlehem by Anglo quilters at Carlisle. Today the Star quilt is an intricate part of giveaways and tribal celebrations nationwide.<sup>268</sup> At the federal boarding schools a pan-Indian identity began to take shape as children from many different nations met; friendships formed and some students intermarried. Tribal celebrations became more intertribal. Every student learned English which facilitated the sharing of tribal traditions, stories and customs, and reconfirmed intertribal networks.

On the darker side, boarding schools were places where many students contracted diseases and perished. Boarding schools introduced corporal punishment and sexual abuse that inevitably would lead some students into alcoholism, all problems that continue to plague

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<sup>267</sup> Lookingbill, *War Dance at Fort Marion: Plains Indian War Prisoners*, 171.

<sup>268</sup> *Ibid.*

many Indigenous nations today. Designed to instill American values and culture in their students, while eradicating Indigenous attributes, federal boarding schools succeeded on numerous counts. “And for better or worse, the schools became part of our histories.”<sup>269</sup> Carlisle is significant because it gave birth to all of these long-term ramifications. All federal boarding schools for Indigenous students were rooted in the ideological infrastructure of Carlisle.

Closer to home for John Tippeconnic, other types of regional schools also opened their doors for Indigenous youth. The Methodist-Episcopal mission close to Anadarko worked with a few students in the Fort Sill area and as Hagan notes, “The Reformed Presbyterian Church also established a mission among the Kiowa-Apaches that attracted an occasional Comanche.”<sup>270</sup> While Carlisle Indian School and other federal school were opening across Indian Country, these Indian Territory missions and the schools attached to them recruited a few Comanche students between 1885-1893. Although the mission schools were separate from federal schools like Carlisle, “Neither in the Mission schools nor in the regular Indian service establishments did the emphasis on substituting white culture for Indian culture waver. Instruction was to be conducted exclusively in English, although religious services could be performed in the native languages.”<sup>271</sup>

The majority of Comanche Headmen did not support the initial efforts to provide Western schooling for Comanche children. Ignoring widespread opposition in Indian Country,

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<sup>269</sup> Ibid.

<sup>270</sup> Hagan, 194.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid.

the majority of American reformers embraced civilization efforts to educate Indian youth by sending Indigenous children to off reservation manual labor boarding schools.<sup>272</sup> Article Seven of The Treaty of Medicine Lodge Creek states,

In order to insure the civilization of the tribes, entering into this treaty, the necessity of education is admitted, especially by such of them as are or may be settled on said agricultural reservations: and they therefore pledge themselves to compel their children, male and female, between the ages of six and sixteen years, to attend school; and it is hereby made the duty of the agent for said Indians to see that this stipulation is strictly complied with; and the United States agrees that for every thirty children between said ages, who can be induced or compelled to attend school, a house shall be provided, and a teacher competent to teach the elementary branches of an English education, shall be furnished, who will reside among said Indians, and faithfully discharge his or her duties as a teacher.<sup>273</sup>

The school that would eventually be known as the Fort Sill Indian School opened as a Quaker boarding school during the Grant Peace Policy in 1871.<sup>274</sup>

Following the Civil War and tragic events like the Sand Creek Massacre, U.S. Senator James R. Doolittle of Wisconsin became aware to the inhumanity of the treatment of Indigenous peoples in the American West. Scholar William S. McFeely in *Grant* notes, “He

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<sup>272</sup> Ibid., 133.

<sup>273</sup> “Treaty with the Kiowa and Comanche, 1867” (Medicine Lodge Treaty), article 7, 979.

<sup>274</sup> Henry Rosenbluth, *Fort Sill ORBS Survey*, Bureau of Indian Affairs, United States Department of the Interior, July, 1973. ED 078 980, RC 007 087, p.1.

brought about a congressional investigation and the establishment in 1867 of a peace commission that investigated the broad question of the settlement of the West and the future of the Indians who would be displaced."<sup>275</sup> Nathaniel G. Taylor, commissioner of Indian affairs, chaired the panel that included William Tecumseh Sherman. Both Taylor and Doolittle spearheaded the foundation of what would become in 1869 the Grant Peace Policy.<sup>276</sup> McFeely notes that Quaker involvement in one proposal,

One proposal, called derisively at first, and later appreciatively, the Quaker Policy, was designed to replace entrepreneurs with missionaries as Indian agents. The men of God would not only look after the welfare of their flocks but bring them into the Christian fold. 'Quaker Policy' was to a large degree a misnomer; the plan was indeed urged on Grant by members of the Society of Friends, but it was also sponsored with jealous zeal by the mainstream Protestant evangelical sects. Each tribe was assigned, for protection and proselytizing, to missionaries of a given denomination. One reservation- and hence one complete group of native Americans- was designated Episcopalian, the next Dutch Reformed, and so on; Grant although not a church man, agreed.<sup>277</sup>

In 1869 the majority of Indian agents employed by the United States government were army officers. William T. Hagan notes, "As general of the army Grant favored the replacement

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<sup>275</sup> William S. McFeely, *Grant* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1982), 307.

<sup>276</sup> *Ibid.*, 308.

<sup>277</sup> *Ibid.*

of civilian agents by army officers and this continued to be his preference. Large numbers of officers were used in this capacity, in 1869 forty-nine of a possible seventy being military men, but in July 1870 Congress banned the practice. If civilians were to be appointed, Grant seems to have believed that religious bodies should be able to come up with better ones than were available through the patronage process.”<sup>278</sup>

On July 1, 1869, the Quaker Lawrie Tatum was placed in charge of the Agency of the Comanche, Kiowa, and Kiowa-Apache tribes and early in the Peace Policy one of the first assignments he carried out was the construction of a school. Initially the school operated as a reservation elementary school for these Indian children. When it opened, the school consisted of one building containing two classrooms, a kitchen, dining room and dormitories. On the first day of school seven students attended. By the end of the first year, the school had enrolled thirty-three students.<sup>279</sup> Some Comanche students attended this school as early as 1872 but it would be three years before any other Comanche joined them. The school got off to an auspicious start and by 1878 its operation had been transferred to Anadarko. This move was part of the government’s relocation of the Kiowa and Comanche Agency from Fort Sill to Anadarko, a shift that consolidated the Kiowa and Comanche Agency with the Wichita. By 1875, schools on the reservation were falling short in delivering the government’s commitment. “As late as 1879 only about 65 of a reservation population of 500 school age children were enrolled. For the first few years the school was operated directly by the agent.”<sup>280</sup>

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<sup>278</sup> Hagan, *United States-Comanche Relations: The Reservation Years*, 57.

<sup>279</sup> Rosenbluth, *Fort Sill ORBS Survey*, Bureau of Indian Affairs, United States Department of the Interior, July, 1973. ED 078 980, RC 007 087, p.1.

<sup>280</sup> Hagan, *United States-Comanche Relations: The Reservation Years*, 134.

From 1885-1893 only two federal schools, outside of the efforts of religious denominations, served students from the Kiowa, Wichita and Comanche Agency. One school was located north of the Washita River and the other one was on the south bank. Comanche students were expected to attend the Kiowa school on the south bank.<sup>281</sup> Leadership at the school was less than stellar and the turnover of superintendents was extremely high. Superintendents committed various abuses, ranging from mismanagement, misconduct and intimidation to violence and their actions eventually prompted Comanche parents to threaten the withdrawal of their children.<sup>282</sup> Partially due to this mismanagement as well as the distance between Comanche homes and the school, the Comanche requested their own school but they had to wait for a few years of additional delays. "Finally in 1890 construction on a two-story frame building, with outbuildings, got under way about four miles south of Fort Sill. The site chosen by Agent Adams overlooked the valley of Cache Creek, which was about a mile from the school. Not until October 1892 did the school open, and even then all the buildings had not been completed, forcing a limitation of the first class to 33 Comanche girls aged six to ten. By the spring of 1893 the plant was finished and filled to capacity with the 100 or so students about equally divided between boys and girls (the addition of the boys raising the average age by two or three years)."<sup>283</sup> In 1891 the Fort Sill Indian School fell directly under the auspices of the federal government.

My paternal grandfather, John Tippeconnic, who was born on his father's allotment, just outside of Cache, Oklahoma, Indian Territory on August 6, 1901, would begin his formal

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<sup>281</sup> Ibid., 195.

<sup>282</sup> Ibid., 196-198.

<sup>283</sup> Ibid., 200.

education in a one-room public school house a few miles from the home place (allotment). The school no longer exists and the name of the one room facility is not known. What is known is that he attended this school for three years and three months.<sup>284</sup> The quarterly reports provide evidence that John received some schooling prior to attending the Fort Sill Boarding School.

Pursuant to U.S. Government regulations, all boarding, day, government, and contract schools were required to file quarterly reports with the Indian Office immediately following the close of each quarter.<sup>285</sup> On these quarterly reports there is a category that indicates how many months each student had attended school before enrollment (Fort Sill). According to this report John had attended school for thirty-nine months prior to entering first grade at Fort Sill Boarding School.<sup>286</sup>

John would rise early each day and walk the several miles to school, after crossing Cache Creek, and leaving Tippeconnic's property. Each morning he was armed with the Comanche ethos and a sweet potato in each of his back pockets.<sup>287</sup> John began school here at the age of six.<sup>288</sup> John enjoyed learning even at this early age and perhaps this is why he continued his education even when his peers stopped attending. It was here in the public school that he was initially introduced to the English language. It was also at this point that John began his journey down the path that would not only provide him with employment opportunities in the future

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<sup>284</sup> Indian Archives Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society Research Division. *Quarterly School Report*, Fort Sill Boarding School, 31 December 1912. Kiowa, Comanche and Apache Agency, Box 684. Fort Sill Indian School, 1912-1913, Doc. No. 5-246.

<sup>285</sup> Ibid.

<sup>286</sup> Ibid.

<sup>287</sup> Norman Tippeconnic Sr., Interview by author. April 5, 2005.

<sup>288</sup> Ibid.

but would also allow him to eventually accomplish what no other Comanche achieved before him, an advanced education.

John's educational journey had begun long before he put sweet potatoes into the pockets of his overalls and crossed Cache Creek to seek formal instruction. The Journey began when his Mother Wimmerchy first uttered Comanche words into his ear shortly after birth, and when his father Tippeconnic, once a fierce warrior of the plains, taught him to ride a horse. John would take with him on that first day of school the Comanche ethos instilled in him since birth. For the next three and a half years John Tippeconnic ventured off to the one-room public school house to obtain a rudimentary western education but he would come home each afternoon, and there the transference of Comanche knowledge continued. John's teacher(s) provided him with the basic linguistic tools that he would need to continue grammar school; however it was the Comanche educational foundation that provided him with the attributes of cooperation, consideration for others, self-denial, courtesy, reverence, self-reliance, conservation, alertness, prestige, courage, respect, loyalty, perseverance, responsibility, neatness, reliability, honesty, trustworthiness, and love. John Tippeconnic would need many of these Comanche attributes in order to succeed in school. His father, Tippeconnic was raised with the Comanche ethos during the pre-reservation era when the Comanche were autonomous. For Tippeconnic, the horse was the vehicle that enabled him to receive the Comanche ethos. His son John Tippeconnic was born during a time that required modern adjustments. Just such an adjustment took place at this time as education replaced the horse as the vehicle to convey knowledge.



Tippeconnic had quite a few horses and he most certainly taught his children to ride in the old fashion. However, once John ventured off to school on that first day, he began a new Comanche journey. Horses, once a primary conduit for Comanche educational transference, would now, at least for John, be replaced by western education. A western education would (in fact) become for John a metaphorical horse. Education would become the conduit he would use to pass along the Comanche ethos to his own children; it would serve as the tool he would ride to establish himself as a man and a Comanche warrior worthy of acknowledgement from those whom he valued the most, his own people. The assertion here is that western education, John's metaphorical horse, enabled him to become the first Comanche tribal member to achieve an undergraduate college degree and, eventually, a master's degree. During the reservation period traditional methods of achieving social status and prestige were denied to young Comanche men. As a result some became preachers or military scouts in order to achieve social recognition. For John, a formal western education would become the vehicle he would utilize to become a modern warrior. John Tippeconnic set the standard and, in fact, he paved the educational road that many would follow, and it all began in a one-room public school house.

My grandfather John had a brother, also named John, who was four years his elder. My grandfather's older brother also began school in this one room schoolhouse and on his first day his mother Wimnerchy took him to enroll at the school. According to the family narrative, he was required to enter a surname upon registration and as a result his surname became Wimnerchy. The day my grandfather John arrived for his first day of school his surname was recorded as Tippeconnic. In 1910, the time arrived for John Tippeconnic to make the transition

from the country school to the Fort Sill Boarding School. By that year, the school had already been relocated from its original site to a location thirty-five miles south of Anadarko and two and one-half miles south of the military post of Fort Sill. By the time John Tippeconnic arrived at the school, it had expanded and consisted of twelve buildings. John successfully made the transition to boarding school, while many other Indigenous children across the country did not. The problems that Indigenous youth faced in Indian boarding schools is well documented; many children died at these infamous institutions, while others ran away.

Since Ft. Sill was only a few miles away from home, the proximity of the school to the farm certainly assisted John in his perseverance. According to the Fort Sill Boarding School November 30, 1913 quarterly report, Tippeconnic's land was only three and a half miles away from the school.<sup>289</sup> It is logical to surmise that John's family visited him on a regular basis and even in the event that these visits were infrequent he must have been comforted by the fact that his family resided only a few miles to the South. John excelled in these academic environments, however, he still retained his Comanche identity. Foremost of the Comanche cultural traits that he kept was his Native language. Fluent in Comanche throughout his lifetime, he was not always free to utilize it openly due to the fact that speaking Comanche was highly discouraged in school. "Boarding schools followed a strict policy that forbade Indian students from speaking tribal languages."<sup>290</sup> Students who did not refrain from using their Native tongue were often beaten, swatted with rulers, had their mouths washed out with soap, or were

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<sup>289</sup> Indian Archives Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society Research Division. *Quarterly School Report*, Fort Sill Boarding School, 30 November 1913. Kiowa, Comanche and Apache Agency, Box 684. Fort Sill Indian School, 1912-1913, Doc. No. 5-255.

<sup>290</sup> Child, *Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families, 1900-1940*, 28.

placed in solitary confinement.<sup>291</sup> Boarding schools were the primary method of assimilation for John's generation of Indigenous Americans and tragically these institutions bear a significant responsibility in the decline of Native languages. Experiences at Fort Sill varied, "Students who attended Fort Sill came away from the boarding school with impressions that ranged from downright hatred of the school to enduring fondness for it. For some the strict discipline and harsh punishment meted out at the institution made it feel more like a prison than a place of learning. Being away from family and tribal communities made the experience even more alienating."<sup>292</sup> Some students indicated that corporal punishment was often administered harshly for infraction of rules.<sup>293</sup> Brenda J. Child notes, "To remain true to the military style the schools sought to imitate, students were subjected to harsh forms of discipline. Recalcitrant students were flogged, and most boarding schools had some form of "jail" on the premises."<sup>294</sup> Strict discipline reinforced the military atmosphere and corporal punishment was certainly held as a threat over every student's head as a way to ensure compliance.

Many Indigenous students attending boarding schools in the U.S. sought to erase the experience from their memories, but John's sentiments were similar to the feelings of one of his contemporaries who lived several hundred miles to the West. Hopi student, Helen Sekaquaptewa notes, "I enjoyed school and was eager to learn."<sup>295</sup> It is easy to surmise that John enjoyed his educational experience. While it is unlikely that he never experienced a

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<sup>291</sup> Ibid.

<sup>292</sup> Josh Clough, "Fort Sill Indian School," Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture, [www.okhistory.org](http://www.okhistory.org) (accessed August 16, 2016).

<sup>293</sup> Rosenbluth, Henry, *Fort Sill ORBS Survey*, Bureau of Indian Affairs, United States Department of the Interior, July, 1973. ED 078 980, RC 007 087, p.2.

<sup>294</sup> Child, *Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families, 1900-1940*, 39.

<sup>295</sup> Helen Sekaquaptewa, *Me and Mine: The Life Story of Helen Sekaquaptewa* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1969), 125.

negative situation at Fort Sill, the family narrative attests that he thoroughly enjoyed grades one through six. Therefore, while the boarding school experience was painful for many, it was uplifting for John. "Others, however, enjoyed their time there, making lifelong friends, participating in extracurricular activities, and remaining Indian despite attempts by the government's educational machinery to grind it out of them."<sup>296</sup>

Fort Sill Boarding School was typical of many federal Indian boarding schools in that it incorporated a strict military like regimen. "In the early years of the school, strict militaristic-type discipline was a part of the Fort Sill program. It was not uncommon to observe students participating in precision marching as they were moved from one part of the campus to the other."<sup>297</sup> David Wallace Adams advances the idea that off reservation boarding schools utilized strict military discipline for logistical reasons as well as a way to promote good health, neatness, politeness and patriotism among others.<sup>298</sup> ". . . the boarding school environment was patently militaristic. This was especially the case at off-reservation schools, where students organized into army units and drilled in elaborate marching routines. On special celebrations, when marching students shouldered rifles, brass bugles gleamed in the sunlight, drums pounded out marching rhythms, and school banners flapped in the breeze, the military atmosphere was only enhanced."<sup>299</sup> Indigenous children from Carlisle, Haskell, and Fort Sill, as well as numerous additional institutions, were initiated into a highly regimented military atmosphere.

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<sup>296</sup> Clough, "Fort Sill Indian School," Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture, [www.okhistory.org](http://www.okhistory.org) (accessed August 16, 2016).

<sup>297</sup> Rosenbluth, *Fort Sill ORBS Survey*, Bureau of Indian Affairs, United States Department of the Interior, July, 1973. ED 078 980, RC 007 087, p.2.

<sup>298</sup> Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928*, 118.

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

In order to reinforce the military atmosphere and general discipline all students wore uniforms. For John Tippeconnic and other students at Fort Sill, this meant wearing long sleeve wool uniforms buttoned high and tight up to their necks as well as wool caps. As spring inched closer to summer in Oklahoma during John's years at Fort Sill, the heat must have been oppressive. A photograph taken in 1912 on the front steps of the entrance to Fort Sill Boarding School features an eleven-year-old John Tippeconnic in his first year at the school (fig. 3). Pictured with Tippeconnic are twenty four other Comanche boys, ranging in ages from seven to seventeen.<sup>300</sup> Each of the boys is standing at attention, which indicates that the photograph was snapped after the Numunu boys had been in school for a few months and therefore had become accustomed to the regimen. Also in the photo with my grandfather is his older brother John Winnerchy.<sup>301</sup> John Winnerchy ventured to Fort Sill to begin the first grade either at age nine or ten in the fall of 1908, a full four years prior to my grandfather's arrival in 1912.<sup>302</sup>

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<sup>300</sup> Indian Archives Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society Research Division. *Quarterly School Report*, Fort Sill Boarding School, 30 September 1912. Kiowa, Comanche and Apache Agency, Box 684. Fort Sill Boarding School, 1912-1913, Doc. No. 5-246.

<sup>301</sup> Indian Archives Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society Research Division. *Quarterly School Report*, Fort Sill Boarding School, 31 December 1912. Kiowa, Comanche and Apache Agency, Box 684. Fort Sill Indian School, 1912-1913, Doc. No. 5-246.

<sup>302</sup> Indian Archives Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society Research Division. *Quarterly School Report*, Fort Sill Boarding School, 31 March 1913. Kiowa, Comanche and Apache Agency, Box 684. Fort Sill Indian School, 1912-1913, Doc. No. 5-246.

However, neither brother would be the first nor the last sibling of the family to attend Fort Sill Indian Boarding School.



**Figure 3. Fort Sill Boys circa 1912. John Tippeconnic 2<sup>nd</sup> Row far left. Photo courtesy of Columbia University Library Archives.**

On March 31, 1895, Frank Baldwin, U.S. Indian agent of the Kiowa, Comanche & Wichita Agency, signed a quarterly report for Fort Sill Boarding School, which lists Abbie Tippiconny, an older half sibling of my grandfather. At the time of this report Abbie was seven years old, and her original name is Ni-Ne.<sup>303</sup> In addition, Tosie Tippiconnie, a female sibling age six was also mentioned in the same report.<sup>304</sup> Between 1895 and 1916, at least six of my grandfather's siblings attended the Fort Sill Boarding School.<sup>305</sup> Abbie Tippiconny and Tosie Tippiconnie appeared in 1895, Eunice Tip-e-con-ic in 1901, Irene Tipeconic in 1903, John Winnerchy in 1909, and Louis Tippeconnic in 1916.<sup>306</sup> In 1914, Doris Tippeconnic, daughter of Abbie, began school at Fort Sill.<sup>307</sup> John would eventually matriculate to high school, college and graduate school; however, as the records indicate, he was not the first in his family to begin the journey down that road.

During John Tippeconnic's years at the Fort Sill Boarding School Industrial and vocational training remained the central focus. Boys encountered training in farming and in skilled crafts like carpentry, painting, and harness making, among others. Girls were expected to become proficient home makers and learned sewing, cooking, and house cleaning. My grandfather John

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<sup>303</sup> Indian Census Rolls, 1885-1940; (National Archives Microfilm Publication M595, 692 rolls); Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Record Group 75; National Archives, Washington, D.C., 1899; Roll: M595\_211; p. 84; Line: 24; Agency: Kiowa & C.

<sup>304</sup> Indian Archives Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society Research Division. Quarterly School Report, Fort Sill Boarding School, 31 March 1895. Kiowa, Comanche and Apache Agency, Box 672. Fort Sill Indian School, 1894-1896, Doc. No. 5-251.

<sup>305</sup> Indian Archives Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society Research Division. Quarterly School Report, Fort Sill Boarding School, 30 September 1903-1916. Kiowa, Comanche and Apache Agency, Box 677. Fort Sill Indian School, 1902-1904, Doc. No. 5-251

<sup>306</sup> Indian Archives Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society Research Division. Quarterly School Report, Fort Sill Boarding School, 20 June 1904-1916. Kiowa, Comanche and Apache Agency, Box 677. Fort Sill Indian School, 1902-1904, Doc. No. 5-251

<sup>307</sup> Tippeconnic is spelled phonetically from the Comanche words Tupi-Kuni meaning Rock House. Therefore, there are multiple phonetic spellings of Tippeconnic

Tippeconnic is featured in a photo taken by Carmelita RedElk Thomas, with fellow Comanche Joe Weryavah and Dewey Permansu. In this photograph the three Numunu boys are standing in a farm field at Fort Sill, each holding a hoe to reflect the industrial aspects of the vocational training provided by the institution (fig 4).<sup>308</sup>

For students at Fort Sill a typical schedule included a half day of classroom instruction in various subjects including English, arithmetic and history, while the second half was devoted to work in vocational training. Fort Sill Boarding School boys also worked on the farm as well as in the saw-mill and at the carpenter and blacksmith shops. Conversely, girls also were employed in the dining room, kitchen and in housecleaning activities.<sup>309</sup> This schedule was similar to the one employed at Carlisle. At Carlisle, children began their day at 6 A.M. for chores and military exercises that included marching and inspection. Breakfast followed and scholar Mary Jenkins in *The Real All Americans notes*, “Mornings were devoted to academics-mostly English at first- and afternoons were for trade and shop classes in wagon building, cobbling, blacksmithing, tin- and coppersmithing, carpentry, painting, tailoring, and harness making. The girls were taught sewing, cooking, canning, ironing, child care, cleaning, and later stenography, bookkeeping and typing.”<sup>310</sup> At Fort Sill, many of these activities persisted until mid-way through the twentieth century. “Until the 1950s the curriculum for males consisted of vocational and agricultural

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<sup>308</sup> Delores Sumner Titchywy et al., *Numa-Nu (The Comanche People): A Photographic Exhibit of the Fort Sill Indian School Experience* (Lawton, Okla.: C & J Printing Co., 1981.)

<sup>309</sup> Ibid.

<sup>310</sup> Sally Jenkins, *The Real All Americans: The Team that Changed a Game, A People, A Nation* (New York: Doubleday, 2007), 79.



training, and females received instruction in homemaking. Thereafter, Fort Sill emphasized more of an academic curriculum, although vocational trades remained important.”<sup>311</sup>



**Figure 4. Left to right Joe Weryavah, Dewey Permansu and John Tippeconnic on the Fort Sill Indian School farm. Photo Courtesy of Carmelita RedElk Thomas**

In a 1937 interview, Ophelia D. Vestal notes that two Comanches, Allen Mihecaby and his wife Rachael, who were both born in Comanche County and who attended Fort Sill, indicated that, “In these schools they were taught how to work, which they are very proud of,

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<sup>311</sup> Clough, "Fort Sill Indian School," Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture, [www.okhistory.org](http://www.okhistory.org) (accessed August 16, 2016).

and they are teaching their three boys to work and make their own money.”<sup>312</sup> On the seventh day each week boys working on the farm and in the blacksmith’s shop as well as in other vocational activities earned fifty cents per day. In addition, at the end of each term, before some of the boys went home, they were provided with a nice small set of tools at government expense.<sup>313</sup> Fort Sill required students to shift job responsibilities each quarter per the line items appearing in the schools quarterly report that list the following duties, farm, kitchen, dairy, cleaning, laundry, house, and bakery.<sup>314</sup>

The boarding school experience for Indian children in general could be a difficult transition, especially for the youngest children. Students missed their home communities, families and fellow tribal members. Child notes, “Homesickness, endemic at boarding schools, was hardest on the very young students.”<sup>315</sup> Some of them found it difficult to learn English while not being allowed to speak their Indigenous language. David Wallace Adams notes, “The forced separation of parents and children was traumatic for the children, and following that they were thrown into a completely alien environment where strangers (white ones at that) stripped away all exterior indicators of tribal identity, even to the point of changing names.”<sup>316</sup>

The strictly regimented militaristic approach and the threat of corporal punishment made the experience unbearable for many Indigenous children who were away from home for

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<sup>312</sup> Allen Mihecaby, interviewed by Ophelia D. Vestal, November 22, 1937, interview 9270, *Indian-Pioneer History*, Vol. 36, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

<sup>313</sup> Titchywy et al., *Numa-Nu (The Comanche People): A Photographic Exhibit of the Fort Sill Indian School Experience, 1981*.

<sup>314</sup> Indian Archives Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society Research Division. *Quarterly School Report*, Fort Sill Boarding School, 30 September 1913. Kiowa, Comanche and Apache Agency, Box 684. Fort Sill Indian School, 1912-1913, Doc. No. 5-246.

<sup>315</sup> Child, *Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families, 1900-1940*, 48.

<sup>316</sup> Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928*, 223.

the first time. Some students resorted to running away in order to return to their families and familiar surroundings. It was certainly enough of a concern for Fort Sill because it warranted a line item on the quarterly school reports. One line item reads “Pupils ran away during quarter” while another reads “Run-away pupils returned during quarter.” The first item indicates that this was the reality administrators faced and the second clearly denotes that it was important for the school, for funding reasons, to make sure the children returned.<sup>317</sup> Helen Sekaquaptewa recalls that at the Phoenix Indian School, “Sometimes boys and even girls would run away, even though they were locked in at night, they managed to get out somehow.”<sup>318</sup> Sekaquaptewa also noted that students who were caught running away were punished through the humiliating experience of wearing a card that stated “I ran away.”<sup>319</sup> An alarming line item on the Fort Sill quarterly reports, “Pupils died during quarter,” revealed another harsh reality that young Indigenous students faced. Many Indian boarding schools maintained a cemetery on their school site. John was able to successfully acclimate to the demands of the Fort Sill Boarding School and completed the sixth grade in 1916.<sup>320</sup>

After successfully finishing the 6<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum at Fort Sill, John attended the Cameron State School of Agriculture in Lawton, Oklahoma.<sup>321</sup> Just one year after Oklahoma became a state, the Oklahoma State Legislature created six agricultural high schools in each

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<sup>317</sup> Indian Archives Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society Research Division. *Quarterly School Report*, Fort Sill Boarding School, 30 June 1896. Kiowa, Comanche and Apache Agency, Box 672. Fort Sill Indian School, 1894-1896, Doc. No. 5-251.

<sup>318</sup> Sekaquaptewa, *Me and Mine: The Life Story of Helen Sekaquaptewa*, 137.

<sup>319</sup> Ibid.

<sup>320</sup> Indian Archives Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society Research Division. *Quarterly School Report*, Fort Sill Boarding School, 30 June 1904. Kiowa, Comanche and Apache Agency, Box 677. Fort Sill Indian School, 1902-1904, Doc. No. 5-251.

<sup>321</sup> “Indian Receives Master’s Degree: John W. Tippeconnie Is Graduated In Arizona.” Lawton Constitution, August 27, 1942, 7.

judicial district.<sup>322</sup> John's school, which was named after Reverend E. D. Cameron, a Baptist minister who served as Oklahoma's first State Superintendent of Schools, opened on Statehood Day, November 16, 1909. Once it became a junior college in 1927, the institution changed its name to Cameron State Agricultural College; however it would continue to offer high school courses until 1941. In 1971, the institution became Cameron College and then in 1974, Cameron University.<sup>323</sup> John Tippeconnic attended the Cameron State School of Agriculture for two years, 1916, and 1917. By the time he was sixteen, John had attended three western educational institutions and achieved enough success to warrant matriculation to a school that was much farther away than three and a half miles from home. In 1918 John's education took him approximately two hundred and thirty miles to the northeast to attend called Bacone College in Muskogee, Oklahoma. From the earliest days of his consciousness, John Tippeconnic had been inculcated with the Comanche ethos that provided him with the ability to develop the attributes that he needed in order to succeed in boarding school, while other students failed. John Tippeconnic would depend upon these skills during the next stage of his life at Bacone.

Efforts to provide an education for the Indigenous inhabitants of what would become the United States began long before anyone conceptualized that political entity. In early seventeenth century Virginia, plans emerged for the tutelage of Indigenous youth in English homes. A little after the mid seventeenth century a colonial legislature in the South passed a measure providing for the education of Indigenous hostages. By 1693, William and Mary College was chartered and partially dedicated to the education of Indigenous students. In

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<sup>322</sup> Sally Bradstreet Soelle, "Cameron University," Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture, [www.okhistory.org](http://www.okhistory.org) (accessed December 10, 2015).

<sup>323</sup> Ibid.

seventeenth century New England the education of Indigenous peoples went hand in hand with Christianity. The Reverend John Eliot was instrumental in both inspiring funding for and educating young Algonquian converts. One beneficiary, Samson Occom, later journeyed to England, Wales and Scotland in order to raise funds that would benefit the opening of Dartmouth College. The Dartmouth charter included a pledge for the instruction of youth of Indian tribes. In the post-Civil War years in the American West the general feelings amongst reformers was that in order for the Indigenous peoples to escape complete decimation they would need to assimilate into American society. In order to accomplish this, reformers felt that communally held lands had to be broken up and Indigenous youth should receive a western based education.

Richard Henry Pratt organized classes for Indigenous prisoners of war at Fort Marion, Florida that would eventually spark the idea for federal Indian boarding schools. Beginning in 1879, these schools sought to remove Indigenous youth from all that was familiar to them, especially their culture, in order to facilitate the assimilation process. The legacy of federal boarding schools still reverberates through Indigenous populations in the United States. John Tippeconnic began his education in these institutions but he did something remarkable by utilizing the Fort Sill Indian School to catapult him to additional educational endeavors, including Bacone College. For many Indigenous youth, federal boarding schools would be seen as an experience to be forgotten. However, John thrived there and while he could not have known it at the time, Fort Sill Indian School would play a part in catapulting him to heights no other Comanche had ever achieved.

## CHAPTER 4

### Finding his place on the Rock: Bacone 1918-1922

In the fall of 1918 John left the familiar surroundings of Southwestern Oklahoma to enroll in high school at Bacone, just outside Muskogee, Oklahoma. By this time John had gained valuable educational experience from the one room public school in Cache, Fort Sill Boarding School and at Cameron during the First World War.<sup>324</sup> Surely, the close proximity of these first three institutions provided John with a level of comfort and perhaps made his adjustment to living away from home a little easier. John was eager to continue school, however, pursuing a high school education would present him with the challenge of leaving southwestern Oklahoma for an extended period of time. John would not be alone on this new adventure; his childhood companion, a Kiowa named Richard Aitson, was also making the journey. During John Tippeconnic's four-year stint at Bacone he would transition from a boy to man.

At Bacone John received an education and was influenced by strong institutional leadership. This chapter contends that the moral attributes Bacone sought to instill in Indigenous youth were, in John Tippeconnic's case, already firmly ingrained through his foundation in the Comanche Ethos. He possessed this ethos when he arrived at Bacone in 1918. Furthermore, this chapter contends that the positive attributes of Christianity easily translated to Indigenous youth like John Tippeconnic because both the Comanche Ethos and his Christian faith emphasized similar characteristics. In other words, for many Comanches like John, full

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<sup>324</sup> "Indian Receives Master's Degree: John W. Tippeconnie Is Graduated In Arizona." Lawton Constitution, August 27, 1942, 7. (John attended school at Cameron in Lawton, Oklahoma after completing grades one through six at Fort Sill.)

acceptance of Christianity was a fluid transition because many of the moral guidelines were closely related. John was already baptized by the time he arrived at Bacone; however, as he matured, his understanding of both Christianity and of himself developed during his transition to manhood. This chapter does not imply that by fully accepting Christianity he gave up what it meant to be Comanche. The antithesis holds true; it reinforced what it was to be Comanche.

In the fall of 1918 John had just turned seventeen before he traversed across the sprawling green farmland and rolling hills of the forty-sixth state. Much had changed in a matter of a few short decades in former Oklahoma Territory. Just after the nineteenth century rounded the corner into the twentieth, the Comanche reservation was broken up into allotments. During John's first year of life, President William McKinley was assassinated by an anarchist in Buffalo New York. On April 6, 1917, when John was sixteen, the United States declared war on Germany. By the time the war ended with the Armistice of November 11, 1918, John had been at Bacone for three months.

John arrived at Bacone ready for the new challenge but he would soon question his decision to journey so far from home. John's boyhood friend, Richard Aitson, was just one of the adventurous students who journeyed across the state, but even though John had his closest friend with him this did not keep him from second guessing his decision. When John Tippeconnic arrived at Bacone apparently he was not overly impressed with the appearance of the school grounds. At the age of seventeen he was forming firm opinions, and he was so disappointed in the appearance of the school he was not sure if he should stay for the entire year. However, this early skepticism would eventually be overruled by the friendships he forged and the education he gained, and he would remain at Bacone for the duration of his high school

years.<sup>325</sup> Perhaps if John had not been provided with the opportunity of attending school so close to home, where he could return each afternoon to learn the core of the Comanche ethos, he might have left Bacone. Walking to and from school for the first three years of his education, John benefited immensely from his family where he absorbed daily the attributes of the Comanche ethos, such as perseverance, courage, self-denial, respect and loyalty. There is no doubt that John persevered at Bacone because of the presence of adult Comanches during the early years of his education.

One of the founders of Bacone, Almon C. Bacone, became interested in working amongst Indians after he completed his master's degree at Rochester University in 1858. Bacone's early career as a professional school teacher in Michigan and Ohio attracted the attention of the Cherokee Nation. In 1878 the Cherokee hired the young school teacher to serve as principal teacher at the Cherokee Male Seminary located in Tahlequah, Indian Territory. Tahlequah lies in northeastern Oklahoma, just forty miles from the Arkansas state line; in 1839 the newly arrived Cherokee, who had been forced west by federal troops, made it their capital. These Southern Appalachian people had been forced by the U.S. government to relocate to Indian Territory along the infamous Trail of Tears.

The U.S. government pursued its policy of removing Indigenous peoples from east of the Mississippi during the 1830s and 1840s. The concept of Removal had its origins in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, as Americans grappled with the so called Indian problem. The U.S. government believed its Indian policy faced four options: it could try to

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<sup>325</sup> Bacone College, Bacone Chief 1922, 43.



destroy the Indians; assimilate them into American society; protect them on their ancestral lands; or, finally, remove them to distant lands. The final option soon emerged as the most popular choice. After the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, the United States held title to 827,000 square miles of Western territory between the Mississippi River and the Rocky Mountains. Therefore, the young republic now held plenty of “empty” land beyond the Mississippi River that could be utilized to relocate eastern Indians in order to open land for the expanding U.S. population.

In 1827, when gold was discovered in Cherokee ancestral lands, prospectors quickly flooded the area. In December of that same year the state of Georgia stepped up their offensive and demanded that the U.S. government push the Cherokees to give up their land. The irony here lay in the fact that the U.S. spent an inordinate amount of time in congressional debate and money in the coming decades in an effort to assimilate Indigenous populations, while the Cherokee had already met all of those expectations. Historian Circe Sturm notes,

When the Moravian missionary Albert Steiner returned to the Cherokee Nation in 1820 after his initial visit in 1801, he noted with delight the Progress Cherokees had made according to white standards of civilization. In a letter to John Calhoun, he deemed them ‘the most advanced in Civilization of any of the Indian tribes without exception.’ Steiner witnessed orderly farms and orchards, an overall growth in animal husbandry, and a number of well-tended plantations. If economic growth were the primary measure of white civilization, then the

Cherokees would be well on their way to meeting, if not exceeding, the expectations of their white neighbors.<sup>326</sup>

According to Sturm, the overall perception held among Euro-Americans was that the southeastern tribes were civilized.<sup>327</sup> Moreover, some Cherokees wore European style clothing, plowed and fenced their fields, a minority were Christian and a small number owned southern style plantations and slaves. Moreover, the Cherokees restructured their tribal government into a constitutional republic modeled after the United States. Furthermore, they developed a written constitution, an independent judiciary, a supreme court and a two house legislature. In 1828, the Cherokees established a bilingual newspaper called the *Cherokee Phoenix*. The Phoenix was published in both Cherokee and English thanks to the work of Sequoyah, a Cherokee man who developed the Cherokee syllabary. Some Cherokees were literate in two languages, and displayed more attributes of what was considered civilized than the squatters and American frontiersmen who sought to displace them.

In the case of the Cherokee Nation, justification for removal was conspicuously absent. Following extensive debate and a close vote in both houses, Congress passed the Indian Removal Act in May 1830. This act authorized the U.S. President to negotiate treaties of removal with all Indian tribes living east of the Mississippi. Almost immediately, outsiders, including surveyors and squatters, arrived in Cherokee country and the state of Georgia pursued its campaign of harassment. Like “civilized” people, the Cherokee fought the state of

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<sup>326</sup> Circe Sturm, *Blood Politics: Race, Culture, and Identity in the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 61.

<sup>327</sup> Ibid.

Georgia in the federal court system, eventually pursuing their case in the U.S. Supreme Court. Circe Sturm notes, The Cherokees resisted this act, taking their case all the way to the Supreme Court, where in two landmark decisions, Chief Justice John Marshall laid out the terms under which the independence of the Cherokee Nation would be constructed. In *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia (1831)*, Marshall declared that the Cherokees were a 'domestic dependent nation' and the Cherokees and the United States had a relationship like that of a ward to his guardian.<sup>328</sup> Sturm notes, in this case, "Justice Marshall sought a compromise that would shield the Cherokee Nation from removal." In *Worcester vs Georgia (1832)* the court ruled that the Cherokee Nation was a distinct community occupying its own territory and that Georgia did not have authority over the Cherokees.<sup>329</sup> The state of Georgia, perhaps spurred on by President Andrew Jackson's open defiance of the rulings, simply ignored the Supreme Court. "Ultimately, executive and state powers won out when President Jackson refused to uphold the Supreme Court's decision and reportedly said, 'John Marshall has made his decision. Now let him try and enforce it.'<sup>330</sup>

Faced with increased pressure from Georgia, a tiny group of Cherokees signed the (Illegal) Treaty of New Echota 1835 with the United States that stipulated the tribe had agreed to move west. Cherokee Principal Chief John Ross, along with the majority of the Cherokee people, denounced the treaty and refused to abide by it. However the U.S. government, with a federal law in hand, possessed the legal means it needed to remove the Cherokees. Federal

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<sup>328</sup> Cherokee Nation v. Georgia, 30 U.S. 5 Pet. 1 1 (1831) <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/30/1/case.html>, accessed September 5, 2016.

<sup>329</sup> Worcester v. Georgia, 6 Pet. 515 (1832) <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/31/515/>, accessed September 5, 2016.

<sup>330</sup> Sturm, *Blood Politics: Race, Culture, and Identity in the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma*, 62.

troops then forced the Cherokees to vacate their ancestral lands. Over 4,000 Cherokees died as a direct result of removal.<sup>331</sup>

The Trail of Tears remains a dark mark in United States history however; if the Cherokee had remained in the Southeast then perhaps Juanita Ghormley and John Tippeconnic would have never met and Norman Tippeconnic would not have been born. Juanita Ghormley was the eldest daughter of Thomas Ghormley and one of four siblings from the tiny Northeastern town of Sidler, Oklahoma. Juanita Ghormley was Cherokee. She was born in 1909 and was eight years younger than John Tippeconnic.<sup>332</sup> By May 18, 1923, Juanita had completed grammar school in Tahlequah and would matriculate to the Chilocco Indian Agricultural School.<sup>333</sup> Chilocco opened its doors in 1884 as a federal off- reservation boarding school that served Indigenous children from five different tribes including, the Comanche. Cherokees did not begin to send significant numbers of their youth to Chilocco until after 1910.<sup>334</sup> On Tuesday evening, May 31, 1927, Juanita Ghormley was one of eight Cherokees and twenty eight seniors to graduate from Chilocco.<sup>335</sup> Juanita collaborated with fellow senior Josephine Washburn (Shawnee) to write the senior class song, “. . . colors a gleaming, while we are singing of golden days of youth. Moments a-fleeting, hearts are a-beating full of loyalty and truth. Joy is abounding, song is resounding for the class of Twenty Seven. Here we come, here we come...”<sup>336</sup> On September 5,

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<sup>331</sup> John Ehle, *Trail of Tears: The Rise and Fall of the Cherokee Nation* (New York: Anchor Books Doubleday, 1988), 391.

<sup>332</sup> Mae Bratton, United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Honor Award Nomination and Personnel History Record for Juanita Tippeconnic, April 22, 1966.

<sup>333</sup> Public Schools of Tahlequah, Oklahoma Grammar School Diploma for Juanita Ghormley, May 18, 1923.

<sup>334</sup> K. Tsianina Lomawaima, "Chilocco Indian Agricultural School," Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture, <http://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry.php?entry=CH042> (accessed August 2, 2015).

<sup>335</sup> Chilocco Indian Agricultural School, Commencement Program, Chilocco, Oklahoma, May 31, 1927.

<sup>336</sup> Chilocco Indian Agricultural School, Senior Class Song 1927, Juanita Ghormley and Josephine Washburn.

1927, just a little over three months later she began employment as seamstress at Wind River Agency, Ft. Washakie, Wyoming, where she met a twenty- six- year- old Comanche man named John Tippeconnic.<sup>337</sup> Before continuing the Tippeconnic narrative it is necessary to step back and briefly examine the educational history of the Cherokee in Oklahoma.

Following removal, the Cherokee Nation would work to establish themselves in their new home and its capital, Tahlequah. “Established as the Cherokee capital by the Cherokee people in 1839 at the close of the Trail of Tears, the town soon became a community that planned for the future through sound government, good schools, prosperous businesses, strong religious entities, and a desire to grow in Indian Territory.”<sup>338</sup> Members of this nation’s National Council took steps to operate its own secular institutions in order to keep its students out of mission boarding schools. Historian Devon A. Mihesuah in *Cultivating the Rosebuds* notes, “When missionaries began planning their schools and missions, the council enacted a law requiring that all proponents of education obtain permission from the council before any institution could be established. A tribal ordinance, however, did allow non-Cherokee teachers to live among the Nation’s citizens for the purpose of educating Cherokee children.”<sup>339</sup> The Cherokees desired to control their own schools for a number of reasons, including the fear that the Indigenous appearance of some its young people meant they would not to be accepted in the white schools, the race conscious progressive Cherokees wanted to prove themselves

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<sup>337</sup> United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Secretary of the Interior, Citation for Meritorious Service for Juanita Tippeconnic, Albuquerque Area Office, November 26, 1965.

<sup>338</sup> Beth Harrington, "Tahlequah," Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture, [www.okhistory.org](http://www.okhistory.org) (accessed August 16, 2016).

<sup>339</sup> Devon A. Mihesuah, *Cultivating the Rosebuds: The Education of Women at the Cherokee Female Seminary, 1851-1909* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 18.

distinct from other tribes, and the affluent Cherokee leadership along with their wives subscribed to the value system of the upper class in the antebellum South, including that women should be educated in order to lead the social salvation of their community.<sup>340</sup>

Mihesuah observes “The progressive Cherokees certainly did not believe themselves ‘primitive’ and were determined to prove it by making their tribe a model of white society. These progressives wanted an educational system in order to ‘uplift’ the entire tribe, including poor fullbloods and some mixed-bloods, whom they considered to be ‘unenlightened’ and ‘uninformed.’”<sup>341</sup>

In 1851, The Cherokee Tribal government opened its renowned male and female seminaries.<sup>342</sup> These Cherokee institutions, which catered to elite mixed blood students, offered a secondary education, including foreign languages like Greek, German, French and Latin as well as various science, history and philosophy classes.<sup>343</sup> Unlike the elite, most Cherokee youth attended elementary day schools run by the Cherokee Nation. Cherokee leadership considered themselves progressive and the decisions they made in regards to education reflected a desire to emulate white society. By assuming control, free from Christian denominations, they determined the curriculum with the goal of producing progressive Cherokee Nation leaders who would mold their nation and also reflect leadership in white society.

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<sup>340</sup> Ibid.,20-21.

<sup>341</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>342</sup> Harrington, "Tahlequah," Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture, [www.okhistory.org](http://www.okhistory.org) (accessed August 16, 2016).

<sup>343</sup> Ibid.

When Almon C. Bacone arrived in Tahlequah to teach amongst the Cherokee Indians he remained for only a brief time but his ambition soon led him to open an independent, church run institution for Indian students just outside the Cherokee capital. Bacone became convinced that the Cherokee national schools were not offering the moral foundation that a Christian school could provide for Indian young people. In 1880, he received permission to begin a school on the mission farm. He opened the college February 9, 1880 with three students. Undaunted by the low numbers, Bacone remained resolute, and before the end of the year fifty-six students had been enrolled in the college.<sup>344</sup> Bacone believed that other tribes, besides the Cherokees, should have the benefit of a college, so he secured a grant of one hundred sixty acres of land about forty miles southwest from Tahlequah, and three miles northeast of Muskogee, from the Creek Council.<sup>345</sup> It is also likely that he found it much easier to receive permission from the Creeks, especially given the Cherokee desire to remain free of Christian control of educational institutions.<sup>346</sup>

More importantly, Bacone owed his success in securing the land grant to the persuasiveness of the Reverend William McComb, a Creek Baptist minister who was an influential member of the Creek Council. Classes commenced in Tahlequah while a school at the new site was under construction. According to the Oklahoma Historical Society, the state's first college was called Indian University.<sup>347</sup> The school's purpose was to provide a Christian

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<sup>344</sup> Bacone College, Bacone Chief 1922, 49.

<sup>345</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>346</sup> Mihesuah, *Cultivating the Rosebuds: The Education of Women at the Cherokee Female Seminary, 1851-1909*, 28.

<sup>347</sup> John L. Williams, "Bacone College," Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture, [www.okhistory.org](http://www.okhistory.org) (accessed August 16, 2015).

education for American Indians.<sup>348</sup> By June, 1885, the school had moved from Tahlequah to its new home outside of Muskogee, and the school furnishings and supplies were hauled to their new home in wagons.<sup>349</sup> At the 1885 commencement three students were graduated.<sup>350</sup> One of the individuals who provided funding for construction on the new campus was John D. Rockefeller, who donated \$10,000 toward the erection of the first building. “Rockefeller, a devout Baptist, was interested in the educational work of his denomination, including the growth and maintenance of missions, academies, and colleges; and in the 1880s he was especially interested in the campaign by the denomination’s leaders to create a great Baptist university.”<sup>351</sup> During John Tippeconnic’s high school years, the administration building was officially named Rockefeller Hall, but it was known as “Old Rock”.<sup>352</sup>

Rockefeller Hall was a four story building constructed of bricks made on site and lumber transported from Tahlequah.<sup>353</sup> During construction one of the first tasks was the laying out of the grounds, which included planting trees along newly developed paths. Soon construction transformed the open prairie from its natural state into a well ordered, manicured campus, just as Bacone himself hoped to transform and mold young Indigenous minds into refined “civilized” and educated Christians. Opened in September 1885. Rockefeller Hall served many purposes.

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<sup>348</sup> Ibid.

<sup>349</sup> Bacone College, Bacone Chief 1922, 50.

<sup>350</sup> Ibid.

<sup>351</sup> Kenneth W. Rose. “John D. Rockefeller, The American Baptist Education Society, and the Growth of Baptist Higher Education in the Midwest,” essay (Rockefeller Archive Center, 1998), <http://www.rockarch.org/publications/resrep/rose1.pdf> (accessed February 5, 2016), 1.

<sup>352</sup> Bacone College, Bacone Chief 1922, 50.

<sup>353</sup> Ibid.



Students used the basement as a dining room and kitchen, they attended classes on the first floor; they lived in dormitories located on the second and third floors.

After he founded the college, Bacone served as its president for sixteen years, and in 1910 the institution was renamed in his honor.<sup>354</sup> When Bacone died on April 22, 1896, in accordance with his own request, his final resting place was on the campus of the school where he devoted the latter years of his life.<sup>355</sup> A marble shaft marks his final resting place and memorializes Bacone's words, "A Christian school, planted in the midst of a people, becomes one of the most powerful agencies in the work of civilization."<sup>356</sup> Clearly, Bacone aligned himself with the sentiments of the Indian Reform movement and believed that the key to civilizing Indigenous youth lay in a formula that included both Christianity and western education.<sup>357</sup>

The view from Rockefeller Hall commanded a stunning site and must have served as inspiration for the ambitious youth who attended the institution. Looking to the east, students could see the beginning of the Greenlee Mountains. These distant hills appeared blue from Rockefeller Hall. Glancing to the north, students could see the Arkansas River and a bit farther in the distance, historic Fort Gibson. Turning their eyes to the west, students could see the village of Muskogee in the distance. Conversely, people looking up the hill from all directions could see the Indian University.

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<sup>354</sup> Williams, "Bacone College," Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture, [www.okhistory.org](http://www.okhistory.org) (accessed April 16, 2015).

<sup>355</sup> Bacone College, Bacone Chief 1922, 52.

<sup>356</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>357</sup> *Ibid.*

Conducted under the auspices of the American Baptist Home Mission Society, Indian University claimed to have “. . . its origin in a desire to meet the wants of a needy people who have an especial claim upon Christian benevolence.”<sup>358</sup> Although this description reflects the perspective of the Indian Reform movement, it offers a microcosm of the U.S. position that viewed the Indian as a ward and assigned Indigenous peoples to a subservient role. Institutional rhetoric aimed to prepare teachers and preachers for effective Christian and educational work; for professional and business pursuits; and to furnish the higher educational advantages attended with the best Christian influences.<sup>359</sup> Additional language published in the school’s annual claims that Bacone was established in benevolence on the part of educators, “But there was a strong belief that God would raise up friends to sustain an undertaking so necessary in behalf of a sadly neglected people.”<sup>360</sup> School administrators not only believed they were doing right by the Indians, they also felt that communities beyond Bacone were recognizing the validity of their work. The 1922 yearbook, *The Bacone Chief*, noted that, “The first years of the school in its new home were prosperous. The people of the territory were learning slowly to appreciate what the school was trying to do for the young people.”<sup>361</sup> From day one Bacone fell under the umbrella of the Indian Reform Movement. Indian University and later Bacone College, as well as Indian boarding schools in general, remained an intricate component of the movement. The movement was meant to protect those under it from the tribal and cultural influences of Indian country. Theoretically, when the time was right and the temporary shelter

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<sup>358</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>359</sup> Ibid.

<sup>360</sup> Ibid.

<sup>361</sup> Ibid., 51-52.

of the umbrella was no longer needed, it could be folded up to reveal properly civilized student graduates.

Indian reformers across the United States promoted education and religion as the key ingredients needed to transform young Indigenous students into well prepared civilized citizens. This was certainly true at Bacone. In 1922, Bacone President, B.D. Weeks wrote,

Bacone College is the response to a call to meet an OPPORTUNITY.

It is established upon these basic PRINCIPLES. Education is the harmonious development of every human power: it is the growing up in all things to our highest possibility. It is an inalienable human right. A Baptist is a regenerated servant of God, who had obediently acknowledged Jesus Christ as Lord by voluntarily uniting with His church for the establishment of the Kingdom of God on Earth. The kingdom of God is a kingdom of righteousness, justice, peace, knowledge, harmony, beauty and brotherhood. Baptist progress then means the advancement of the kingdom. Therefore education is the first postulate of a Baptist. He demands education, first that he may realize himself: that he may come into his own-the heritage of yesterday, the wealth of today. Secondly, that he may serve his King by serving his generation and thus achieve his mission in the world. A BAPTIST SCHOOL then should be a two-fold expression of allegiance: a response to the call of culture and an adequate attempt to lead and

light humanity.<sup>362</sup>

During John Tippeconnic's years at Bacone, the school proudly saw itself as a beacon to develop young Indigenous minds through religious doctrine. The president of Bacone further emphasized that this was a school that worshipped Christ, revered the bible, exalted the home, honored motherhood, considered children sacred, valued work, considered service a privilege and finally, valued joyous charity.<sup>363</sup> Bacone undoubtedly provided many Indigenous students with tools that assisted them to lead productive lives. It certainly fostered intertribal relationships that would endure long after students graduated. Without question many students, including my grandfather John Tippeconnic, looked back at their Bacone experience with predominantly fond memories. Without doubt, students grew to admire their instructors and administrators as well. However, it cannot be overlooked that the students of Bacon were inculcated with the idea that Indigenous children should be led out of cultural darkness in order to live worthwhile lives. This is evident in a description of Dr. Bacone's mission, "After working among the Indians faithfully, he saw the possibilities of the Indian youth. He had realized the fact that noble, helpful, and worthy lives can be built under Christian influence. He was spurred on with this realization to start a Christian School for the Indians."<sup>364</sup> The implication here is that without Christianity, a worthy life would prove elusive for Indigenous youth. This is what reformers were selling and while it might have seemed to them that this is exactly what the Indian students in western Christian institutions were buying, I contend that it is not that simple.

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<sup>362</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>363</sup> Ibid.

<sup>364</sup> Ibid., 20.

Individuals like my grandfather had absorbed a moral framework long before they travelled east to attend Bacone. A description of the school's Religious Department states, "Besides the class studies, which are required in all schools, Bacone requires the study of the Bible, believing that it uplifts the student to a higher and better standard of life on which to depend in the future, because it makes him or her the best and most trustful Christian."<sup>365</sup> The implication is that Indigenous youth could not achieve a "higher and better standard of life" without Christianity. The Comanche Ethos instilled in John by Tippeconnic and Winnerchy emphasized honesty, responsibility, consideration of others, self-denial, respect, loyalty and love. Therefore, I contend that the moral attributes Bacone was attempting to instill in Indigenous youth were, at least in John Tippeconnic's case, already ingrained as a foundation of the Comanche Ethos. Furthermore, I contend that the positive attributes of Christianity easily translated to Indigenous youth like my grandfather because both stressed similar traditional characteristics. Many Comanches accepted Christianity because many of the moral guidelines were in alignment.

I am not suggesting that all Christian and Comanche beliefs were in alignment. They most certainly, were not. There were fundamental differences. To cite just one example, Comanche youth were not discouraged from sexual exploration prior to marriage. Yet each tradition possessed some attributes that made the transition from one to the other less difficult. Moreover, in Comanche culture it was not considered acceptable for one Comanche to tell others what their medicine or guiding belief should be. This certainly contradicts the practices of the fundamental Christian doctrine of proselytizing. Each Comanche was free to

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<sup>365</sup> Ibid.

determine what his/her own medicine would be. Comanche activist LaDonna Harris notes the explanation her father provided concerning her grandmother's acceptance of Christianity, "Papa said Christianity was what she chose for her medicine, and it was good for her, and you had to respect other people. So they never had a real controversy over it. Papa thought if you don't respect other people's religion, you'll hurt them, but more importantly, you'll hurt yourself because it comes back to you. So you should never mess with that. It's the Comanche way."<sup>366</sup>

By medicine I am referring to the forces, beliefs, and guiding principles, both tangible and intangible that provide one with the strength, protection and guidance needed to endure the challenges presented in life. It is the contention here that John Tippeconnic saw the common features in the two traditions and accepted Christianity as his medicine. This does not imply that he gave up being Comanche. In fact it reinforces what it is to be Comanche, as all Comanches had the right to determine for themselves what their medicine would be. This is what John did, and he did so while maintaining the attributes of the Comanche Ethos. A cultural fusion allowed John to accept one system without discarding another. Many Comanches accepted Christianity. LaDonna Harris notes that her grandmother's Comanche values were what made her a good Christian, "She was an ideal Christian but I think it was because she was more Comanche than Christian. Her Comanche values made her a good person, and she just happened to take up with Christianity."<sup>367</sup>

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<sup>366</sup> Harris, *A Comanche Life*, ed. H. Henrietta Stockel, 20.

<sup>367</sup> Ibid.

At Bacone religion was emphasized on a daily basis. Bible study was a regular part of the curriculum, however, that was only part of the religious instruction. Each morning at 10:30 students attended a chapel exercise where they read scriptures, sang songs, and engaged in prayer. On occasion a guest speaker would address the student body, and attendance was mandatory. Every Wednesday evening, students met for a mid-week prayer meeting conducted by the Bacone President. President B.D. Weeks encouraged students to take active part in quoting scripture and leading prayer. Attendance was not compulsory but most of the student body attended. Every Sunday morning at 9:15 all students assembled in the chapel for Sunday School. In addition, every Sunday evening at 7:30 they gathered for church services held in the chapel, where Bacone President Reverend Weeks preached. On occasion guest preachers conducted services in the chapel.<sup>368</sup> Until the end of John's Junior year 1921-22, Bacone also had a Y.W.C.A (Young Women's Christian Association) Cabinet and a Y.M.C.A (Young Men's Christian Association) Cabinet.

John was an integral part of the Y.M.C.A Cabinet and each of these groups was trained to lead and organize meetings. At the meetings Bacone students conducted each member had the opportunity to take part. On occasion these groups invited guests to attend their meetings. Some of the guests who attended the Y.M.C.A were Dr. J.S. Murrow of Atoka, a veteran missionary to the Indian people who was known as "Father Murrow." In addition, the Honorable Gabe E. Parker, Superintendent of the Five Civilized Tribes served as a guest speaker for the Y.M.C.A. Moreover, Mr. Ralph Walkingstick, Indian Y.M.C.A Secretary for the State of

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<sup>368</sup> Bacone College, Bacone Chief 1922, 35.

Oklahoma and a Mr. Hall, National Y.M.C.A. Secretary provided the boys with sources of great inspiration.<sup>369</sup>

Twenty four faculty and staff served at Bacone during John Tippeconnic's senior year. Faculty and staff worked with kindergarten kids through secondary school. Courses taught ranged from bible, science and math, as well as physiology, English, history, geography, music, Latin and French. In addition, students were trained in home economics, manual arts and agriculture. According to Indian Reformers, these courses were vital to the civilization process. This training was gender specific and intended to inculcate Indigenous children with acceptable social roles. Bacone differed from the federal boarding schools like Carlisle, Haskell and others in that students were not forcibly removed from their homes. However, the philosophy behind the instruction of students in both federal and religious institutions was similar. "Removing Indian children from their native communities, stripping away the external trappings of their tribal identity, and initiating them into the routine and discipline of institutional life were just the beginning. The battle for children's hearts, minds, and souls could not be won simply with barber shears and marching drills. If Indians were to be prepared for citizenship, if they were to become economically self-sufficient, and if they were to adopt the values and sentiments of American civilization, then they must be instructed to achieve these ends."<sup>370</sup> Indian reformers and federal policymakers expected boarding schools to produce law-abiding, patriotic, God fearing citizens but they also expected these schools to produce citizens who were

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<sup>369</sup> Ibid.

<sup>370</sup> Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928*, 136.



economically self-sufficient. In order to achieve these goals, schools required students to participate in science and math and also in gender based industrial skills and manual labor.

Indigenous boys and young men worked at farming, plowing, planting and blacksmithing and their female counterparts were employed in cooking, cleaning and sewing. At Bacone, the Home Economics Department focused on providing these skills for Indigenous females.

The interest of the course in Home Economics in Bacone College is to create and develop interest in home making, its responsibilities and duties, and to give practical training in this vitally important factor in American life. Two phases of the work are offered-sewing and cooking. The aim of the course in sewing is to develop appreciation for the artistic and appropriate in dress, and in the furnishing and decoration of the home; good judgement in the purchasing of materials, and technical skill in the planning and making of garments is also dealt with. Emphasis is placed on simplicity, economy, and artistic line and color combination. A study is made of the textile fibers with relation to their growth and processes of manufacture into cloth, the hygiene of clothing, and the care and repair of clothing.<sup>371</sup>

At Bacone the sewing and cooking classes organized a Home Economics Club to enable students to further develop their skills amongst their peers. Once these skills were honed, a picnic was organized and the male students were invited, where the girls could put their practical knowledge to the test. "All had such a good time that ever since they have been looking

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<sup>371</sup> Bacone College, Bacone Chief 1922, 49.

forward to another picnic this spring.” This fulfilled one of the stated intentions for manual labor and domestic labor instruction in both federal and religious boarding schools to produce self-sufficient citizens.

Through the examination of a letter written by Bacone freshman Miles Reynolds in 1922, one can see the emphasis on the idea of self-sufficiency.

The art of Manual Training will go with us throughout our lives if we only get it now. Suppose a family lived out of town and were badly in need of a hen house. They took a weekly farm magazine, and there was a drawing in it of the kind of a house they need. Now suppose the man had taken Manual Training when he was in school. He could look at the outline of the house, and at once understand every detail. Why? Because he had taken mechanical drawing when he was in school. He was able to make that hen house and save money, because in his boyhood he had taken Manual Training. We may not see the benefit of it now, but in later years we will realize it. I am glad I started in and hope to be able to take it several years more. I think the rest of the boys are of the same opinion.

One aspect of the Manual Training Department at Bacone that differed from similar training at federal boarding schools is that it was open to both boys and girls. At Bacone, the Manual Training Department instructed students in woodworking, and the principles of art but it also provided them with a deviation from the classroom.

The Manual Training Department at Bacone is one of our many good

features, and we certainly appreciate the fact that we can have it.

In the Manual Training shop we find a diversion from the school-room.

In a way, it is the same, but it seems as though we enter something different when we start to work. We do not have the books around us, and it seems as though we are out in the open. However, we do our best and get our work done the best we can. We learn the art of mechanical drawing and wood work, both of which help us mentally and physically.<sup>372</sup>

At Bacone, Manual Training stood for high ideals and pushed students to concentrate their minds, while carefully employing tools which fostered the ability to take the advice of superiors.

When John Tippeconnic arrived at Bacone he briefly entertained leaving, as he walked the campus between Rockefeller Hall and Sacajawea Hall, but it did not take him long to become firmly entrenched in almost every aspect of life at Bacone. Not only did he persist, John thrived. He played three sports at Bacone; football, track, and baseball. He adjusted so well that he was selected as the football team captain in 1918 during his freshman year. In addition, he was the class yell leader from 1919-1922. Although he played football from 1918-1921, he was also the assistant manager (coach) from 1918-1921.<sup>373</sup> During one of the seasons the Bacone football team outscored their opponents 361-61 (fig. 5.) Moreover, he was the Secretary of the literary society and President of an organization called the Uplifters. He served as the Sports editor for the yearbook his junior year and as the business manager his senior

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<sup>372</sup> Bacone College, *Bacone Chief* 1922, 51.

<sup>373</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

year. During his junior year he was a member of the Y.M.C.A Cabinet, and a member of the choir.<sup>374</sup>

It is evident that John, had become very comfortable with his surroundings. In addition, he was held in high regard by his peers, as this passage from the 1921 *Bacone Chief* notes, “Our Tipp, with his smile and sparkling eye, Now where’s one better than he?”<sup>375</sup> Students at Bacone from 1918-1922 were similar to young people of all historical eras, dreaming of taking on the world and of accomplishing great things. One Bacone senior in 1922 dreamed of being a pastor at Calvary Baptist Church in Washington D.C. which boasted a membership of twenty thousand and included President Warren G. Harding and most of his cabinet members. Another student’s life ambition was to become the director of Athletics at Vassar College, in Poughkeepsie, New York. Minnie Walker dreamed that she would become a singer and tour Europe. John Patterson envisioned himself, “As the Judge of the State Supreme Court, I can now protect the Indians of this state from the grafters.”<sup>376</sup>

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<sup>374</sup> Ibid., 25

<sup>375</sup> Bacone College, *Bacone Chief* 1921, Juniors section.

<sup>376</sup> Bacone College, *Bacone Chief* 1922, 30.



**Figure 5. Bacone Football Team 1921. Upper Right hand corner (10) John Tippeconnic**

Yet another student wanted to excel in scientific farming and to train others to become farmers. Neva Winton dreamed of becoming the Kindergarten teacher at Bacone. In 1935 stated, "I am still on the "dear old hill top" as the Athletic Coach. The year has been a real success, and take it from me, the Indians can scalp 'em right. The Varsity team has won the championship for the year of '35. By the consent of a committee at Washington, I will be allowed to take two all- around athletes to the next Olympian games.<sup>377</sup> In 1918 when John arrived, he considered leaving, by 1922, he envisioned that he would still be at Bacone or have

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<sup>377</sup> Ibid.

returned there after college.<sup>378</sup> While it is important to read between the lines and compare the statements of these young people against those made by administrators in order to ascertain that some of the language had to be a reflection of the latter's aim for the students, it is also very clear that Bacone was a place that John, and others, grew to cherish. At Bacone, students were also made aware of the political climate in the United States.

John was in his junior year when, on November 2, 1920, women in the United States participated in the presidential election for the first time. Students were cognizant of the national election and noted in their annual on November 3, 1920 that Warren G. Harding would become the next President of the United States. Harding won a lopsided victory. James M. Cox, his opponent carried only eleven states and garnered only 127 electoral votes to Harding's 404.<sup>379</sup> Harding's proposed policies appealed to farmers and to enfranchised Oklahomans.

Students fostered life-long relationships at Bacone but they also developed close relationships with the instructors, staff and even the president. At Bacone, each year was filled with social events including the president's reception. John's senior year began officially on September 6 1921, and the president's reception was held the evening of September 10. The students considered it one of the most enjoyable events of the year as they were honored guests at Lewis Cottage, the president's home.

On the night of the reception, all the girls and boys came over to the President's home, everyone dressed in his best bib and tucker, and

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<sup>378</sup> Ibid.

<sup>379</sup> Ellis W. Hawley, *The Great War and the Search for a Modern Order: A History of the American People and Their Institutions, 1917-1933* (Prospect Heights: Waveland Press, Inc., 1992), 46.

with carefully polished shoes. All were greeted by President Weeks, Mrs. Weeks, and the members of the faculty. After passing heroically down the receiving line, all went out on the lawn, which was lighted with strings of electric lights. At first, everyone was very well reserved and dignified, but the old students were glad to see each other again, and the new ones soon got acquainted and became as loudly happy as the rest. After playing games and having a good time, all gathered around the porch and sang of our dear Bacone songs. The music sounded strangely beautiful in the night, and we were all glad that we were at old Bacone again. Soon the tired, but happy Buddy was asking for ice cream, and even Tyler looked lean and hungry, so the refreshments, consisting of pink ice cream and cookies, were served. Before leaving for the dormitories, all gave a rousing cheer for the President and for the school that loves Indians.<sup>380</sup>

Throughout the year students gathered to celebrate events such as Halloween and Valentine's Day. For example, during Halloween Sacajawea Hall was selected for the masquerade party and decorated with orange and black crepe paper. "The walls of the room and the windows were also decorated in the same colors. In one corner was the witch's booth, where many gruesome fortunes were told to lovesick youths."<sup>381</sup> Students bobbed for apples and participated in a grand masquerade march to determine the winner of best costume. The

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<sup>380</sup> Bacone College, Bacone Chief 1922, 44.

<sup>381</sup> Ibid.

descriptions above sound like they could be plugged into many eras until the list of the most common costumes in the contest are revealed. "When all had assembled, the grand march was started and the masqueraders marched solemnly in front of the judges who were to decide on the best costume. Their task was hard because there were so many clever ones, negroes, clowns, and ghosts being in predominance."

Mondays at Bacone were typically designated as days when the students could venture into Muskogee after school. Students looked forward to these trips, and while they were a part of the established routine, they served to break up the monotony. Students might catch a silent film or make a visit to the local soda fountain. Social outings and excursions that involved both students and administrators and staff at Bacone appear to have played a part in developing mutually respectful relationships. Through the examination of school photographs and annuals one gets a sense that humor, in appropriate situations, was also helpful to break up the monotony. President Weeks, appears to have recognized that it was important that students not only visualized him as their leader but as a friend as well. He worked aggressively to bring more Indian students to Bacone and advertised it as the only college designated exclusively for American Indians. In addition, he actively recruited Indian faculty and staff as well as supporting a movement to create classes focused on Indian culture.<sup>382</sup> "As a result, a style of "traditional" Indian painting developed and became recognized by art historians as 'the Bacone School.'"<sup>383</sup>

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<sup>382</sup> Williams, "Bacone College," Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture, [www.okhistory.org](http://www.okhistory.org) (accessed August 16, 2016).

<sup>383</sup> Ibid.



Mr. Weeks participated in all school celebrations such as Halloween, where he won the prize for best costume.<sup>384</sup> On one occasion the president revealed his sense of humor,

Judge: (Impaneling a jury) "Are you a property holder?"

Mr. Weeks: "Yes sir."

Judge: "Married or single?"

Mr. Weeks: "I have been married for seven years."

Judge: "Have you formed or expressed an opinion."

Mr. Weeks: "Not for seven years."<sup>385</sup>

Mr. Weeks occasionally incorporated an Indigenous methodology in order to teach one young couple a lesson. On October 1, 1921, he found a "love letter" and instead of calling the offenders into his office to be chastised and or receive some form of punishment, he decided to tease them amongst their peers by reading the letter aloud in chapel.<sup>386</sup> It is a certainty that President Weeks opted to call in another couple for their offense when they were caught by the president "spooning after school hours."<sup>387</sup> President B.D. Weeks took charge of Bacone on July 1, 1918, just three months prior to John Tippeconnic's arrival. Considering John's opinion of Mr. Weeks, it is clear the two shared a close bond of mutual trust and respect. An examination of Bacone materials has led me to conclude that Weeks he might have provided some guidance to a young seventeen-year-old Comanche who was not sure if he would finish his first year. I also firmly believe that John Tippeconnic provided President Weeks with a model Indigenous student. John Tippeconnic was intelligent, witty, outgoing, athletic, handsome and

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<sup>384</sup> Bacone College, Bacone Chief 1922, 44.

<sup>385</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>386</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>387</sup> Ibid.

well-liked by all who had an opportunity to know him, including President Weeks. In 1933, when John and his wife Juanita had a son, my father, they named him Norman Weeks Tippeconnic. Given this decision, non-Indian administrators might have been convinced that John was fully assimilated but, Tippeconnic's son remained grounded in his Comanche Ethos, while successfully navigating Bacone.

Some students at Bacone were more fortunate than their federal boarding school counterparts. When Christmas vacation arrived each year, those who lived close enough to venture home for the short break took advantage of the opportunity, including the president. During John's senior year, Christmas break began on December 23, 1921, and school resumed on January 3, 1922.<sup>388</sup> It is not known whether John Tippeconnic remained at Bacone for the break, but it appears that many of the students did remain. On December 23, "From three-thirty that afternoon until noon the next day, boys and girls were to be seen hurrying to the car station. The group of students that were destined to stay at Bacone for the vacation looked rather wishful when the last 'lucky ones,' as they were termed, passed out of sight, but they could not be lonely very long, because of the jolly crowd that was left behind."<sup>389</sup>

For those who remained their time was filled by attending Sunday school in the school chapel, and they shared Christmas dinner with the orphans associated with Bacone.<sup>390</sup> Christmas season in the early 1920s was certainly far removed from our modern materialistic holiday, demonstrated by the fact that the normal "town day" was cancelled because the stores

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<sup>388</sup> Ibid.

<sup>389</sup> Ibid.

<sup>390</sup> Ibid.

were closed.<sup>391</sup> In lieu of the normal Sunday evening service in the chapel, students gathered to sing Christmas songs and President Weeks told the Christmas story. Perhaps in order to keep student minds off family at home, the Christmas season appeared to be quite busy at Bacone. Just prior to the Sunday Christmas song service, the Christmas tree was taken into the chapel and decorated with popcorn, tinsel, and many different kinds of decorations. Another indication that many students remained at school were the numerous presents. Many of them could not fit under the tree and were placed on the floor and on nearby chairs.<sup>392</sup>

No less than three additional parties were held at the school between Christmas and New Year. Since the stores remained closed after Christmas, the usual shopping trip was cancelled, but students did go into Muskogee to take in a movie. In 1921, the first film to feature an audible voice or “talkie” was still seven years in the future.<sup>393</sup> Although the silent film that Bacone students watched during Christmas vacation was not identified, on the January 19<sup>th</sup> trip to the movie house, the students enjoyed “Mary’s Ankle.”<sup>394</sup> Directed by Lloyd Ingraham and starring Douglas MacLean and Doris May, “Mary’s Ankle” was released in 1920 by Paramount Pictures. On the last evening of 1921, a New Year’s watch party was held in the attic at Sacajawea Hall.

Certainly when students lived, ate, slept, and attended school in the same building the monotony was readily broken up with festive parties and elaborate decorations. New Year’s

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<sup>391</sup> Ibid.

<sup>392</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>393</sup> Ronald L. Davis, *The Glamour Factory: Inside Hollywood’s Big Studio System* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1993), 182. (Al Jolson starred in the 1927 “Jazz Singer” which marked a revolutionary achievement in motion pictures bringing the first “talkie” or film that featured audible dialogue.)

<sup>394</sup> Bacone College, *Bacone Chief* 1922, 67.

eve was no exception. The decorations included Bacone pennants, Indian blankets, and crepe paper.<sup>395</sup> In 1922 Valentine's Day was also celebrated in Sacajawea Hall and featured games and a fortune teller's booth. Red heart decorations and red crepe paper lampshades provided the room with a rosy light color. "Valentine Day is always celebrated at Bacone with a party, and this year we had an especially fine one. The post office was crowded with lovers and friends who were buying valentines, and at the hour appointed they were all in the boxes and ready to be given away."<sup>396</sup> Throughout the academic year students could gather during "social hour" at three thirty each Sunday afternoon. Students would have until five o'clock to stroll around campus, or visit with each other in Sacajawea Hall.<sup>397</sup> In addition to celebrating annual holidays, the students celebrated the athletic achievements of their student body.

During John Tippeconnic's tenure at the school great emphasis was placed on athletics "We at Bacone, believe in every attribute of athletics. We believe in the effectiveness of the sound mind, supported by a strong and healthy body. We also believe that athletics have a part in the formation of character. We believe that athletics contribute largely to the moral welfare of a school. Because we believe in these qualities of athletics, all sports have been maintained these many years."<sup>398</sup> At the end of the nineteenth century, and shortly before John's years at Bacone, the federal government operated twenty-five boarding schools located at sites off reservations.<sup>399</sup> From their inception, federal boarding schools included physical education in

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<sup>395</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>396</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>397</sup> Ibid.

<sup>398</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>399</sup> John Bloom, *To Show What an Indian Can Do: Sports at Native American Boarding Schools* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000.), 12.

their curriculum and by the end of the nineteenth century, schools like Carlisle, and Haskell Institute in Lawrence, Kansas, fielded competitive football teams. By the early twentieth century athletics had become a significant component of the federal boarding school educational system, but for Indigenous peoples, sports have long been part of the cultures.

North America's Native people have engaged in sports and games throughout their rich histories. Pre-contact sports and games varied from Lacrosse in North America and the Mayan ball games in Mesoamerica, to the lesser known competition known as Snow Snake, played by the Iroquois nations during the winter season. Post-Contact favorites included horse racing, especially amongst plains tribes like the Comanche, to the Chicken pull contests enjoyed by Santo Domingo Pueblo in present-day New Mexico.

Sports ranged from team contests to individual games and the motivation for each competition varied widely, as Troy Johnson explains, "Games were played for many reasons. Some were played to cure disease. Others made the crops grow. Many games were played just for fun. Part of the fun was watching the sport and betting on the outcome."<sup>400</sup> Indigenous peoples, like all distinct groups, love to have fun, especially when engaged in sports and games

Many tribes participated in Lacrosse, Double Ball, and Shinny, however, amongst Comanches, Shinny was exclusively a women's game. Although sports and games had served multiple purposes before contact, when the colonization process shifted to the reservation era and, subsequently, with the arrival of the federal boarding schools Indigenous peoples became relegated to the margins of American history. In the twentieth century, increasing numbers of

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<sup>400</sup> Troy Johnson, *Native American Sports and Games*, ed. Troy Johnson (Philadelphia: Mason Crest Publishers, 2003), 10.

Indigenous youth found themselves in boarding schools and for many, the reasons for engaging in sports changed significantly.

For school officials sports offered a way to balance various aspects of education but sports also promoted their assimilation goals. "Mainstream sports, like football, were first introduced at boarding schools as part of a larger effort to erase Native American culture and history from memory. Ironically, however, they ended up being a source of pride for students and their children, a resource for pleasure, and an instrument through which they creatively constituted and reformulated their identities."<sup>401</sup> Certainly for boarding school leaders like Richard Henry Pratt, student participation in sports was seen as an unwitting tool of exploitation and promotion. Surely Pratt developed endearing relationships with some of his students but he actively exploited them to promote his product. However, John Bloom notes, "Unlike physical education or recreation, these athletic programs were created to provide schools with a valuable source of public relations providing 'proof' that Native American children could be assimilated and taught to compete with grace and sportsmanship."<sup>402</sup> Regardless of the motivation behind the exploitation of Indigenous youth under federal assimilation policies, sports proved an avenue for many students to assert their ethnic pride. Legendary Carlisle football coach Pop Warner recognized that for some of his players football contests finally offered an opportunity to engage in combat (albeit on the gridiron) with Anglo-Americans on equal terms.<sup>403</sup>

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<sup>401</sup> Bloom, *To Show What an Indian Can Do: Sports at Native American Boarding Schools*, 12.

<sup>402</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>403</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

Athletics at Bacone played an immense role in the expansion of John's confidence as a young man. Certainly it was one of the aspects of the Bacone experience that shaped his decision to remain (there). After he arrived at the school, John immediately became involved in athletics. His leadership qualities were quickly evident to his peers and coach, and he was named football team captain in his first year. John played Left Halfback for the team and was described by his peers as a player that ". . . twists and squirms and snakes his way along."<sup>404</sup> This description of John making his way on the gridiron is perfect due to the fact that the Comanche were known as the Snake people.<sup>405</sup> Football was the students' favorite sport and Coach W.A. Robertson, who arrived in 1921, played a major role in the team's success and was revered by his players. "To him belongs the credit of bringing the football team out of obscurity, as well as the spirit of the boys themselves. The method of training and rules instituted by Coach Robertson, has made possible this record to which we refer with pride."<sup>406</sup>

The football team won five, and lost five games during John's junior year. It is clear that the Indigenous student athletes envisioned the gridiron as a twentieth-century battlefield in which they could count coup on their enemies, just as Tippeconnic and the previous generation of young men viewed war deeds against their enemies. John Bloom notes this traditional transference to a post colonialism context, "He sees this not as a mark of any sort of loss of

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<sup>404</sup> Bacone College, Bacone Chief 1922, 55.

<sup>405</sup> Wallace and Hoebel note in *The Comanches: Lords of the South Plains*, p. 5., in the sign language used on the plains that the Comanches are known as the snakes and the gesture was made when one placed the right hand palm downward with their forearm across the front of the body, and moving it to the right with a wiggling motion. There are multiple explanations that have been passed down orally over the generations as to why Comanches are called the snake people including a reference to the geographical area around the Snake River where they originated as Shoshone people.

<sup>406</sup> Bacone College, Bacone Chief 1922, 58.

identity but, rather, as the continuation of long-standing tradition, simply in a new form.”<sup>407</sup> I grew up in a household that was clearly part of John Tippeconnic’s legacy. In that home, one of John Tippeconnic’s grandchildren certainly viewed his participation in division one college football as his modern day venue for achieving social recognition amongst his people. In 1990, I was a senior linebacker at Colorado State University. Before every game I envisioned making big plays to help us win. I always visualized myself as a Comanche warrior, and the offense as the enemy. Each time I lined up on defense, I was trying to count coup on my enemy. I was always cognizant of my grandfather’s legacy, not only in education but in sports. I was fortunate to count coup on one hundred-seventy five enemies during my senior campaign at Colorado State University, good enough for second all-time in Colorado State University football history.<sup>408</sup> Prior to every game, I envisioned myself just as Tippeconnic must have, before he took up arms against his enemies in the nineteenth century, and as my grandfather John did during his athletic career at Bacone and Ottawa University. Certainly the historical circumstances surrounding Bacone athletes sparked this traditional social transference.

At the very least, the Bacone players characterized their gridiron battles as Indians vs whites. “However, Bacone was victorious five times out of the ten games she played, and in some of these games the Indians out-played their white opponents.”<sup>409</sup> John would go on to play football in college and his legacy continued when four of his grandchildren would complete

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<sup>407</sup> Bloom, *To Show What an Indian Can Do: Sports at Native American Boarding Schools*, 38.

<sup>408</sup> All-Time Football Records. “Colorado State University Tackles,” May 5, 2005. <http://www.csurams.com/sports/m-footbl/archive/080405aaa.html> (accessed June 2, 2014).

<sup>409</sup> Bacone College, *Bacone Chief* 1921, 58.



in college athletics, three of them at the division one level. Once Coach Robertson arrived for the 1921-1922 season, the impact was clear.

On September 16, 1921, Coach Robertson held a meeting that attracted many of the Bacone boys. In addition to their new coach, the team received new equipment and uniforms that fall. "Step by step they have advanced, until they now occupy a prominent place in High School football."<sup>410</sup> On September 20, 1921, the football team endured a rigorous scrimmage that prepared them for the first game of the season. On September 23, 1921, Bacone met Haskell and emerged victorious. Haskell had opened its doors for the education of Indian students during the same era that Bacone was established, beginning as the United States Indian Industrial Training School in 1884.<sup>411</sup> Early trades for boys at Haskell included tailoring, wagon making, blacksmithing, harness making, painting, shoe making, and farming. Girls studied cooking, sewing and homemaking.<sup>412</sup> A high school level curriculum was absent until the closing years of the nineteenth century, however, by the fall of 1921, when Bacone faced Haskell in football, the secondary school there was well established. Since 1993, the institution has been known as Haskell Indian Nations University.

Bacone next took the field against C.O.T.S. and destroyed them, 88-0. On October 7, Bacone's win streak continued and they shut out Claremore High School 27-0 and followed that with a victory seven days later against St. Joseph's College. The incredible run continued for three more weeks as Bacone stomped Wagoner, Warner, and Pryor. Led by the "Duke" Lock

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<sup>410</sup> Bacone College, Bacone Chief 1922, 58.

<sup>411</sup> Haskell Indian Nations University. "School History," <http://www.haskall.edu/about/history.php> (accessed January 20, 2016), 1.

<sup>412</sup> Ibid.

Morton, and “Tipp” John Tippeconnic, Bacone had an impressive perfect record at this point in the season. Lock Morton had entered Bacone in 1915 as a freshman, but he left school in 1916 to join the United States Navy and served in World War I. He returned to Bacone in 1920 as a sophomore. “He won the favor of his class by his splendid ability, and has been elected president of his class every year that he has been here. Lock has taken part in athletics, and won the trophy cup for best all- around athlete in 1920.”<sup>413</sup>

Rounding out the varsity football squad were Sanford McGilbra playing Right End and serving as captain elect, David Archibald at Left End, Jacob Alexander at Left Tackle, Roy Saumty at Quarterback, George King at Right Guard, John Wolfe, Galvos Cosar at Right Half Back, John Patterson, who played both Center and Right Guard, Claude Washington at Left End, Clifford King at Center, fellow Comanche and life-long family friend, Robert Coffee at Quarterback, Jeff Robertson at Right Tackle, and William Shadlow at Left Guard.<sup>414</sup> On November 12, 1921, the team journeyed to Pryor and suffered its first defeat. The following week the scheduled meeting with Nowata was cancelled. In the final game of the season the team visited Tahlequah and participated in what was characterized as a “prize fight.”<sup>415</sup> On December 2, perhaps still on the mend from the battle with Tahlequah, the team limped into their last game against C.H.S., and while the score is not documented, Bacone’s team most likely did not achieve their desired result. Regardless of how the season ended for gridiron stars of Bacone, the season was a success. “Seven teams, some among the best in the state, have gone down to defeat beneath the tread of the cleated moccasin. Only twice have they tasted defeat, and then at the hands of

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<sup>413</sup> Bacone College, Bacone Chief 1922, 27.

<sup>414</sup> Ibid., 54-57.

<sup>415</sup> Ibid., 66.

opponents whose strength was unusual. In fact, one of the opponents who defeated us, fought the final duel for championship honors. We mention this only to show you the relative strength of the Bacone team "A clean scrap," irrespective of the outcome, is the motto of every player on the team."<sup>416</sup>

On December 13, 1921, following the end of the season, the football banquet was held at the president's home. Dinner began at 6:00 and all the players looked forward to the feast. Major Victor M. Lock, Jr., and Superintendent of the Five Civilized Tribes, Mr. S. Ralph Walkingstick, Jr., were special guests at the banquet, which featured a four course dinner. Following dinner, both of the special guests spoke, as well as Coach Robertson and President Weeks. "The balance of the evening was spent with social time and music, and upon leaving the boys of the team gave vent to their enthusiasm by several lusty yells in honor of President and Mrs. Weeks, Coach Robertson, and Bacone."<sup>417</sup>

In a boarding school like Bacone, where the student population was not large, students could get to know everyone in their class and most likely everyone in the school. In 1922, during John's senior year, there were 234 students enrolled in the entire institution. In addition, students who attended Bacone that year represented twenty- one different tribes and five different states. By the fall of 1922, Bacone began its forty-second year and at this point the school had worked with 3,446 Indigenous students since its opening.<sup>418</sup> Some of John's classmates spoke of him with affection and referred to him as Tipp, "John Tipp, the wild

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<sup>416</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>417</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>418</sup> Bacone College, Bacone Chief 1922, 34.

Commanche Indian, came from the western part of the state and became an interesting character of our class. He came mostly for the exploring of the state, but while here, became immensely interested in Bacone, and stayed through the four years of high school with his class. During these four years, John has taken part in all school activities, especially in all forms of athletics. John has many friends, and we know the school will miss him very much."<sup>419</sup> For John Tippeconnic, the feelings were mutual,

In the fall of 1918, I arrived at Bacone with six other members of my tribe. I was pretty disappointed in the outward appearance and size of the school, for I had thought of Bacone as a place of many fine buildings, and the home of many students. My disappointment was so great, that during the first few weeks, I was rather undecided as to whether or not I should stay through the whole year. At last a time came when I had a better understanding of my school, and I had learned the great purpose of Bacone, and what it stands for.

Bacone exists not for show or popularity, but for the honor of Christ, and for the strengthening of Indian boys and girls. Nearly everyone on campus is a working Christian who is not ashamed to say so in public or private. This encouraged me very much, and ever since then, I have been trying to grasp the great opportunities that are constantly offered me. Bacone broadened my vision of the meaning of the great word, education,

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<sup>419</sup> Bacone College, Bacone Chief 1922, 28.

for I now know what a real education must include a working knowledge of Christianity. I have also learned that it is not the school with many fine buildings, many students, or privileges that has the greatest influence over its students; the purpose of the school and the character of its teachers and leaders are worth far more. Each year I came back with greater determination to finish my schooling at Bacone, for she has changed my whole course, and has set me on the narrow road, always to be on the level and play the game square.

Bacone has been my school of schools, and I shall always say a good word about her. She always has teachers of the best, who very graciously extend to the students a helping hand, and she will soon have fine buildings and equipment, also. Perhaps, if I had not gone to Bacone, I would be in the same condition as many of my Indian friends are in now. They have neglected the strengthening of their moral and religious character, and are not completely educated. The great educational opportunities we are facing now, as Indian youths, are far greater than our forefathers ever dreamed. Bacone is meeting the need by increased equipment and broader visions. It is a place of equal feeling, for its students and teachers have no other purpose than that of pulling together for the betterment of the school and its principles. These are the greatest reasons why I stuck to Bacone, and will always feel the thrill of love at the sight of her maroon and white.<sup>420</sup>

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<sup>420</sup> Bacone College, Bacone Chief 1922, 43.

John credited Bacone with strengthening his moral and religious character and he came to appreciate the institution for its educational privileges and the leadership opportunities it provided. John arrived at Bacone as a young man of seventeen who was unsure of his surroundings but after four years he emerged as a man. That man had a foot in two worlds. However, the Comanche ethos remained and for him it meshed well with Christianity because of their shared characteristics. John not only found himself making the transition into manhood at Bacone, he reaffirmed what it was to be a Comanche. He was both a Comanche and a Baptist but as a Comanche man he was free to choose the medicine that would guide him on his life journey, which was about to take him into uncharted waters.

## CHAPTER 5

### A Warrior of Education

At Bacone, John Tippeconnic not only found a place upon the rock, he found himself. This is evident in one group photograph taken in 1922 of John and ten additional male students (at Bacone). In this photograph John exudes confidence. He has an air of accomplishment about him that is apparent in his posture and gaze. He has the look of a young Comanche warrior who has counted coup in a modern way. John's look in this photograph is similar to what can be observed in the 1876 photograph of Tippeconnic with his fellow Comanche warriors (fig 6).<sup>421</sup> Graduating from Bacone was a wonderful accomplishment for this young Comanche man, given that he was only one generation removed from a life on the plains. Regardless of the obstacles that stood between him and academic success in a white world, John overcame them with the character traits of the Comanche Ethos. John would become a warrior, but the early twentieth century called for a different kind of horse. Every Comanche warrior in the pre reservation era needed a horse in order to take an enemy, seize captives, steal enemy horses or hunt. His possession of a horse demonstrated that he was worthy of social recognition as a man amongst the Comanche people. John brought with him to Bacone a Comanche educational foundation and at Bacone he procured the necessary tools to ensure future success in the white academic world.

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<sup>421</sup> Student Group, Bacone, Oklahoma, MRL 10: G.E.E. Lindquist Papers, 55, 1188, The Burke Library Archives (Columbia University Libraries) at Union Theological Seminary, New York. Can be viewed at [http://lindquist.cul.columbia.edu/catalog/burke\\_lindq\\_055\\_1188](http://lindquist.cul.columbia.edu/catalog/burke_lindq_055_1188). Web accessed 27 Dec 2014.



**Figure 6. John Tippeconnic third from left.**

This chapter examines John Tippeconnic's matriculation into Ottawa University, his early professional life as well as his stint in graduate school. He emerged as the first Indigenous American to earn a Master's degree. This study contends that John's accomplishment, as a member of the first generation in his family not born on the plains, set a historic precedent for the Comanche and that it paved the way for those members of our tribe who followed. This chapter will also address John's role in World War II.

Following his graduation from Bacone, John was riding straight ahead into a world no other Comanche had ever entered before, the Post-Secondary arena. However, John wasn't riding the same horse that enabled his father to become a man; John's horse was western education and he was prepared to count coup. After John graduated from Bacone, he was admitted to Ottawa University in Kansas. Ottawa University was founded in 1865 on the banks



of the Marais des Cygnes, or River of Swans.<sup>422</sup> The Marais des Cygnes runs for two hundred and seventeen miles through both eastern Kansas and western Missouri, and is a principal tributary of the (Osage River). The Osage River is a tributary of the Missouri River. Ottawa University is located some forty miles southwest of Kansas City in Ottawa, Kansas. In the midst of the Civil War missionaries as well as other recent arrivals to Kansas influenced an agreement between the Kansas Baptist denomination and the Ottawa Tribe to form a school to benefit the children of the Ottawas.<sup>423</sup>

The original idea of the founders of Ottawa University was to charter a boarding school for children of the Ottawa Tribe between the ages of six and eighteen. In addition, the founders claimed that they intended to clothe, educate, and care for the children during sickness and to continue to do so as long as any children in the tribe should need these services. In lieu of a cash payment the Tribe endowed 20,000 acres of land. The institution's operating funds relied on the sale of this land and, in exchange, the Baptists agreed to build and operate a school with the promise to provide the free education for Ottawa students.<sup>424</sup> Consequently, a board was formed and when a plan to open a college came under discussion, board members determined to provide Ottawa Tribal members with an opportunity to achieve a higher education. The Kansas Baptist denomination, The Ottawa Tribe and local townspeople engaged in the conceptual framework of the institution viewed the college as an economic growth engine in an

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<sup>422</sup> "Ottawa University History and Ottawa Tribe Heritage," Ottawa University, <http://www.ottawa.edu/about-us/history-and-heritage>, (accessed February 22, 2016), 1.

<sup>423</sup> Ibid.

<sup>424</sup> Ibid.

emerging but ambitious community.<sup>425</sup> However, the promises made to the Ottawa people were not delivered.

Ottawa lands were coveted by outsiders who did not have the best interest of the tribe in mind. Scholars William E. Unrau and H. Craig Miner note, “Acres upon acres of prime prairie land lay unproductive, timber was in bountiful supply, potential town lots seemed to be begging to appreciate in value, ribbons of rail iron were stretching toward the territory, and the Ottawas meanwhile remained committed to moral improvement. What remained was to secure legal sanctions from both the tribe and the government that all would profit from a new arrangement.”<sup>426</sup> Speculators had been coveting Ottawa lands since the early years of the Civil War, and the method to secure this property would be through the formation of an Indian University. While the master architect behind schemes to secure Ottawa lands is difficult to nail down, certainly three individuals, Clinton Carter Hutchinson, Reverend Isaac S. Kalloch, and Tauy Jones would become significant players. Hutchinson arrived in Kansas Territory in 1856 to serve as an agent representing the American Baptist Home Mission Society. He would also be appointed Sac and Fox agent and then dismissed for fraud. Apparently he was well connected because he later secured the position of Ottawa Indian agent.<sup>427</sup> The Reverend Isaac S. Kalloch was a preacher in Boston before he arrived in Kansas and Tauy Jones, adopted by the tribe and known as Ottawa Jones, had been previously implicated in land speculation amongst the Potawatomi.<sup>428</sup> Further, “With the assistance of such other territorial dignitaries as S.B.

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<sup>425</sup> Ibid.

<sup>426</sup> William E. Unrau and H. Craig Miner, *Tribal Dispossession and the Ottawa Indian University Fraud* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985), 82.

<sup>427</sup> Ibid., 78-79.

<sup>428</sup> Ibid., 80-82.

Prentiss, Jesse Cinell, R.C. Brant, Benjamin Luce, J.J. Emory, E. Allward, John Drew, Augustus Isboll, L.A. Alderson, and Wm. H. Russell, a charter of incorporation for the 'Roger Williams University' was obtained from the territorial legislature in the spring of 1860.<sup>429</sup> The corporate body empowered was a group of 'leading Baptists of Kansas' with tax-exempt authority to operate a university at an undesignated place in the Kansas Territory, and to offer degrees in liberal arts, sciences, medicine, law, and theology."<sup>430</sup>

Later that year, at a Baptist convention, the idea of opening a University on Ottawa lands took shape in a conversation between Reverend L.A. Anderson and Tauy Jones. In this discussion they determined that the Ottawas had land that could be converted to money, and since whites had the ability to develop an educational program, Rogers University should be located on the Ottawa reserve.<sup>431</sup> "A Committee of Roger Williams University was duly organized in December, 1860, which 'by invitation of the Ottawas in full council' secured a written statement (branded fraudulent by federal investigators in 1872) that the tribe would give the Baptists, for the purpose of boarding, clothing, and educating fifty of their children for the next thirty years, 20,000 acres of 'average' reservation land. In return the trustees of the University were to spend \$10,000 on buildings. In 1865 the university was renamed Ottawa University to discourage impressions that the government was aiding a denominational school."<sup>432</sup> Proceeds from the sale of Ottawa lands were key to the scheme.

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<sup>429</sup> Rogers University takes its name from the founder of Providence Plantation (later named Rhode Island) who established the first Baptist church in America in 1638.

<sup>430</sup> Ibid., 82-83.

<sup>431</sup> Unrau and Miner, *Tribal Dispossession and the Ottawa Indian University Fraud*, 83.

<sup>432</sup> Ibid.

Five thousand of the twenty thousand acres were earmarked for sale under the leadership of a board of trustees. The sale of the remaining fifteen thousand acres of land also required board approval but it was stipulated that no business could be conducted unless two of the white trustees were present. The two white trustees were Kalloch and Hutchinson.<sup>433</sup> Conveniently, Hutchinson's father in law purchased a great deal of the land at \$1.25 an acre and re-sold it at \$3.00 an acre. In addition, a large school building was constructed, along with a developing town as land sales continued.

Tribal members became increasingly unhappy with the land development and the business dealings of the trustees that took place without tribal consent. Trustee Clinton Carter Hutchinson also served as Ottawa Indian agent. Unrau and Miner note tribal sentiments, "Are we to be kept wholly ignorant of the acts, whereabouts, and workings of our agent? Much, most of the wrongs from which we have and are suffering have been under the cloak of religion and the feigned idea of promoting the spiritual interest of our Church."<sup>434</sup>

Ultimately Hutchinson was suspended as the Ottawa agent but by 1867, \$31, 103.94 of the \$45,000 in proceeds from Ottawa land sales that he admitted to, which were to be placed in trust for the tribe, remained unaccounted for.<sup>435</sup> Following an investigation, in which Kalloch admitted that the university board was continuing to sell school and trust lands beyond what was allowed per an 1862 treaty, Kalloch and Hutchinson resigned from the board of trustees.<sup>436</sup> Over the course of the next one hundred years investigations, claims, stalling tactics, and

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<sup>433</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>434</sup> Ibid., 90.

<sup>435</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>436</sup> Ibid., 108-109.

denials meant that this story would not conclude until August 11, 1967, when Public Law 90-63 was approved by congress. This law approved an award to the Ottawa tribe of \$406, 166.19 to be distributed on a per capita basis.<sup>437</sup> Unrau and Miner note, “Today the Baptist Denomination continues to operate Ottawa University in Franklin County, Kansas. White farmers cultivate the fertile hinterland that once was the Ottawa Indian reservation...A few Ottawas have enrolled under the University’s Indian scholarship program, but for the most part the tribe looks elsewhere for the education of their youth. That seems an understandable response to events of the past.”<sup>438</sup>

Since the institution’s founding in 1865, Ottawa University has been affiliated with Baptist churches and specifically the American Baptist Churches USA since 1905. The University holds a position that states, “While the purposes and aspirations of the new college were noble, not all of the actions of those initially involved were equally so. Though instructed by a treaty personally signed by President Abraham Lincoln, governance of the new board was at times loose and there were intimations of self-dealing related to some of the land sales.”<sup>439</sup> Unfortunately, the land lost by the Ottawa to speculators during the 1860s was just one of many tragic events in their history. The Ottawa Tribe’s history, since the arrival of Europeans and the subsequent formation of the United States, unfortunately aligns with numerous Indigenous nations subjected to U.S. federal removal policy.

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<sup>437</sup> Ibid., 175.

<sup>438</sup> Ibid., 176.

<sup>439</sup> “Ottawa University History and Ottawa Tribe Heritage,” Ottawa University, <http://www.ottawa.edu/about-us/history-and-heritage>, (accessed February 22, 2016), 1.

The Ottawa originally lived in the Great Lakes region. Prior to the arrival of Europeans, the Ottawa resided near the mouth of the French River and on large islands in Lake Huron. Specifically, they considered Manitoulin Island as their original homeland. In the early seventeenth century, they migrated to Mackinac, in present-day Michigan. By the mid seventeenth century pressure from other Indigenous groups led the Ottawa to move to present-day Wisconsin. The French and their Indigenous allies pressured Iroquois nations to move, which in turn allowed some of the Ottawa to return to Manitoulin Island, where they remained. However, the majority of Ottawa remained in Mackinac until the early eighteenth century. Eventually, these Ottawa moved south. Some Ottawa peoples migrated as far East as Pennsylvania and other Ottawa bands moved into northern Ohio. In addition, some Ottawa people remained in Mackinac until 1741, when they relocated to lower-Michigan.

Other Ottawa bands migrated to the eastern shores of Lake Michigan, while still others ended up on the opposite shore near present day-Milwaukee. This group eventually spread into Northern Illinois. In 1834, Ottawa peoples in Wisconsin and Illinois were removed with the Pottawatomis to Iowa. This Ottawa group eventually merged with the Pottawatomis. Following the passage of the Indian Removal Act in 1830, various bands of Ottawa relocated west of the Mississippi. In 1833, two bands of Ottawa in Ohio ceded their lands and were removed to Kansas. "Both groups (about 500 souls) were assigned 34,000 acres along the Marais des Cygnes River just south of the Shawnee in what is now Franklin County, Kansas."<sup>440</sup>

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<sup>440</sup> Ibid.

The Black Hawk War put additional pressure on other Ottawa bands and in 1833, the Ottawa living west of Lake Michigan joined the Prairie Pottawatomi and moved to Iowa. After Iowa achieved statehood in 1846, these groups were forced to move to Kansas, which became a state in 1861. A few years later in 1861, Kansas was granted statehood. The following June, the two Ottawa bands in Franklin County, Kansas, “. . . agreed to dissolve their tribal government, become citizens, and accept 160 acre allotments. The excess lands were to be sold to whites for not less than \$1.25 per acre and 20,000 acres were donated to Ottawa University to ensure the education of their children. However, many could not agree to the end of tribal relations, and in 1867 signed a treaty selling their Kansas land and agreeing to move to the Indian Territory.”<sup>441</sup> These Ottawa people eventually were able to halt the westward movement that had spanned several decades and landed them in Miami, Oklahoma, where their tribal headquarters remain today. Certainly John Tippeconnic was unaware of the scandalous origins of the University when he was guided to Ottawa.

It could not have been by chance that John Tippeconnic ended up attending Ottawa University nor Bacone College for that matter. Both of these institutions were run by Baptist organizations. This was significant for John, who remained a Baptist throughout his life. John was baptized at Deyo Mission located eight miles West of Lawton, Oklahoma, on October 8, 1916.<sup>442</sup> In 1893, Chief Quanah Parker had given permission to the American Baptist Home Mission Society to erect the church.<sup>443</sup> The Church was named after the first minister, Reverend Elton Cyrus Deyo, from Buffalo, New York. One day Deyo heard a speaker who was

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<sup>441</sup> Ibid.

<sup>442</sup> Wahhahdooh ed., *“Deyo Mission 1893-1980”*, 16.

<sup>443</sup> Ibid., 2.

seeking volunteers to serve as missionaries to the Indians; Deyo applied for a position among the Comanche<sup>444</sup> John and his siblings attended Deyo Mission along with their mother Wimmerchy. Although Tippeconnic did not initially attend Deyo with Wimmerchy and his children, at the end of his life he converted, “Tippeconnic was reared in the old Indian customs, but in the latter months of his life his heart turned toward Christianity.”<sup>445</sup> Before his apparent conversion, it is likely he might have journeyed there with his family simply to see old friends. Wimmerchy’s name does not appear in the baptismal records but according to John’s eldest son Norman, she was the driving force behind the conversion of her children. Although many Comanche attended the mission and subsequently converted to the faith, this does not indicate the abandonment of Numunu values. In fact, it enforced them.

One of Quanah Parker’s wives, “Topay, lived in the Cache area and she would go to church there too, because she had been converted. Even though she kept Indian values, she would go to church every Sunday.”<sup>446</sup> This is consistent with the Comanche tradition, which allows each individual to find his/her own medicine or religion. Tippeconnic remained true to his own version of Comanche spirituality, even upon conversion, however, he did not impede his family members from seeking their own medicine. After he was baptized at the age of fifteen, it was a logical choice for John to choose Bacone College for the beginning of his secondary education.

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<sup>444</sup> Ibid.

<sup>445</sup> “Mr. Tippeconnic Passes,” *Home and School*, February 3, 1934. Vol. XXI, No. 9. Anadarko, OK.

<sup>446</sup> Harris, *A Comanche Life*, ed. H. Henrietta Stockel, 10.



Elton Cyrus Deyo was born on a farm near Buffalo, New York, in 1851. The future Reverend Deyo converted to Christianity at the age of thirty-eight. His initial vocation was farming and the rearing of race horses. Following his conversion, in 1889, he changed directions and sold his farm in order to enter the ministry. After he attended the University of Rochester, he moved on to Colgate Theological Seminary where he graduated in 1893. Evidently he made haste to reach the Kiowa, Comanche and Apache reservation because he arrived in October of that same year.<sup>447</sup> Apparently, when Deyo arrived Comanches did not roll out the proverbial red carpet for him. Deyo began construction of a church on numerous sites, only to cease building and move to additional locations until he found one that was acceptable to the Comanche.

The first Comanche Mission was established five miles east and two miles south of Cache.<sup>448</sup> Organized in 1895, the church included the first Comanche convert and four missionary workers as its charter members.<sup>449</sup> However, even after the mission was constructed Deyo had trouble with the Comanche before the allotment era. Prior to allotment Comanche conversions were rare. Once the process had begun, numerous Comanche converted. Church membership may have increased after the breakup of communal land holdings because the services served as a magnet, enabling the Comanche to gather together in one central spot on a regular basis. I am not suggesting that the Comanches who converted to Christianity at Deyo were disingenuous in their faith (they certainly were not). I am only

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<sup>447</sup> Clyde Ellis, "Deyo Mission," Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture, [www.okhistory.org](http://www.okhistory.org) (accessed August 17, 2015).

<sup>448</sup> Ibid.

<sup>449</sup> Wahhahdooah ed., "*Deyo Mission 1893-1980*", 3.

suggesting that the two events were directly related. Groups of the Comanche found that they could gather on Sundays as a community.

One manifestation of these new Comanche church communities occurred at Deyo Mission camp meetings. These annual gatherings typically took place in the fall prior to the start of each academic school year. The Comanche gathered, beginning on Thursday and running through Sunday evening, in part as resistance to the efforts of outside forces to dismantle tribal gatherings. What these outside forces failed to realize was that the Comanche had a long history of adapting to both voluntary and involuntary change. When the allotment process set in amongst the Comanche, conversion rates spiked. Comanche people found a way to rekindle their communities. I am not implying that the Comanches who formed new communities around the church and especially at camp meetings were duplicitous with their adopted faith. However, at least in the early years of the twentieth century, community overshadowed Christianity in regards to Comanche priorities. "In the early days many Indians would come to these meetings in wagons and buggies; put up their tents and brush arbors ahead of time and were ready on the dot when the call for the first meeting opened."<sup>450</sup> Beef was distributed to camp attendees and even visitors could expect to partake in meals provided for them. Every morning before the sun rose, a camp caller would announce the sunrise meeting, and in the early years many people would respond to the calls for the sunrise meeting. Many Comanches participated in the camp meetings during these years; however, as time passed, participation dropped off. This reinforces the point that the Comanche utilized these gatherings to establish new communities, even as proponents of allotment tried to dissolve existing communal ties. As

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<sup>450</sup> Ibid., 9.

the twentieth century progressed into a modern era, attendance dwindled. "Today these meetings still are carried on, though the crowd may not be as much, nor the testimonies and songs many not be as active, still lost souls come to find relief from their burdened load."<sup>451</sup>

By 1901, the Comanche had a quarter of a century of experience adapting to situations in which they did not dictate the change. Simply stated, when the United States attempted to break up communal relationships through allotment, Comanche people responded by gathering at church. Morris Foster notes, "A list of converts at the Deyo Baptist Mission shows Comanches seldom turned to Christianity until after allotment but then did so in significant numbers."<sup>452</sup> In 1895, only one Comanche converted at Deyo and the following year not a single soul donated his/her own to Christianity. In 1898, five Comanches converted at Deyo but no additional Comanche accepted the faith until 1900, and then it was limited to only two. The number of Comanche converts at Deyo would not eclipse two until the year after allotment began in 1902, when six Comanches turned to Christianity.<sup>453</sup> In 1903, just two years after Comanche allotment began, thirty-six Comanches were baptized and became members at Deyo.<sup>454</sup> The evidence suggests that after the reservation was dissolved, Comanches resisted the attempt to break up their communities by forming a new type of gathering at Deyo. This idea is reinforced by the fact that the number of conversions in a one-year period at Deyo would never eclipse those of 1903. One of the thirty six Comanches baptized by the mission in 1903, was Tosie Tippeconnic.<sup>455</sup> This trend continued throughout communities where the

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<sup>451</sup> Ibid.

<sup>452</sup> Foster, *Being Comanche: A Social History of an American Indian Community*, 120.

<sup>453</sup> Ibid.

<sup>454</sup> Ibid.

<sup>455</sup> Wahhahdooh ed., "*Deyo Mission 1893-1980*", 16.

Comanche now lived on their allotments, as Foster notes, "Within a decade of allotment, at least six churches with predominantly Comanche memberships were attracting converts. They corresponded to the local communities that had developed after allotment. Although they were led by Anglo pastors, their members were almost all Comanches, locating them well within the boundaries of the Comanche community as defined by Comanche-Comanche interaction."<sup>456</sup> By 1920, the number of Indian churches attended by the Comanche, as well as Kiowa and Apache, had increased to thirteen.<sup>457</sup>

The first convert at Deyo was John Timbo. On Sunday December 29, 1895, he was baptized in Cache Creek following the Sabbath morning service at the mission. The Deyo congregation drove their wagons to Cache Creek, where the first Deyo convert was baptized to the hymn of "O Happy Day."<sup>458</sup> Just prior to this baptism, the first meeting of the mission took place on November 17<sup>th</sup>, 1895 at Evangel Mission Chapel. There Reverend Deyo, Mrs Deyo, Miss Ida M. Schofield and Lydia H Birkhof met with various representatives, including the Superintendent of Indian Missions, as well as others from the Women's Baptist Home Mission Society, the Missions in Missouri River District and the General Missionary for Indians in Oklahoma Territory.<sup>459</sup> The name of the church was chosen at this initial meeting. "This church shall be called the First Comanche Baptist Church, of Oklahoma Territory."<sup>460</sup>

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<sup>456</sup> Foster, *Being Comanche: A Social History of an American Indian Community*, 120-121.

<sup>457</sup> *Ibid.*, 121.

<sup>458</sup> Wahhahdooah ed., "*Deyo Mission 1893-1980*", 5.

<sup>459</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>460</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

Reverend Deyo served as the pastor of the mission for thirty three years until his death in 1926.<sup>461</sup> Reverend Deyo was a proponent for development in the region, “. . . he gained a reputation for supporting the opening of reservation lands to non-Indians on the grounds that it would hasten the conversion of the Comanche.”<sup>462</sup> Deyo openly looked forward to increased numbers of whites settling because he felt their industriousness would facilitate increased conversion rates.<sup>463</sup> In 1927, a year after Deyo’s death, Reverend H.F. Gilbert arrived at Deyo, where he served as pastor until 1951.<sup>464</sup> According to Comanche Elbus Hoto, a deacon at Deyo Mission, Reverend H.F. Gilbert, “. . . practiced what he preached so that his congregation can learn from observation the kind of man he really is. He didn’t want to be seen where a Christian man should not be seen; nor did he say words that would reflect upon his Christian character; or act like a non-christian before his people.”<sup>465</sup> Elbus Hoto also relayed in a letter that Reverend Gilbert was a tireless worker who would spend his own time repairing and cleaning and attending to the general upkeep of mission buildings.<sup>466</sup>

Another Comanche and Deyo member, Covah Watsuah, echoed these sentiments, “My Christian experience with Rev. H.F. Gilbert was very successful and faithful. He has set a good example for us such as he would pray before he undertook a task away from home on church business and going to picnics and parties, prayer meetings. We learned to respect him and his family. His teachings to our young people meant love thy neighbor as thy-self, and again it

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<sup>461</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>462</sup> Ellis, "Deyo Mission," Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture, [www.okhistory.org](http://www.okhistory.org) (accessed August 17, 2016).

<sup>463</sup> Ibid.

<sup>464</sup> Wahhahdooah ed., “*Deyo Mission 1893-1980*”, 3.

<sup>465</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>466</sup> Ibid.

meant to me, don't let your church run down."<sup>467</sup> Reverend Gilbert apparently immersed himself in Comanche communities. On one occasion, Covah Watsuah explained that he enjoyed dried meat prepared by Comanches near Faxon, Oklahoma, while out collecting wood for Deyo Camp meetings.<sup>468</sup> While Reverend Gilbert was clearly held in high regard by some Comanches, he certainly viewed his "mission" from a paternalistic perspective. "I feel that the fate of the heathen is in the hands of God but I cannot escape the responsibility which is upon me to take or send to him (the unsaved) the gospel."<sup>469</sup>

Following the retirement of Reverend Gilbert, Reverend Daniel Milton Grummon arrived in 1952 to serve as the pastor at Deyo Mission. Reverend Grummon remained at Deyo until 1965. According to Mabel Ann Blalock, "Rev. Grummon loved to sing and what a beautiful voice he had! His children inherited his wonderful singing ability also. Rev. Grummon loved to sing 'Oo-soon- cha nuh su kaht,' with the late John Wahkahquah. They made a joyful noise together."<sup>470</sup> Like his predecessors Grummon, was resolute in his mission, "Christian Indians, supporting Baptists and I- prayed the Lord of the Harvest. As three continue in prayer, shall the Lord have His harvest."<sup>471</sup> After he left Deyo, Reverend Grummon served in Anadarko, Oklahoma and at Sunlight Mission amongst the Hopi at Second Mesa, Arizona. "Rev. Dan Grummon died on Wednesday, December 13, 1972, after a short illness and was buried at El Dorado, Kansas, where his wife, Elda, still lives."<sup>472</sup> Rev. Robert Coffey, who is the lay pastor at

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<sup>467</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>468</sup> Ibid.

<sup>469</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>470</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>471</sup> Ibid.

<sup>472</sup> Ibid.

Deyo Baptist Church, spoke at the funeral. Rev. Coffey said that Mr. Grumman was a missionary who so participated in the life of the Indian community that the Indians knew he understood and related to their situation. Rev. Coffey said that the Christian people of the Indian groups felt their lives greatly enriched by the presence and the friendship of Mr. Grummon."<sup>473</sup>

The next pastor at Deyo Mission ushered in a new era for this Comanche community. Reverend Robert Coffey, a Comanche, became a member of Deyo Mission on September 1, 1912, just twenty-one days before John Tippeconnic's elder brother John Winnerchy was baptized by Reverend Deyo, who also baptized his father, mother, brother and sister.<sup>474</sup> "Rev. Deyo was very influential during Rev. Coffey's early years by counseling, advising, and training Rev. Coffey in the Christian way of life. Consequently, Robert grew in a Christian environment."<sup>475</sup> Robert Coffey was a lifetime friend of John Tippeconnic and the entire Tippeconnic family. Coffee, ". . . was ordained in 1966. Born March 15, 1903 near Faxon, Oklahoma to (Perthtay) Pauline and Eli Coffey, (Hovarithka), he spent most of his life near Faxon."<sup>476</sup> Before he became the pastor at Deyo, Robert Coffey was a deacon at the church, and for many years he was also the adult Sunday School teacher.<sup>477</sup> Reverend Coffey attended with my grandfather several educational institutions, including, local, federal and church run schools, as well as other institutions such as Fort Sill Indian School and Bacone College.<sup>478</sup> During the time that Deyo was led by non-Indian pastors (1893-1966) the Comanche successfully utilized

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<sup>473</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>474</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>475</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>476</sup> Ibid.

<sup>477</sup> Ibid.

<sup>478</sup> Ibid.

various church gatherings, ranging from regular service and Sunday school to camp meetings in order to facilitate the continuation of Comanche community. Following the arrival of Reverend Coffey, Deyo Mission was not only a Comanche congregation, it was a congregation led by a trusted tribal member.

Like other missions in Oklahoma that focused on the conversion of Indigenous populations, Deyo established the tradition of translating church hymns into Comanche. The intention of non-Indian church leaders was to make the church and its message more alluring and accessible to the target population through Comanche hymns. Certainly this worked, however, it is yet another example of how the Comanche transformed church gatherings into their own distinct communities. In addition, by utilizing their own language during worship services, Comanches at Deyo facilitated the continuation of Comanche culture in which language is a key element. Certainly the use of the vernacular made services more welcoming and it also appealed to potential converts, if for no other reason than it provided familiarity. While it is likely that the intention to draw in more Comanches worked in the missionaries favor in the long run, this aspect of church gatherings at Deyo also contributed to Comanche language preservation efforts. Today, Comanche hymns are more than religious songs in the Comanche language, they are an important twentieth century historical and cultural marker for Comanche people.

I remember attending Deyo's services on many occasions as a child, when my family traveled back to Oklahoma, and reveling in the sound of the Comanche language. The Comanche language in spoken form sounds lyrical, however, when put to song it becomes beautiful and it always filled my soul with pride. This occurred long before I was of the age to



truly understand Christianity. In addition, I was ignorant of the role Christianity played in assimilation as well as in the attempted break up of tribal communities. However, at that time all that mattered to me was that I was in the presence of my relatives, basking in the joy of Comanche culture. The joy and pride that I felt hearing Comanche hymns in the company of other Comanches made me realize that I was home. History is rarely absolute. It is rarely all good or, conversely, it is rarely all bad, and while I now have the luxury of examining Christianity's role in suppressing Comanche culture, at that moment, some seventy years after my grandfather first attended Deyo, I felt the power of Comanche perseverance. The intention might have been to suppress Comanche culture, however, the Comanche responded as they always have, by simply adapting, embracing and making it their own.

Deyo Mission is an extremely important part of the Tippeconnic family history. The majority of the Tippeconnics that accepted Christianity did so at Deyo. In addition, Tippeconnic and many of his descendants are buried in the Deyo cemetery. "The Cemetery is located just south of the church building, within walking distance. Several native red cedar trees grace the cemetery itself and it is surrounded by a cyclone fence. Two brick pillars greet visitors, all that remain of the laborious efforts of Rev. Robert Coffey to provide an impressive brick entrance to this old cemetery."<sup>479</sup> Deyo was a place that played a significant part of John Tippeconnic's young life, and he would return here each time he came home. Each time he visited Deyo he fit in seamlessly as if he had never left. While Deyo became an important part of John's adult life, as a young man his baptism proved challenging. "When my father was baptized in Cache Creek

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<sup>479</sup> Goodin, *Deyo Mission Cemetery*, i.

he swam away from the preacher when he tried to dunk him under the water.”<sup>480</sup> Regardless of the ulterior motives of the founder of this mission, Deyo clearly played a guiding role in the path the young John Tippeconnic would take in his educational journey.

Clearly, it was not by chance that John Tippeconnic ended up attending Bacone College and then Ottawa University. Born in Cortland County New York, Bacone was likely in communication with other reformers that ventured west. Deyo Mission founder, E.C. Deyo was twenty one years younger than Bacone, however, it is likely that they knew each other or at the very least were aware and in contact with each other. Both Bacone and Deyo grew up on farms in upstate New York and both were influenced by the message of the Indian reform movement. This was also the base for the Revival movement, centered along the Erie Canal and known as the Second Great Awakening. This Revival was led by the Presbyterian minister Charles Grandison Finney. Both, Bacone and Deyo attended Rochester University and advanced their professional careers working directly with Baptist organizations amongst Indigenous peoples in Oklahoma, Indian Territory. While both certainly felt that they were advancing the cause of the American Indian, their efforts fell directly in line with policies promoted by the Indian reform Movement. In addition, while Bacone might have had a softer touch, certainly Reverend Deyo had ulterior motives.

It is likely that John Tippeconnic and other Comanches were steered from their home church community at Deyo to further opportunities within the Baptist pipeline in Oklahoma.

Prior to the reorganization of the Federal Indian Service under John Collier

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<sup>480</sup> Norman Tippeconnic Sr. Interview with author. November 14, 2006.

in 1933, local missionaries or their wives were often employed as district farmers and matrons. Of the four district matrons responsible for Comanches, for instance, three were wives of Anglo missionaries or were associated with Anglo missions between 1900 and 1926. Because these matrons were the conduits for requests for funds, as well as sources of information about individual Comanches for the agency Superintendent, their churches and they were important economic factors in the local communities. Often they were responsible for recommending younger Comanches for Indian educational opportunities beyond high school. The approval of the local Anglo-run Comanche church was quite useful in obtaining economic and other support from the local agency, and arguably that approval was more useful to younger than older Comanches.<sup>481</sup>

There is little doubt that John Tippeconnic was steered toward Bacone and, upon graduation, to Ottawa University. Yet my grandfather accepted this guidance because of the opportunities that a formal education could provide in the changing Comanche world.

By the time John arrived in Kansas to attend Ottawa University, he was prepared and well versed in the rigors of western educational institutions. However, at Ottawa University, John ventured into waters never before tested by a member of the Comanche Nation, a post-secondary education. While John might have been guided by influential figures at Deyo and Bacone, the onus still lay upon this brave young Comanche to become the first tribal member

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<sup>481</sup> Foster, *Being Comanche: A Social History of an American Indian Community*, 121.

to receive a four-year college degree.<sup>482</sup> Today it would be easy to overlook a Comanche receiving a Bachelor's degree, but in the early twentieth century, the enormity of his accomplishment cannot be overstated. He was the first generation of his family to be born after the Comanche people ceased to be independent pastoral nomads. In order to fully appreciate this accomplishment, it is imperative that one be cognizant of more than just the standard United States history most Americans possess. One must be knowledgeable of the barriers purposely designed to dismantle tribal communities and culture from the reservation era and through the further dispossession of tribal lands and allotment to the inculcation of Indigenous youth by "benevolent" institutions like Christianity and western formal education. The psychological and physical effect of western benevolence on young Indigenous children has been well documented and is evident in the markings on numerous headstones at many boarding schools across this nation. Brenda J. Child reminds us of this painful reality, "Historians have mostly forgotten the Indian students who died in government boarding schools-especially because the deaths occurred during a period of high mortality generally for Native Americans-but the roll call of names is shamefully long. Between 1885 and 1913, one hundred Indian students were buried in the Haskell cemetery alone. The youngest students interred at the cemetery were six and seven years of age."<sup>483</sup> John was fortunate; while he did attend a federal boarding school at Fort Sill he was able to matriculate into a church run institution for high school. While this would not always translate into a positive experience for the Indigenous student, it certainly did so for John Tippeconnic.

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<sup>482</sup> *The Quarterly Bulletin*. Report no. 4. Ottawa University. Ottawa, Kansas, 1926, 64.

<sup>483</sup> Child, *Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families, 1900-1940*, 66.

John arrived in Ottawa with his boyhood friend Richard Aitson just two years after Indians in the United States were granted citizenship.<sup>484</sup> John and Richard had attended Fort Sill Indian School and Bacone in sync and would continue their educational journey together. On September 12, 1922, John and his partner in education, Richard, began classes at Ottawa University. Shifting the historical gaze back just one generation, I surmise that two young men—a Comanche and a Kiowa in their early twenties—were venturing into Kansas to raid in order to achieve prestige that would elevate their status among their people. A generation later some would have considered it implausible that these two young men were venturing to Kansas with the same goal in mind; however, instead of using a horse to achieve status, they used education.<sup>485</sup>

On Sunday, September 17, 1922, both attended church with their classmates. Some of the freshman did not know their way around and the older students poked fun at them, “Freshies start for church, but many are lost on the way. I’ll bet that is some sophomore’s work.”<sup>486</sup> Freshman at Ottawa donned green caps, at least for the first month, to indicate their status amongst the upperclassmen.<sup>487</sup> This tradition began in 1920, “when they reluctantly agreed to wear a special design of cap.”<sup>488</sup> Both John and Richard participated in a hike for the freshmen organized by the junior class on Saturday September 23, 1922.<sup>489</sup> This Comanche and Kiowa had come a long way since their days working the farm and learning English at the Fort

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<sup>484</sup> June 2, 1924 the United States Congress granted all Indians U.S. citizenship. However, some states prohibited Indians from voting in elections until the 1960s.

<sup>485</sup> Ottawa University, *The Ottawan* 1923 Yearbook, 138, in author’s possession.

<sup>486</sup> Ibid.

<sup>487</sup> Ibid.

<sup>488</sup> Ottawa University, *The Ottawan* 1924 Yearbook, 25, in author’s possession.

<sup>489</sup> Ottawa University, *The Ottawan* 1923 Yearbook, 138.

Sill Indian Boarding School. Without hesitation they jumped into the world of post-secondary education with the same fervor that they plunged into Cache Creek years before as boys. Certainly John remembered being taught the desirable attributes Comanche parents bestowed upon their young as he began his college education such as: "Self reliance, to be dependable in carrying out tasks to completion was an important way of doing things to develop self-confidence."<sup>490</sup> John exhibited self-confidence when he fully immersed himself in college life, and he began by joining the football team.

Tuesday, September 26, 1922, John and twenty eight other students, including Richard, began football practice.<sup>491</sup> Coach E.R. Elbel entered the 1922 campaign "With practically a new team this year, facing a schedule of the strongest teams in the state, coach developed a good team. The prospects for next year are the best."<sup>492</sup> This conclusion did not require a gifted prognosticator as the team fell to each of their seven opponents.<sup>493</sup> On October 7, 1922, John suffered misfortune playing halfback while running the ball during the game vs Hays Normal.<sup>494</sup> Ottawa lost the game 19-13. However, he left enough of an impact and impression to be featured in the school's yearbook, "'Tipp' started the season off with a whirl and played wonderful football but in the Hays game he was injured and this kept him out for several games. Tipp is light, but with his speed he is clever at dodging tackles and getting away for long gains. He comes from Bacone."<sup>495</sup>

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<sup>490</sup> Tippeconnic, "Comanche Indian Customs With Educational Implications", 58.

<sup>491</sup> Ottawa University, *The Ottawan* 1923 Yearbook, 109.

<sup>492</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>493</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

<sup>494</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

<sup>495</sup> *Ibid.*

Both John and Richard also participated in various clubs and organizations at Ottawa. During his initial year, John was a member of the Stockford Club. This club was organized in 1910 as a way to provide a home like atmosphere for students far from home.<sup>496</sup> “The club is not merely a boarding club for this organization and Mrs. Stockford fill the place of home for many a lonesome-out-of-town boy, and girls too, for it has been invaded by a few co-eds. Nothing wins the boys admiration and respect more readily than does the ‘Missus’s’ kindly manner and pleasant words. And Fred is always that same jolly gentleman as is known on the campus. It is no wonder that the boys consider this, ‘the Stockford Club,’ as a vital part of O.U. life!”<sup>497</sup> Comanche youth were expected to learn responsibility, “They knew the meaning of mutual dependence and that no one person could live to himself and be a successful member of the tribe.”<sup>498</sup> John continued to remember this lesson at Ottawa, incorporating it with his friend Richard Aitson. On Friday, June 1, 1923, both men finished their final exams. It is assured that both relied on each other for assistance and depended on the other for support as they continued along the educational path. Still other Comanche lessons John utilized during his first year were cooperation and consideration for others. Comanche children were inculcated with advice that stated, “they accepted in all things, were united and considerate of the needs of others...they respected the rights of others to live happy, and useful social lives.”<sup>499</sup> These attributes were noticed in John as early as his freshman year when his Ottawa classmates described him, “Always striving to please, never to offend.”<sup>500</sup>

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<sup>496</sup> Ottawa University, *The Ottawan* 1924 Yearbook, 93.

<sup>497</sup> Ottawa University, *The Ottawan* 1923 Yearbook, 103.

<sup>498</sup> Tippeconnic, “Comanche Indian Customs With Educational Implications”, 58.

<sup>499</sup> Ibid.

<sup>500</sup> Ottawa University, *The Ottawan* 1923 Yearbook, 69.

John registered for his sophomore year on September 11, 1923.<sup>501</sup> He glowed with confidence by the time he suited up for the first gridiron battle of the season, Ottawa vs. Bethany. Ottawa scored twenty points by halftime and posted the first victory of the season by winning 39-0.<sup>502</sup> The home crowd yelled until they were hoarse.<sup>503</sup> Over the next two weeks the Baptists (Ottawa) defeated the Presbyterians from the College of Emporia and the Catholics from St. Mary by a combined score of 16-3 expanded their record to three wins without a defeat.<sup>504</sup> The next three games saw the Ottawa Braves losing two and tying another, including a 6-0 loss to another denominational school, the Friends College Quakers. On November 23, 1923, Ottawa drubbed Kansas City University by scoring eighteen touchdowns on the way to a 114-0 blowout. John and the rest of the first string were held out beginning in the third quarter but the second string still scored fifty-three points in the second half.<sup>505</sup> On Thanksgiving Day 1923, the team closed the season by playing in eight inches of snow at Pittsburgh Teachers College. "The Pittsburgh game ended a very successful season for Cowell's Braves and a record for which O.U. is proud. The Kansas Conference record shows Ottawa with a standing of .667, there being four victories, two defeats and two scoreless ties. Every game found the Ottawa team fighting, and though in many instances against strong odds, they forged on with the spirit that makes Ottawa University known over the state as a school of high standards and clean, sportsmanlike play on every occasion."<sup>506</sup>

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<sup>501</sup> Ottawa University, *The Ottawan* 1924 Yearbook, 9.

<sup>502</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>503</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>504</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>505</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

<sup>506</sup> *Ibid.*



John continued to be involved in extracurricular activities at Ottawa. In addition to the Stockford Club he joined the Zale Bay Club. This club organized for the first time in 1923 and according to the school, "Zale Bay is an Indian word meaning 'full of pep' and the organization designed to make the meaning of that phrase characteristic of the entire student body."<sup>507</sup> The organization coordinated activities during the academic year to foster school spirit. The Comanche Ethos John possessed featured two more attributes taught to him as a child. Reliability and Loyalty. Accordingly, John was raised with the knowledge that honor could be achieved through, "trustworthiness and reliability established by custom from early childhood. Loyalty, was taught to persevere the existence of the institutions; past experience and demonstrated that the tribal strength rested in loyalty to one another and through the group."<sup>508</sup> Apparently these characteristics were evident in John at Ottawa because the members of the Zale Bay Club were elected by both the student body and faculty.<sup>509</sup> In the 1925 Ottawa yearbook John handwrote a note next to his photo exhibiting this very spirit, "I think our class is the best, even if I am doing the saying myself, Tipp."<sup>510</sup> When they were not in class or on the field, John and his classmates frequented the Pastime theatre to take in silent films followed by trips to Bennett's Ice Cream parlor in town. Yet another Comanche value John was raised with was "Neatness, dignity was attained by those who were orderly and clean."<sup>511</sup> It is likely that John also frequented the city barbershop because in each photo in which he

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<sup>507</sup> Ibid., 101.

<sup>508</sup> Tippeconnic, "Comanche Indian Customs With Educational Implications", 58-59.

<sup>509</sup> Ottawa University, *The Ottawan* 1924 Yearbook, 101.

<sup>510</sup> Ottawa University, *The Ottawan* 1925 Yearbook, 48.

<sup>511</sup> Tippeconnic, "Comanche Indian Customs With Educational Implications", 58.

appears he is dressed smartly and well groomed.<sup>512</sup> John continued as an active member of clubs, organizations and sports at Ottawa until he graduated in June, 1926. A photo in the 1926 annual shows him wearing a graduation cap with a tassel. He was the first Comanche to don the regalia marking a college graduate.<sup>513</sup>

The freshman class that John and Richard had entered at Ottawa University was one hundred and thirty five strong. The majority of their class members were from Kansas, however students also came from Oklahoma, Missouri, Idaho and Colorado.<sup>514</sup> One student hailed from Miami, Oklahoma, where the Ottawa had been forced to move.<sup>515</sup> By John and Richard's second year, eighty-four students advanced from the freshman class and were classified as sophomores.<sup>516</sup> Unfortunately, the student from Miami is not on the sophomore list. By their third year, sixty three students advanced from sophomore to junior status.<sup>517</sup> Finally, in their fourth year, the Senior class at Ottawa numbered sixty five.<sup>518</sup> By the end of the 1926-1927 academic year, John Tippeconnic, along with his boyhood friend Richard Aitson, had successfully completed the Ottawa University degree requirements and both of them procured Bachelor of Arts degrees. Sixty two students earned Bachelor's degrees that year.<sup>519</sup> Thirty eight students earned a Bachelor of Arts degree, while twenty four picked up a Bachelor of Science

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<sup>512</sup> Ottawa University, *The Ottawan* 1925 Yearbook, 48, in author's possession. (Neatness did not imply short clean cut hair. It is no secret that Comanche men would spend hours braiding and re-braiding their hair until it was just rite before they would venture out, even in the pre-reservation period. In this context neatness applies to John because he is always well groomed and smartly dressed.)

<sup>513</sup> Ottawa University, *The Ottawan* 1926 Yearbook, 37, in author's possession.

<sup>514</sup> *The Quarterly Bulletin*. Report no. 4. Ottawa University. Vol. 22. Ottawa, Kansas, 1925, 64.

<sup>515</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>516</sup> *The Annual Catalog*. Report no. 4. Ottawa University. Vol. 21. Ottawa, Kansas, 192, 67.

<sup>517</sup> *The Quarterly Bulletin*. Report no. 4. Ottawa University. Vol. 23. Ottawa, Kansas, 1926, 64.

<sup>518</sup> *The Quarterly Bulletin*. Report no. 4. Ottawa University. Vol. 23. Ottawa, Kansas, 1927, 58.

<sup>519</sup> *The Quarterly Bulletin*. Report no. 4. Ottawa University. Vol. 23. Ottawa, Kansas, 1926, 64.

degree. More than fifty percent of the freshmen from John's initial year at Ottawa did not make it to graduation. By graduating from Ottawa, John secured a place in Comanche history.<sup>520</sup>

Retention of Indigenous students today at four-year post-secondary institutions is a constant challenge, which makes John's success all the more impressive. His accomplishment provided the foundation for all Comanches who would follow. Through this achievement he emerged as a modern day warrior. However, instead of counting coup on an enemy as his father had done in order to achieve social status, he became a warrior by utilizing his mind. Although John's accomplishment required an altogether different type of bravery, it was valor nonetheless. He had to have the courage to venture into waters never before tested by another Comanche. He not only tested unexplored waters, he learned to swim. Armed with a college education, John entered the professional world as the first Comanche in our people's history to receive a four-year college degree.

In 1927, shortly after graduation, he tested the waters of the professional world as a teacher among the Cherokee at Sequoyah Boarding School in Tahlequah, Oklahoma. The next year John took a position as boy's dormitory advisor at an Indian boarding school on the Wind River (Shoshone/Arapaho) Reservation in Ft. Washakie, Wyoming amongst the Comanche's closest relatives, the Shoshone. Fluent in his language, John could communicate with the Shoshone students and their parents who, like his own family, might have spoken only their native tongue.<sup>521</sup> At Fort Washakie he also taught, served as farm agent, principle teacher as well as the Principal.<sup>522</sup> In Ft. Washakie John met and married Juanita

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<sup>520</sup> Ottawa University, *The Ottawan* 1923 Yearbook, 121.

<sup>521</sup> Comanche's and Shoshone's speak the same language with only a few minor differences. Comanche's originated as Shoshone people.

<sup>522</sup> "John W. Tippeconnic" Honor Award for Commendable Service, United States Department of the Interior Bureau of Indian Affairs, Walter O. Olsen Area Director, 1961.

Ghormley, a Cherokee who, ironically had attended Chilocco Indian School in Muskogee. They were married on June 2, 1927.<sup>523</sup> Following John's stint in Wyoming, he and his new bride took employment amongst the Mohave people at the Truxton Boarding School in Arizona. His next opportunity in education landed John and Juanita on the White Mountain Apache Reservation, also in Arizona, where he served as a teacher. It was here that their first attempt at parenthood ended tragically when their first child was stillborn. In 1933, while the young couple still resided and worked amongst the Whiteriver Apache people, Norman Tippeconnic arrived in the world but he, too, almost died at birth.

John's next educational employment took him to Valentine, Arizona, where he worked as a teacher and principal in Hualapai country. Each summer he attended Arizona State Teachers College in Flagstaff, and in August 1942, he procured a Master's degree.<sup>524</sup> This was a significant accomplishment; as it meant that he had become the first Comanche to receive a Master's degree and the first Native American in the state of Arizona to earn an MA.<sup>525</sup> One newspaper suggested that he might have been the first Indian in the nation to earn a Master's degree.

John W, Tippeconnic, Comanche Indian who will graduate from Flagstaff State college distinction of being the first of his tribe and potentially the first Indian in the nation to receive a master of arts degree. Tippeconnie is a teacher at Peach Springs and has attended summer sessions at the local college for the past four years. He has attended the Colorado Agricultural College at Ft. Collins, Colorado and received his bachelor's degree at Ottawa college in Kansas and took some work at Colorado State college at

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<sup>523</sup> Obituary of Juanita Tippeconnic, *Sunday Constitution*, May 21, 1995. Lawton, OK.

<sup>524</sup> Arizona State Teachers College became Northern Arizona University

<sup>525</sup> John Tippeconnic III to Norman W. Tippeconnic, personal letter written as an explanation accompanied to copies of John Tippeconnic's Masters thesis (in possession of author).

Greeley. For his master's thesis, Tippeconnie chose a comparison of the education of Indian children by the inheritance system. He interviewed 25 Indians from 50 to 85 years of age, and, according to his thesis, those educated by the inheritance system have more respect for elders, self reliance, reverence, truthfulness, honesty, welfare of the tribe, courtesy and stick-to-it-iveness. Tipseconnie is the first Comanche Indian to graduate from Flagstaff State College. Other tribes which have been represented in graduating classes include Hopi, Navajo and Sioux. Each representative from these tribes received a bachelor's degree.<sup>526</sup>

On August 27, 1942, the *Fort Sill News* also recorded this monumental event but did so with a bit more perspective, background and a display of humility from John Tippeconnic. In an article titled, "Indian Receives Master's Degree: John W. Tippeconnie Graduated in Arizona,"

It's a far-cry from the son of non-English speaking Comanche Indians to a master's degree from a recognized American college...but that's the achievement of John W. Tippeconnie, native of Comanche county. Tippeconnie doesn't claim to be the first Indian to advance so far in modern education, but he does believe that he's the first fullblooded member of the Comanche tribe to obtain a master's degree. The degree was obtained recently from the Flagstaff, Ariz., state college. Tippeconnie will teach this winter at Mexican Springs, N. M., a three-room community school. Arizona newspapers said he was the first American Indian to receive a master's degree, but Tippeconnie

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<sup>526</sup> "Comanche Indian Will Receive Masters Degree", *Lawton Constitution*, 1942.

doesn't make this claim. Forty years old, married and father of four sons, he left here in 1927. He has taught for seven years in Arizona, Oklahoma, Wyoming and now New Mexico, attending college Intermittently. Tippeconnie based his thesis on a comparison of Indian children by the inheritance system, concluding that the old Indian has more confidence in the inheritance system. Tippeconnie was born near Cache. His father, Tippeconnie (meaning Stone House) is dead, his mother, Winnerchy, is still living, near Cache. He attended school at Cameron during the first World War after going through the first six grades at the Fort Sill Indian school.<sup>527</sup>

My own education and career inadvertently followed a path similar to my grandfather's. Upon graduation from high school, I accepted an athletic scholarship to play football at Colorado State University (CSU). Like my grandfather, I played football in college for four years. John took classes from the Colorado Agricultural college, which was renamed Colorado State University.<sup>528</sup> John worked, although in what capacity I have no knowledge, at Colorado State College in Greeley, Colorado. In 1995, I was hired by the same institution, which had changed its name to the University of Northern Colorado (UNC), as the first Director of Native American Student Services. However, when I attended CSU and later worked at UNC, I was ignorant of the fact that I was not the first Tippeconnic to attend and work at these institutions. It was only later as I conducted research for this project that I became aware of these similarities, learning the path I was taking to achieve my own social and professional recognition amongst Comanche people was initially established by the route forged by my grandfather. Therefore, it

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<sup>527</sup> "Indian Receives Master's Degree: John W. Tippeconnie Is Graduated In Arizona." Lawton Constitution, August 27, 1942, 7.

<sup>528</sup> J.C. McCaskill to John W. Tippeconnic, 4 November 1937, United States Department of the Interior, Office of Indian Affairs, Washington, D.C.

is my contention that John Tippeconnic not only paved the way for me to procure an education and profession, he did so for every Comanche who followed down the road to higher education. This study asserts that John's educational legacy is as historically significant as the legacy of Quanah Parker, Ten Bears, Green Horn and other great Comanche leaders. Today, at Northern Arizona University (formerly Flagstaff State College) my grandfather's legacy lives on through a scholarship in his name, awarded to multiple students each year.<sup>529</sup> John W. Tippeconnic Memorial Scholarship awardees must be at least one quarter American Indian and enrolled in a federally recognized tribe. In addition, the scholarship gives preference to Education majors.<sup>530</sup>

In October 1942, John resigned from teaching in order to contribute to the war effort. Too young during World War I, and now at the age of 41, he answered the call to service in his own way.<sup>531</sup> "My father quit his teaching position in Mexican Springs (Arizona) in 1942 and went to Oklahoma City to work for Douglas building C-47 twin engine cargo planes."<sup>532</sup> Native Americans not only volunteered for military service, but like much of the American civilian population, they migrated from their homes on various reservations to procure jobs in the defense industry. Between 1942 and 1945, as part of a larger national relocation, ranging from the Rocky Mountain states to the Pacific coast and across the eastern United States, forty thousand Indigenous Americans (men and women), between the ages of eighteen to fifty, left their home communities in order to secure defense industry employment.<sup>533</sup>

John contributed alongside thousands of other Indigenous Americans who rallied to assist their country during this perilous period. Comanche and Indigenous Americans in general have traditionally

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<sup>529</sup> Eugene M. Hughes, President Northern Arizona University to John W. Tippeconnic, 27 February 1992, The John W. Tippeconnic Memorial Scholarship, Northern Arizona University Foundation, Inc..

<sup>530</sup> S. Theodore Ford, Vice President for University Advancement, to John Tippeconnic III, 25 November 1997, Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, AZ.

<sup>531</sup> W.H. Larson, Dean, to John William Tippeconnic, Certificate of Completion of 108 hour course in Aircraft Sheet Metal Inspection, Engineering, Science and Management War Training, University of Oklahoma, February 19, 1943.

<sup>532</sup> Tippeconnic Sr. Interview with author, April 5, 2005.

<sup>533</sup> Jere' Franco, *Crossing the Pond: The Native American Effort in World War II* (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 1999), 80.

followed the call to duty to defend America. "Native Americans responded in unprecedented numbers to America's call for volunteers immediately after Pearl Harbor and continued throughout the war years, because they clearly understood the need for defense of one's own land."<sup>534</sup> Out of the entire Indigenous American population of 350,000 during the American war years of 1941-1945, 44,000 served in the United States armed forces during World War II. This figure is over 12% of the Indigenous American population and proportionally it was higher than all other American ethnic groups in World War II.<sup>535</sup> "That Native American patriotism was unsurpassed was reflected in the *Saturday Evening Post*, which stated, 'We would not need the Selective Service if all volunteered like the Indian'"<sup>536</sup> By 1942, ninety-nine percent of all eligible Indigenous American males had registered for the draft.<sup>537</sup> While John's age did not make him a good candidate for service as a soldier, like so many other Indigenous Americans, he wanted to do his part. On February 19, 1943, John satisfactorily completed the course in Aircraft Sheet Metal Inspection at the University of Oklahoma. The course was authorized by the U.S. Office of Education and consisted of one hundred and eight instructional hours.<sup>538</sup>

Following his graduation from Bacone, John Tippeconnic ventured into the post-secondary world. He not only continued his educational journey, he moved farther away from home. By graduating from Ottawa University, he became the first Comanche to procure a four-year college degree. However, he was not finished. During his summer breaks he attended the Flagstaff State College and became the first Indigenous American in Arizona to earn a graduate degree (Masters). In doing so, John became a warrior, and the vehicle he used, education, deviated from the horse utilized by his father. By World War II everything had changed for the Comanche, from the reservation and allotment to the attempted

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<sup>534</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>535</sup> William Meadows, *Comanche Code Talkers of World War II* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), 12.

<sup>536</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>537</sup> Franco, *Crossing the Pond: The Native American Effort in World War II*, 39.

<sup>538</sup> W.H. Larson, Dean, to John William Tippeconnic, Certificate of Completion of 108 hour course in Aircraft Sheet Metal Inspection, Engineering, Science and Management War Training, University of Oklahoma, February 19, 1943.



break up of tribal communities; however, one thing remained the same. The Comanche always found ways to adapt to the changes around them, whether they were imposed or voluntary. John not only adapted, he thrived, and in doing so he put himself in the category of great Comanche leaders. During World War II John's age was too advanced to put on a uniform, but he answered the call from his country to serve in the defense industry.

## CHAPTER 6

### A Comanche in Canoncito

John continued to leave a positive mark on Indigenous education on two separate Navajo reservations in New Mexico as both a principal and teacher at Mexican Springs and Canoncito. However, he spent the most of his professional career in education on the Canoncito Navajo Reservation. John's record indicates that he positively impacted each Indigenous community in which he worked; however, it was at Canoncito that he had the opportunity to fully employ his educational approach that included securing community support and involvement in the implementation of his educational methods. John believed that in order for an Indigenous community to participate, and ultimately benefit from the educational process, he had to implement a system that made the knowledge relevant to their Indigenous culture. Today, this community just west of Albuquerque goes by the name To'Hajiilee. To'Hajiilee is the name for a natural spring that provided water to the ancestors of the community.<sup>539</sup> Until recently, To'Hajiilee was called Canoncito, the Spanish name for the little canyon where this group of Navajos resided.<sup>540</sup> One source in a collection of my grandfather's papers describes the community of Canoncito,

Twenty-six miles west of Albuquerque, a dirt road branches off from the highway toward the north leading to the school which serves the Navaho community of Canyoncito. As your car reluctantly eats up the eight miles of this road, each mile

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<sup>539</sup> Rosemary Ann Blanchard, "A History of the To'Hajiilee/Canoncito Navajos" ( written under the direction of: The Canoncito School Board of Education, Inc., To'Hajiilee Community School, 1999, 1.

<sup>540</sup> Ibid.

seems to separate you by generations from every-thing familiar to you. A sense of extreme physical and psychological isolation nearly overpowers you. On your way to the school, you pass two Hogan – settlements. You also may pass a flock of sheep, and you may recognize the shepherd who motionless stands against the trunk of a gnarled pinon-tree. (The ability to make themselves invisible against-the background of their environment in the face of danger, is deep- rooted in the Navaho and has become a social trait with which an outsider has to familiarize himself if he wishes to deal successfully with the Navahos.) the country is barren, the pastures are poor, arroyos and gullies cut every-where through the land. Here and there, a small patch of cultivated fields breaks the monotony all around you.<sup>541</sup>

During John's tenure approximately six-hundred Navajos lived on the Canoncito Navajo Reservation.<sup>542</sup> John Tippeconnic explained in one report that "Their homes are found here and there on the reservation, they do not live in groups like their neighbors the Pueblos."<sup>543</sup> Author Rosemary Ann Blanchard notes that "Navajo people who were probably our ancestors lived in the region called the Mt. Taylor massif a long, long time ago, maybe as long as 500 years ago, or even earlier. Some of them may have lived right in this canyon. But many of them lived in the hills just south and east of Mount Taylor and Cabezon, near where the Pueblo of Laguna is today. . . . When the Spanish people came to New Mexico more than 400 years ago, Navajo

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<sup>541</sup> "Socialization and the Reading Readiness Program in a Navajo Day School", 2. (This paper is in the author's possession and was with John Tippeconnic's papers and reports on Canoncito however, there does not exist on the document a name or date.

<sup>542</sup> John W. Tippeconnic, "Canoncito Navajo Elementary Boarding School." (paper in author's possession), 3.

<sup>543</sup> Ibid.

people were already here, living in the mountains and growing corn.”<sup>544</sup> Just as the Spaniards turned the Ute word for Numunu, Kho-Mats, into Komantcia, they called the Dine people Apaches de Navahu, or Navajos.<sup>545</sup> “They called the Navajos in this area the ‘Cebolleta Navajos.’ This means the ‘little onion’ Navajos. This name did not really have anything to do with the people. ‘Cebolleta’ was the name the Spanish gave to the mountains around Mt. Taylor, and to a community which Spaniards established east of Mt. Taylor and near Laguna in the area where the Cebolleta Navajos planted fields. The name comes from the onions that the Spaniards found growing wild in the area.”<sup>546</sup> In To’Hajiilee some of the people call the people who originally formed this community, lina’bi’ho, which in English means ‘one who owns life.’ “They say that the word “Navajo” came from the Spanish pronunciation of this word.”<sup>547</sup> From the time the Spaniards arrived and established dominance over the Pueblos of New Mexico in the sixteenth century, the Cebolleta Navajos often found themselves in conflict over resources with the Spaniards and their Pueblo neighbors. Some of these conflicts resulted from the manner in which these Navajos farmed. “The Spanish did not understand the way Cebolleta Navajos farmed. Pueblo people planted their fields around settled communities, the same way the Spanish planted their fields in Spain. The Navajo farmers followed a different tradition of farming. They planted small fields in many places around their homelands as they moved from place to place within a definite area. If one field did not grow well because of weather and soil

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<sup>544</sup> Blanchard, “A History of the To’Hajiilee/Canoncito Navajos”, 2.

<sup>545</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>546</sup> Ibid.

<sup>547</sup> Ibid., 6.

or a change in the water supply, they could rely on other small fields. They also moved into areas where wild game were plentiful during the best times for hunting.”<sup>548</sup>

When the Spaniards observed fields that appeared abandoned, they simply claimed them. Naturally conflicts arose when the Cebolleta Navajos returned. In addition, if there were conflicts over farmlands between the Cebolleta and the Pueblos, the Spaniards supported the Pueblo claims. After the Spaniards established permanent settlements in New Mexico, the relationships between Cebolleta Navajos and Pueblos deteriorated because each group competed for resources. Both Pueblos and Cebolleta Navajos practiced war and raids upon the other during this time. “In the 1700s, the Utes and Comanches began more intensive raids on Navajos north of the Cebolleta area. This warfare moved more Navajos from other bands into the area occupied by the Cebolleta Navajos. The presence of more Navajos in the Mt. Taylor and Rio Puerco areas put more pressure on the Acoma and Laguna Pueblos and the arriving Spanish settlers.”<sup>549</sup> One of the Spanish solutions for the Cebolleta Navajos was the attempted organization of this group into settled farming villages resembling those of their Pueblo neighbors. However, this proved futile because the Cebolleta Navajos simply returned to their homes each time they were forced to leave. “In the end, the Spanish had to accept the Cebolleta Navajos were going to remain a part of the region.”<sup>550</sup>

The Navajos at Canoncito and the Comanche shared similar experiences with non-Indigenous groups. Just as the Spaniards, Texans, and the Americans had difficulty

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<sup>548</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>549</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>550</sup> Ibid.

understanding that not all Comanche people acted as one group nor that one individual governed them all, the Cebolleta Navajos ran into similar difficulties with the Spaniards in the early eighteenth century. While some Navajo groups made peace with the Spaniards, other Navajos made war. The result was that the Spaniards believed a state of war existed between themselves and all Navajos. In the end this led to animosity amongst various groups of Navajos, including the Cebolleta people. During the years when the Spaniards were the dominating European presence in New Mexico, the Cebolleta people experienced intermittent periods of hostility and peace with Spaniards, Pueblos, Apaches and even Comanches. Through persistence however, they were always able to return to their home. Following a treaty negotiated with the Spaniards in 1819, the Cebolleta Navajos fought other Navajo bands. In addition, the terms of this treaty, which also involved other Navajos, resulted in non-contiguous Navajo lands. “. . . the Navajos from the northern, Dinetah region agreed to give up part of their land holdings, including a strip between the Mt. Taylor massif and the main Dinetah Navajo land base. This meant that the land held by the Cebolleta Navajos was now separated from the land held by other Navajos. A piece of Spanish-held land stood between the two groups.”<sup>551</sup> In the early 1820s, Mexico replaced Spain as the self-appointed land lord in New Mexico and a quarter of a century later the Americans replaced them. These Imperial powers passed through the revolving colonial door that led to New Mexico, however the tenants, for the most part, remained, including the Cebolleta Navajos.

After 1819, the Cebolleta Navajos were both physically and ideologically separated from other Navajo bands. On numerous occasions they found themselves in direct conflict with their

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<sup>551</sup> Ibid., 36.

brethren. Treaty obligations to Spaniards and Mexicans had forced them into a position where they were expected to make war upon their kinsmen. During the American era, the Cebolleta Navajos once again found themselves in a unique position in relation to the latest Imperial landlords. While other Navajo bands of Dinétah were engaged in conflict and war with the United States, from the late 1840s and through the mid-point of the nineteenth century, the Cebolleta Navajos preferred to steer clear of the conflict. “The Headman of the Cebolleta Navajos, Antonio Sandoval, did not want to fight the Americans. The American military headquarters were too close to the Cebolleta Navajo lands and the American army was too strong and too well armed. Sandoval and the Cebolleta Navajos did not want to have to move their people away from their homes and they did not want their families to be killed and their ranches destroyed.”<sup>552</sup> By this time the Cebolleta Navajos were viewed by other Navajo bands as outsiders who could not be counted on as allies in campaigns against American forces. In the late 1850s, as fighting broke out again, “Antonio Sandoval realized that he would have to find a more secure place where his band could live and stay out of this latest conflict between Americans and Navajos. So, on behalf of his band, he made an agreement with the Americans in 1858. . . to move into the area just east of the Mt. Taylor massif, near the eastern watershed of the Rio Puerco. This new home within the Cebolleta Navajo homeland included the ‘little canon’ where the To’Hajiilee Navajo community is found today.”<sup>553</sup> Following this event, some people called the Cebolleta Navajos the Canoncito Navajos.

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<sup>552</sup> Ibid., 54-55.

<sup>553</sup> Ibid., 57.

In 1999, this small Navajo community officially changed its name to To'Hajiilee. However, when John Tippeconnic served as a teacher and a principal in this community school, from August 1951 to May of 1967, it was known as Canoncito. John worked at Canoncito for sixteen years before he retired on May 13, 1967. In 1967, six hundred Navajos lived on the Canoncito reservation.<sup>554</sup> In one report he noted the conditions of the reservation.

The Canoncito Navajo Elementary Boarding School is located thirty miles west of Albuquerque on Highway 66 and eight miles north of the Highway. There are approximately six-hundred Navajos living on the Canoncito Navajo Reservation. Their homes are found here and there on the reservation, they do not live in groups like their neighbors the Pueblos. The nature of the reservation is semi-arid and there is scarcity of water, especially soft water. The vegetation comprises sage-brushes, tumble-weeds and cacti plants found in abundance here and there on the reservation. Good grass is found in limited areas and is overgrazed and because of limited rainfall the grass does not re-seed from year to year. There are canyons, arroyos, hills, and blow-sands throughout the reservation. During the early spring time there is much wind-erosion on the reservation. There is no farming because of limited rainfall. Most of the Navajos have sheep and goats in small numbers and there are about six families that have herds from 250-1200. The wool, lambs and sheepskins are sold to secure money for food and clothing. The older members of the tribe and widows and incapacitated men are on welfare and get checks

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<sup>554</sup> Tippeconnic, "Canoncito Navajo Elementary Boarding School." (paper, in author's possession), 3.



every month and also surplus commodities.<sup>555</sup>

In the early 1950s, when John arrived (at Canoncito), the members of this tribal community lived in widely scattered settlements in their extended family units that upon first glance gave the appearance of extreme isolation. Although members of this community lived in a dispersed fashion, they were connected culturally, they were also connected by the geographical boundaries of the reservation. This community provided an extreme contrast to many of the other Indigenous nations residing in New Mexico and certainly to the village dwelling Pueblo peoples. There is no doubt that this place, with its rugged high desert beauty, is cherished by the Indigenous people who call it home. "The members of this community live in widely scattered settlements. The group-feeling which holds these peoples together is largely determined by a factor external to the immediate family, namely the boundaries of a well-defined geographical area is that characteristic of the old Indian band, vaguely centralized by the personality of the headman. Social organization and government, in contrast to that of the Pueblos, is diffuse. The acknowledged unit is the biological family. There is, as I was to find out, little cooperation between the individual families and hardly any participation on the basis of common community interests."<sup>556</sup>

When John arrived at Canoncito he most certainly had to deal with issues of trust amongst the students, but also with the overall community as well. One of the first hurdles to overcome at Canoncito was communication. Many of the students with whom John worked initially did not read or write in English. In order to get to the point where students could begin

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<sup>555</sup> Ibid.

<sup>556</sup> "Socialization and the Reading Readiness Program in a Navajo Day School", 4.

to write in English, first they had to acquire a basic understanding of the language. “The problem, then is how to go about to teach Navajo children, first, to speak the English language, and then to read and write in it. That these skills have to be taught to them without upsetting them and without alienating them from their own culture is a problem which complicates this problem still further. That much is certain that a non-English speaking child has to go through a longer reading readiness period than the child which learns to read in his own language. He has to acquire first a sufficient speaking vocabulary.”<sup>557</sup>

At Canoncito John and his staff also had to overcome issues of trust as well as the language barrier. In order to make progress with the acquisition of what was a foreign language for many of these people, John and his staff had to provide these children with experiences that had meaning for them. “The preparatory procedures will largely evolve around situations which are familiar to him, that is, around his own environment and experiences which have meaning to him. This will not only facilitate the learning-progress proper, but will also warrant that adjustments be made with the least amount of stress and that the child will not be alienated from his own culture.”<sup>558</sup> When John arrived at Canoncito the school had one teacher. The isolation was reinforced by the fact that the nearest telephone and post office were sixteen miles from the school. In addition, the school had only pre-first, first, and second graders.<sup>559</sup>

At any rate, at the beginning, the children and I faced each other in a complete vacuum, and communication had to be established by way of signs, symbols,

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<sup>557</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>558</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>559</sup> Ibid.

and inarticulate sounds. Directions were given by way of pictures drawn on the blackboard and by the aid of a few words in Navaho. The children, at first, were so shy that they would not even talk in their own language. They would not play together. They would just sit and watch the teacher out of a wary eye. But as the days passed, confidence became established, by what means I do not know.

Fortunately, there exist many ways of communication apart from that by language: you may communicate by your eyes; by the tone of your voice; by the gesture of your hand; by the way you lightly touch a child.<sup>560</sup>

Trust was established with the community at Canoncito overall and specifically with the students through relationships based on common experiences. The school staff participated in social situations and home visitations that demonstrated to the local community at Canoncito that the educational personnel working with their children were willing to put themselves in situations in which they could learn from members of the community. When this occurred, students might then be able to establish a sense of trust in school employees.

Once the vacuum was filled with relations which had meaning to the children, a basis of common experiences could be built up. Furthermore, there had to be found a strong motivation, a purpose, for learning. Organically, this motivation grew out of the educational situation itself...If the children were in need of meaningful experiences, the teacher likewise was in need of meaningful experiences. Soon the children realized that I was anxious to learn everything

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<sup>560</sup> Ibid., 8-9.

about their way of life, that nothing seemed unimportant to me if only it had some relation to their daily round of activities. Whenever the spirit moved us, we went out to visit families, to watch mother care for the baby, cook for the family, spin the wool or weave the rug. We would watch father harness the horses, or shear the sheep, or rope the calf. We would visit the older sister out on the range while she was herding sheep; we would have a look at the younger brother who was helping father to build a lean to. Seeing the teacher being so interested in their way of life, filled the children with confidence, even with pride.<sup>561</sup>

Once a degree of trust was secured, students responded in the classroom, even if they could not speak English. They communicated ideas by drawing pictures of their hogans, horses and sheep and even of a mother sitting in front of a loom as she wove. "Language, being intrinsically social in its function, is not only a means of voicing and recording, but also one of sharing. You clinch experiences by way of language. You find release by way of language. In a non-English speaking school like Canyoncito we could not profit by all these advantages inherent in language. Drawings had to take the place of oral communication voiced and recorded and shared through drawings. Drawings by necessity, became one of the most important aspects of our preparatory period."<sup>562</sup>

During this time at Canoncito the children felt that they had a stake in the entire learning process, in fact they felt that they were helping the instructor and because of this their

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<sup>561</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>562</sup> Ibid., 10.

confidence grew. In addition to providing a valuable component to the learning process, the students felt that they were part of a group. "In knowing that they were doing something important, their self confidence increased; with growing self-confidence they became happier; in realizing that all children alike were engaged in a common project the sense of belonging to a group began to develop; the slowly increasing group consciousness automatically increased feelings of security and so on."<sup>563</sup> Once an image was drawn by a student then the students would give the name in Navajo and the instructor would assign the spelling for it in English. Then certain aspects of the Hogan, such as door, roof, and smoke hole, would be spelled out in the same manner. During this process the children attempted to pronounce the words in English but the instructor also attempted to say the word in the Navajo tongue. On occasion the instructor's pronunciation mistakes caused laughter, however this fostered a comfortable and safe environment for all involved. The students soon realized that trying was the important part and they let their guard down and they thought, "Maybe, they should not worry either and go right ahead making mistakes, experimenting with the strange new words, no matter how it might sound to the teacher. Without knowing it, the children overcame their shyness, step by step."<sup>564</sup>

As learning was progressing during the first years of work at Canoncito, all of it was centered around the topic of "How we Navajos live."<sup>565</sup>

This enterprise received its motivation by a strongly socializing factor: the teacher

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<sup>563</sup> Ibid.

<sup>564</sup> Ibid.

<sup>565</sup> Ibid.

was in need of thorough information. Interest on the part of the pupils was assured by their being familiar with the subject, which in turn, warranted continuous success, indispensable for making a child ready to learn. The purpose of the project, which coincided with the motivation called for recording of its basic experiences. Recordings in pictures and in words, called automatically for evaluation. Evaluation necessitated by review and practice both in picture-reading and in actual reading. Understanding throughout was assured by each sub-topic under discussion being based on some previous experience shared both by pupils and teacher. Each single concept with which any of the sub-topics were dealing was carefully linked to a concept of the preceding sub-topic so that organic repetition of word and idea was warranted.<sup>566</sup>

This process allowed students to achieve the ultimate goal, the acquisition of a meaningful speaking vocabulary, which in turn, promoted reading readiness.

Pictures were utilized extensively as teaching aids and this was then followed by guided interpretations of the images on the part of the students. Students would draw objects along with colors, and number concepts. Eventually, for some of the more advanced students, the drawings matched not only the appropriate words but sentences as well.

For the more advanced First graders, pictures were matched with appropriate words and sentences; interpretation of pictures is guided into more complicated thought-processes as for instances problem solving activities; sequential thinking,

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<sup>566</sup> Ibid.

etc. A simple but meaningful sight-vocabulary is developed. Along with the acquisition of a sight vocabulary, the ability of moving the eyes from left to right is being developed; the attention span gradually is increased; the ability to concentrate and to follow directions is constantly being encouraged. The Second Graders have enriched their speaking and sight vocabulary to such a degree that they may dictate stories to the teacher in which they record their experiences.<sup>567</sup>

Once the instructor had written the stories on the blackboard, the students would read them back. The students had a stake in the learning by providing the drawings and the stories to go along with them and the instructor then writes that in English on the blackboard. Next, the students were introduced to word recognition. In other words, the ability to recognize a word from its context was developed methodically. Follow up experiences were then developed.

One follow up experience to accompany the verbal was the actual construction of a model of a Navajo settlement using clay, students had constructed models of hogans and lean-tos with corrals and wagons and looms as well as flocks of sheep. The students utilized rocks and sand and tiny shrubbery to develop the terrain. Students then constructed human figures from paper mache' as well as clothing. Supplementing this model the students then drew plans of the extensive community along with roads that connected the various isolated settlements. "This activity will help the children overcome the atomistic isolationism which used to center in nothing but strong family-ties; they will become aware of the out-group of which they are a part, they will become conscious of belonging to a community. Efforts toward cooperation and

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<sup>567</sup> Ibid., 13.

participation, encouraged at all times, will become still more meaningful.”<sup>568</sup> The intent was that processes of socialization and processes of learning kept constantly overlapping. In addition, this overlap provides mutual stimulus, deeper meaning and inspiration towards additional learning.

Moreover, the goal was not only to get students to realize that they were an intrinsic part of a group but that they would now look at their group in relation to other groups living beyond the boundaries of their own reservation. Students would visit nearby Pueblos and towns in order for them to see how other people lived. As this occurred their social relations would increase beyond their own borders. The idea introduced to students was that there are people all over the country who are interested in how the Indigenous people of Canoncito live. “They wish to get informed about the ways and customs of these Indians. We have to settle down and write letters and draw still more pictures, now not only for our own or the teacher’s sake but for the sake of people who live far away. We look up on our map where these people live and are astonished to find out how big the country of which Canyoncito is a part! In return we shall receive letters from our friends who tell us what it is like to live in big cities or near the ocean.”<sup>569</sup>

Other topics of study during John’s early years at Canoncito included hygiene and soil conservation. In addition, a garden was started in the early spring and students would learn about the various types of soils, which led to questions such as, “Why was it that our soil was so poor? How was soil formed anyway? Could it be that soil was formed by rocks? Could it be that

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<sup>568</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>569</sup> Ibid., 15.



water and wind had something to do with making of soil?"<sup>570</sup> In order to have a better understanding of how these questions might be answered various rocks that students collected contributed to the terminology and became a part of the overall educational approach. Students also planted corn in an effort to learn more about the soil. The point here is that during John's first few years the students at Canoncito were actively engaged in learning the English language through learning more about the structures of their community and the resources available to them. These activities inevitably led to successful language acquisition through participation in activities the students were familiar with. By John's sixteenth year as principal at Canoncito's boarding school the enrollment had grown to one hundred and thirty one children.<sup>571</sup>

Within the larger context of federal Indian education policy, John Tippeconnic's methods of educating Navajo students at Canoncito fell within a cross-cultural approach. The cross-cultural approach emphasized both Indigenous and non-Indigenous value systems. This approach to Indian education was rooted in the pre-World War II years. Following World War II, the emphasis on cross-cultural education for Indigenous students was largely abandoned in favor of education for assimilation, which emphasized the training of Indigenous students for urban life and assimilation into mainstream American society. Margaret Connell-Szasz notes, "Assimilation education assumed that the Indian youth would choose to live in the city rather than return to the reservation."<sup>572</sup> In education, this shift from an inclusive cross cultural

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<sup>570</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>571</sup> Ibid.

<sup>572</sup> Margaret Connell Szasz, *Education and the American Indian: The Road to Self-Determination Since 1928* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1974), 106.

approach to one of assimilation reflected federal Indian policy during the termination era.

Historian Donald Fixico notes,

Following World War II, a new era dawned for the United States and American Indians. The momentum of Commissioner John Collier's Reorganization policy, implemented under the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, came to a halt. BIA officials, the American public, and even Native Americans were convinced that the IRA plan of reconstructing tribal governments and restoring cultural traditions was outdated. Both Indians and bureaucrats favored a modernized society that would require the integration of Indian population into the mainstream of modern America. This new direction in affairs between Indians and the federal government spurred a policy of terminating the government's trust relationship over Indian lands and relocating the native residents to new homes in urban areas.<sup>573</sup>

While John's cross-cultural approach to education resembled pre-war policies, he also incorporated some aspects of the new federal policy.

In order to make learning in a western setting relevant for Navajo students, John fully embraced a cross-cultural approach at Canoncito. However, he also saw that there were few employment opportunities on the reservation and encouraged students who followed their parents into urban areas, like Albuquerque, to enroll in off-reservation public educational

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<sup>573</sup> Donald L. Fixico, *Termination and Relocation: Federal Indian Policy, 1945-1960* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1986), ix.

institutions. This would indicate that John's methods fused both pre-war and post-war methodologies. "It would help the children and reduce retardation if the parents would enroll their children in public schools near where they find employment when they leave the reservation to work; instead of keeping the children out of school for as long as three months. It would help if the people that recruit the Indians to work off the reservation insist that they put their children in school, it would give the children an opportunity to extend their learning experiences."<sup>574</sup> John's approach also mirrored the position of many post-war Navajos who felt that western education should be an immediate goal for their people. Margaret Connell-Szasz notes, "For many of these people, the significance of the war lay in the birth of the concept that education should become an immediate goal. Suddenly they believed that the initial step toward the solution of their problems was adequate schooling for their young people. The fact that this tremendous shift had occurred in such a short time period gave their new attitude an even greater authority."<sup>575</sup> Contextualized within the larger federal Indian policy as well as post-war Indian educational policy, Navajo people could push for more educational opportunities, however, the reality was that many would have to leave home to claim them. One program designed to assist overage Navajo students was the Navajo Special Education Program.

From 1946 and into the 1960s, the Navajo Special Education Program educated over four thousand Navajo overage students. Overage referred to Navajo students who had reached their teen years without the benefit of any formal western education. Margaret Connell-Szasz notes, "As far as Bureau educators were concerned, the Special Program was an overwhelming

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<sup>574</sup> Tippeconnic, "Canoncito Navajo Elementary Boarding School." (paper in author's possession), 11.

<sup>575</sup> Connell Szasz, *Education and the American Indian: The Road to Self-Determination Since 1928*, 115.

success. Most of the students achieved the two aims of the course, which were general learning about white culture, including a knowledge of English and an understanding of social customs and attitudes, and specific vocational training to enable them to find jobs.”<sup>576</sup> This program reflected the Termination era attitudes of the federal government in that it shifted the focus away from a cross-cultural approach to an assimilationist pursuit.

Federal policy in regards to educating Navajo students on the main reservation included the bordertown program. This allowed the Bureau to tackle the problem of educating Navajo students in public schools off the reservation, while housing them at off reservation boarding schools. This also allowed the Bureau to spend less money on the construction of community schools on the reservation. John worked with families at Canoncito to educate older students living in off reservation locations, however was not specifically part of the bordertown program. By sending kids to off reservation public schools in Albuquerque, John Tippeconnic aligned himself with the federal Indian educational policy of the 1950s and 1960s. These post-war Navajo attitudes towards education are reflected in a report by John Tippeconnic, “A family sold all their sheep and bought a home in Albuquerque to provide better access to schools for the children. Another family built a new home on the reservation and finally had to move back to Albuquerque to be near schools the children had previously attended. There are several families that are working near towns in New Mexico and their children are attending schools where they are employed. More and more families are finding employment off the reservation every year. They are assuming responsibilities for their family welfare. This change of attitude is

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<sup>576</sup> Ibid., 116.

the result of being employed regularly and the desire to keep their children in school.”<sup>577</sup> The general trend during the 1950s and into the 1960s on the big Navajo Reservation was a movement away from community schools. During this time John continued to develop the community school on the small Canoncito Navajo Reservation.

The students at Canoncito ranged in age from six to sixteen years of age.<sup>578</sup> In 1967, one hundred twenty-eight of the students were Navajo and three were non-Navajos.<sup>579</sup> At Canoncito’s boarding school, sixty-four students, thirty-two boys and thirty-two girls, lived in the school dormitory.<sup>580</sup> The sixty-four dormitory students were divided into eight groups with a group leader who met with instructional aides on a weekly basis in order to discuss any problems or needs their group might have. The group leaders also served as a point of contact between the staff and their group members and relayed information to the students in their respective groups. Every student who lived at the boarding school was assigned various tasks that included dusting furniture, keeping books, magazines and toys in order as well as maintaining the individual lockers that housed their clothes. Moreover, children over the age of ten were assigned additional work in the dormitories, kitchen and dining room. The girls and boys over ten years of age completed tasks such as cleaning tables and sweeping. The children assigned to these duties rotated every two weeks.<sup>581</sup> An additional sixty-seven students attended as day students only. Day students also helped out in the kitchen but only during lunch on school days because this was the only time when they were at school that they

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<sup>577</sup> Tippeconnic, “Canoncito Navajos” (paper in author’s possession), 1.

<sup>578</sup> Tippeconnic, “Canoncito Navajo Elementary Boarding School.” (paper in author’s possession), 4.

<sup>579</sup> Ibid.

<sup>580</sup> Ibid.

<sup>581</sup> Ibid., 5.

received a meal. Breakfast and dinner chores were the responsibility of the boarding students.<sup>582</sup> Children who lived in the dormitory and were over the age of ten had access to a washing machine and an iron.<sup>583</sup> An additional ninety-three children were enrolled in BIA schools off the reservation like the Santa Fe Indian School, Albuquerque Indian School as well as in Mission schools and public schools.<sup>584</sup> After 1934, a common reality for many boarding schools was that students who lived at the school were allowed to go home on weekends if family could retrieve them. Students would be expected to obtain a week-end permit from the dormitory staff. Day students returned home each day after they completed their school activities. Students attending Canoncito's boarding school in 1967 lived as close as a quarter of a mile away and as far as fourteen miles away from the institution.<sup>585</sup>

A report written by John Tippeconnic also listed some of behavioral problems encountered at the Canoncito boarding school. Offenses ranged from stealing in the dormitory (minor nature), and some boys teasing girls, to writing on school property, boys calling girls names (usually dirty language in Navajo), over-age pupils (referring to students who were over the age of 12 but still in elementary school) causing trouble for little boys by making them do things against the rules and fighting (usually big boys picking on the little ones) and absenteeism.<sup>586</sup> The problems encountered at the Canoncito boarding school were minor compared to off-reservation boarding schools, primarily because ninety eight percent of the students were Navajos attending an institution on their own reservation, and while many had

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<sup>582</sup> Ibid.

<sup>583</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>584</sup> Ibid.

<sup>585</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>586</sup> Ibid., 8.

to commute several miles to reach school, they were not attending a school out of state.<sup>587</sup>

However, John's own boarding school training certainly influenced the way in which he administered the school at Canoncito and, to his credit, he was honest about the issues the school faced and the need to address them. "There is a need on the part of the school personnel not to take things for granted, but to study each child and to accept him as he is and to understand his strong and weak points to help him become a part of his new environment gradually. (In-service training, going to workshops or summer school and taking guidance courses as needed)."<sup>588</sup> John also called for a better follow-up program from the home to the school and the school to the home. "When a child is absent for more than one day the reasons for his not being at school should be gotten by the school. Sometimes the parents do not trouble about encouraging their children to attend school regularly. An understanding is needed in such cases with the parents and the school, this would create closer ties with the school and home for the benefit of the child."<sup>589</sup> John had no reservation about first addressing what he as an administrator and the other school employees could do to improve the educational process for his Indigenous students at Canoncito.

However, he also called on both parents and tribal leaders to play an active role alongside the school in the same process. "It would help the children and reduce retardation if the parents would enroll their children in public school near where they find employment when they leave the reservation to work; instead of keeping the children out of school for as long as three months. It would help if the people that recruit the Indians to work off the reservation

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<sup>587</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>588</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>589</sup> Ibid.

insist that they put their children in school, it would give the children an opportunity to extend their learning experiences. The Tribal leaders and the school need to work more closely on the parents putting the education of their children first among their needs. This would help and mean more schooling for the children in the years to come, and would help the children to look forward to school experiences in a happy way”<sup>590</sup> John addressed not only the immediate issues he encountered administering a reservation boarding school but larger issues such as the Canoncito students who dropped out of school and the limited employment opportunities on the reservation.

“The drop-outs among the older pupils attending schools off the reservation has been increasing from year to year; this indirectly works against us for our children see them out of school and doing nothing on the reservation. This is a trend that the schools involved and the parents should get together on and learn the reasons why they leave school to further the educational interests of the children. The time is coming when the parents will leave the reservation and become part of the communities where employment is available and this will cut down on the school population in the years to come; for there is nothing on the reservation for many of them to improve their living conditions. Eventually most of them will be forced to leave their homes because reservation resources are undeveloped and exhausted, they must be trained to earn a living in a new way. For this reason the need for education and specialized training is important; if they are to be self-supporting

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<sup>590</sup> Ibid.



citizens of New Mexico. The impact of rapid technical changes, increase of population and changing conditions places our young Indians with many difficulties, they must learn to cope with if they are to become part of the Off Reservation society. Because of this a new program is needed to keep the young people in schools until they develop their potential and experience better socio-economic conditions.<sup>591</sup>

During John's sixteen years at Canoncito he worked diligently to provide Navajo students with an environment that fostered enthusiasm and persistence and eventual matriculation into off reservation public schools, because at that time Canoncito did not have a high school. It was clearly his intent, as the record shows, to procure buy-in from parents and family as well as from the tribal community in order to increase the educational attainment levels of this community. Clearly John's own boarding school, and post-secondary and graduate school experiences molded a professional educator who wanted to give back to Indigenous communities. It is my contention that John's education allowed him not only to excel and secure a professional career in education, but his connection to the Comanche ethos he was ingrained with as a youth ensured that he would not use his knowledge simply for individual gain. In fact during his entire career he worked to plant the educational seed in each community where he worked. John had the ability to see that in order to achieve success as a school administrator in an Indigenous environment he had to achieve community support for his methods.

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<sup>591</sup> Ibid., 11.

One report from 1967 demonstrates the changes in attitudes toward education at Canoncito that happened during his sixteen-year tenure.

The Parent-Teacher Organization and the School Advisory Board has been providing opportunities for the parents to get involved in the schools their children are attending.

Education, Health and Home Improvements has progressed the most in the past Sixteen years. Education has shown the most progress. The total enrollment in all schools in 1952 was 90 children. This increased to 248 in 1966. In 1955 three children were enrolled in public school. The enrollment for 1966-67 school year is 92 children not counting the children that are attending public schools off the reservation. In 1967-68 School year children attending public schools from Canoncito should be over 125. The parents are showing satisfaction with Public schools for their children's education. This trend has been an important progress for Canoncito reservation. It is developing a strong concern and involvement in the education of the Canoncito children. It has also provided an opportunity for the parents to select the school they prefer their children to attend. In the years to come Canoncito Reservation will continue to support the public schools of Bernalillo County.<sup>592</sup>

Throughout his professional career John sought to connect Indigenous communities with the schools that served their young people. In other words he worked to bring the school, home

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<sup>592</sup> Tippeconnic, "Canoncito Navajos" (paper in author's possession), 3.

and child into a closer relationship with one another for the good of the whole Indigenous community.

It is evident that during his career John believed that several agencies outside the school could be used to enhance relationships with school employees. The intent in this approach was to produce community engagement in the education of its youth in order to ensure educational goals. John pushed for nurses, doctors, social workers, the forestry service, farmers, dairymen, alumni, weekly newspapers and Indian fairs. John believed that farmers could be brought in to the school and provide courses in cattle raising techniques as well as function, repair and maintenance of equipment. He also advocated for Forestry Service personnel to give courses in fire-prevention and fire-fighting and to teach the students the value of grass and trees as viable resources that could provide Indigenous communities with the knowledge to protect and properly utilize natural resources. In addition, John worked to bring in community doctors to the school in order to provide examinations while parents were present and to foster relationships between medical staff and families on the reservation.

All these can be used to a great advantage and help your community to a closer understanding and appreciative feeling for the school and home relationship.

This relationship came into the Indian Service with the coming of the Day Schools.

Some Indian Communities have experienced this relationship for a long time.

Some are experiencing this for the first time. This relationship was not given much attention by the Indians until they were given the opportunity to share the school with their children. The children going home every day after the

school session is over and becoming a part of the Community responsibilities have brought the importance of the Parent and School Relationship. The parents are gradually assuming the welfare and responsibility of their children. This was totally absent when the children were Boarding School pupils. Under the Boarding School personnel the parents were ignored to a large degree, therefore, they assumed if any, a very little thought for their children. The children were taken away from their parents and the natural set-ups of their lives for the greater part of the year. Under these conditions there was no room for parent and school relationships to function.<sup>593</sup>

John believed that fostering parent and community relationships through the school would foster trust and ultimately endorsement in education from community members, which in turn ultimately led to combatting attrition rates. As a direct result, more children would procure an education. Moreover, he believed that, "This parent and school relationship will mean the solution of many of our behavioral problems by generating a reciprocal relationship between the school and the home. New methods of approach will also come into being from this relationship and the school people will enjoy their work with pleasure. More appreciative control will develop by the Indians for their own good from this field. The whole reservation force of Indian Service employees should benefit by this relationship."<sup>594</sup>

By the time John ended his career of education amongst various Indigenous groups across the American Southwest, he had established himself as not only a leader in the

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<sup>593</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>594</sup> Ibid.

educational field but as an Indigenous man who had genuinely strived to enrich all the communities where he had worked. He was a man who did not call for accolades nor did he speak of himself. He always spoke about the accomplishments of other people and holding true to the Comanche Ethos, he left the talking to others, preferring to let his own actions do the talking.

Throughout his life he carried himself in a humble manner and was respected so much at Canoncito that the community approached him about naming the new high school they were building after him.<sup>595</sup> True to his nature he respectfully declined this honor and urged the Navajo community now known as Tohajilee to provide the school with a Navajo name. John Tippeconnic retired after a sixteen year stint at Canoncito, and settled in Albuquerque, New Mexico. During his retirement he spent long hours carving figures such as Comanche Gourd Dancers, once again demonstrating his deeply rooted cultural ties. In retirement, often he would continue to journey back to Oklahoma to visit friends and family. John stayed true to the faith that provided him strength through his life by attending Deyo Mission every chance he had.

If you took away the word Comanche from John Tippeconnic's accomplishments they might not appear remarkable at first glance. However, if you consider that he was amongst the first generation of Comanches who did not grow up free on the plains, his achievements are indeed noteworthy. For Tippeconnic's generation the horse was the vehicle through which a Comanche man achieved social status and prestige. In one generation John Tippeconnic

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<sup>595</sup> Tippeconnic family oral tradition passed down relays that school officials approached John Tippeconnic about naming the school after him, however he declined.

successfully shifted gears and transformed the vehicle for attaining social status in his tribe from the horse to education. Moreover, at Canoncito, where John left his biggest imprint, he successfully adapted an educational methodology that convinced the Navajo to invest in the educational process. John achieved this by structuring the curriculum to include Navajo cultural aspects of the Canoncito people. All of John and Juanita's seven children attended college and two received PhDs, three more retired from government positions in the Forestry Service and the Bureau of Indian Affairs and yet another became the CEO of a major Petroleum company. Two of his grandchildren have also earned Doctorate degrees. He successfully navigated the tumultuous world of U.S. federal Indian policy, which sought to destroy the cultural connections of Indigenous peoples, and truly remained Comanche. Moreover, he retained the Comanche identity while appropriating from the Euro-American society the tools he deemed appropriate for survival. John Tippeconnic's headstone in the Deyo Baptist Mission Cemetery reads "Pioneer Indian Educator led by example in God's way."<sup>596</sup>

Certainly the years at Canoncito were a special time for John Tippeconnic. He worked in this location longer than any other place during his professional career. Following their retirement from Canoncito John and Juanita purchased a home in Albuquerque, just a short drive from Canoncito. For the next twenty years John remained in contact with Navajos from Canoncito and frequently welcomed members of this community into his home. On a 1967 United States Department of the Interior Performance Rating Report, John received ratings of excellent in the following categories; volume of work, quality of work, and supervisory ability. In addition, he received a rating of outstanding in the following categories; work habits and work

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<sup>596</sup> Goodin, "*Deyo Mission Cemetery*", 14.

attitude.<sup>597</sup> John was much like his father in that he did not sing his own praises. He was humble and, like the traditional Comanche man, he let others speak on his behalf. In terms of his professional work the following review provides insight.

This is the twelfth year the rater has evaluated your services at Canoncito. It is considered to be the best year of your performance there. During your entire service at Canoncito you have shown deep concern and genuine interest in the education of the children and community betterment for the Canoncito people. You have demonstrated outstanding performance in your work habits and attitude. You made some fine contributions through your cooperative participation in special assignments for the Agency Education program. Your public relations work continues to be noteworthy especially in the area of strengthening parent interest in education and as a result very few school age children are out of school. Your positive support of the Bureau's public school policy shows good results as evidenced by some 25 children attending Albuquerque Public School Head-Start session held in Albuquerque last summer (for the second year) and some 80 Canoncito pupils attending Public Schools in Albuquerque on a daily commuting basis for the fourth year. Improved health practices of the pupils and parents and a greater facility in the use of English have also been noted. Your devoted

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<sup>597</sup> United States Department of the Interior Performance Rating Report for John W. Tippeconnic, Signed by Reviewing Official Mae Bratton, April 26, 1967.

service is deeply appreciated. Mae Bratton.<sup>598</sup>

While this letter paints a picture of a dedicated professional, the consideration of the Canoncito community to name its high school after him reveals much more.

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<sup>598</sup> *ibid.*



## CHAPTER 7

### A Comanche in Indian Country

This chapter will explore the life of John and Juanita Tippeconnic's oldest child, Norman. It examines his childhood and high school years at Navajo Methodist Mission, as well as his extensive professional career in the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The chapter advances the idea that Norman was the beneficiary of a Comanche cultural shift from the utilization of the horse to the appropriation of education as the primary method to convey the Comanche ethos. In addition, this chapter asserts that this shift made it possible for Norman to make his mark on the world as a Comanche man. Once again, I am not claiming that this was a universal shift for all Comanche people. It was a shift that occurred within the Tippeconnic family and it would provide a platform for the family to continue as Comanche people. John began school at a time when Comanche culture was suppressed by western institutions. He played the game, and more importantly, he ensured a competitive edge by achieving an advanced degree that provided him with a platform. By the time he attained a master's degree, his work openly proclaimed the fundamental role the Comanche ethos played in his success. The Comanche Ethos would survive the involuntary changes that affected all Comanche people during both Tippeconnic's and John's lifetime. He did not use these words, they are mine, but it is through his educational perseverance that he was able to keep his Comanche identity. Tippeconnic provided this guidance for his son and in turn, John provided this model for his own son, Norman.

John and Juanita's son Norman was born in Whiteriver, Arizona on the Fort Apache Indian Reservation on August 24, 1933. At this time John Tippeconnic was serving as the boys advisor at a boarding school on the reservation.<sup>599</sup> Prior to Norman's birth, Juanita had given birth to a stillborn child who they buried at Whiteriver. "After the stillborn child, the doctors told my mother that she would probably never have any more children. Well she had seven more and proved the doctors wrong."<sup>600</sup>

Norman would be next, but his birth was not without complications. Norman emerged in a precarious state because he was born at the Indian Health Service Hospital two months premature and without fingernails, eyelashes and eyebrows.<sup>601</sup> He nearly died because the Indian Health Service hospital in Whiteriver did not have the equipment to keep his body temperature up. For several harrowing days the hospital staff heated bricks in an oven and placed them underneath the swaddled child. Fortunately, these efforts paid off and Norman survived and eventually thrived. "I was lucky to make it, and I think that is why I have always had such poor eyesight over the years. I have always had to wear glasses."<sup>602</sup> Norman would begin school, like his father in a one room school house, on the Hualapai Indian Reservation, where he was the only non-Hualapai student. There was just one teacher for all the students regardless of age or grade. Each morning Juanita drove Norman the two miles from the agency, where they lived, to school. Each afternoon he then had to find his own way home.<sup>603</sup> Norman had three choices, he could walk home on a dirt road, follow the railroad track or walk along

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<sup>599</sup> Tippeconnic Sr. Interview with author, November 14, 2006.

<sup>600</sup> Ibid.

<sup>601</sup> Ibid.

<sup>602</sup> Ibid.

<sup>603</sup> Ibid.

highway sixty six. “The Hualapai boys didn’t care for me much. Each day I had to try and guess where they wouldn’t be as I decided which way to walk home from school because they always tried to beat me up. One day I guessed wrong and they threw me in the river.”<sup>604</sup> After living in Valentine, John and Juanita took their family back to Oklahoma, where they lived on the family farm.

Growing up with parents who were educators and had the summer off, Norman and his family journeyed back to Oklahoma each year. However, after the U.S. entered World War II, the family lived on the farm as well as in Oklahoma City. Tippeconnic resided on his allotment until his death. Norman remembers very little of his grandfather Tippeconnic, who died on January 22, 1934 at eighty years of age.<sup>605</sup> He does have fond memories of those summers spent on the farm (allotment). “I guess you would call us poor by the standards of the day but I never thought of us as poor, we always had chickens and other animals on the farm as well as a garden and we hunted. There was always water in Cache Creek in those days, before they built the dams in the Wichita Mountains. We spent most of our days in and around Cache Creek, which ran through the farm. We did not have money so we made all of our own toys, if you take the red clay and put water on it you can mold it into anything. That was one way we made our own toys”<sup>606</sup> One of Norman and his siblings favorite places to explore in Cache Creek was a location they called the turtle hole. It was a little natural pool that meandered off Cache Creek and then flowed back into the main body of water. Norman and his siblings learned to swim in

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<sup>604</sup> Ibid.

<sup>605</sup> Goodin, “*Deyo Mission Cemetery*”, 14.

<sup>606</sup> Tippeconnic Sr. Interview with author. November 14, 2006.

the turtle hole. Many days were spent fishing there, and when he and his siblings needed a change, they would simply jump in turtle hole and swim.

Entering the home place, Tippeconnic's allotment, and looking off to the right, one immediately notices a hill jutting up out of the flat landscape. This was called Medicine Hill because Tippeconnic performed some of his medicine ceremonies there. Continuing on down the road one encounters the two ruts that form the path the wagons and later the vehicles would take to travel to the house. "When it would rain you could hardly get out because the red clay was so thick."<sup>607</sup> As one continued down the road, it would eventually curve to the right and take you to the farm house. Just outside the house was the well that the family utilized for their water supply. Wildlife was plentiful on the farm, as were pecan, willow and oak trees. The home itself was devoid of indoor plumbing so an outhouse was necessary. Behind the house stood a chicken coop and on the back porch an ice box rested. The family travelled into town, either Cache or Lawton, periodically to pick up supplies, and Norman recalls that the last stop was usually at the Ice House, where they would purchase a block of ice to place in the icebox on their return.<sup>608</sup> Some of the most pleasant memories of Norman's life encompassed the years he spent living on the farm. He attributes family as the primary reason. There was always plenty of family on the home place and other Comanches often stopped by to visit. "Very few people had cars in those days so they arrived on horseback or in wagons, and we didn't have a phone so we would never know when people might show up."<sup>609</sup>

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<sup>607</sup> Ibid.

<sup>608</sup> Ibid.

<sup>609</sup> Ibid.

In 1887, when Massachusetts Senator Henry L. Dawes sponsored the legislation that bears his name, one of the primary motivations was to break up tribalism. This was manifested by separating Comanche family allotments. However, Norman recalls that the Tippeconnics always had relatives living with them on the farm. Tippeconnic's wife at this time was named Wimmerchy. Wimmerchy's sister Ella Wimmerchy, her daughter Ruth and Ruth's husband Werqueyah lived on the allotment, known as the family farm. Norman called Werqueyah "Wild Boy," and he performed many jobs on the farm including the planting and harvesting of the staple crop, cotton. The family hunted for all of their food within the parameters of the one hundred and sixty acre allotment. "Wild Boy always hunted with a bow and arrow and he taught me to hunt rabbits. In that way."<sup>610</sup> Werqueyah was continuing a traditional educational element of Comanche culture as he guided Norman. In addition to hunting with a bow, Werqueyah instructed Norman in the art of catching catfish with his hands. "When the creek (Cache Creek) was high we would wade in and Wild Boy showed me that catfish liked to burrow into openings in the muddy banks just below the surface of the water. We would then reach into those openings slowly with both hands, secure the fish and pull it out. Sometimes the catfish's head were eight or nine inches wide while their bodies were several feet long so needless to say this was an adventure."<sup>611</sup> Norman and his siblings often swam in the creek and Wild Boy would tell them not to worry about the water Moccasins because they wouldn't bite you in the water.<sup>612</sup> "I don't know if that it true or not, but they never bothered us in the water."<sup>613</sup> The family gathered pecans and wild berries to supplement their diet. Norman was

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<sup>610</sup> Ibid.

<sup>611</sup> Ibid.

<sup>612</sup> Ibid.

<sup>613</sup> Ibid.

often sent to hunt or gather food for the family, and on numerous occasions he was instructed to collect turtles so Wimmerchy could make turtle soup. "Once I caught the turtles I brought them back to grandmother who then proceeded to chop their heads off, clean the meat out of the shell and deposit it into the pot. I always looked forward to turtle stew."<sup>614</sup>

Wimmerchy had a special relationship with her grandchildren, which Norman remembers fondly. Everyone at the farm lived in the same two bedroom home. Norman's bed was outside on the back porch. Wimmerchy had her own bed in the corner of the living room. "She was a very small woman, not even five foot, she couldn't speak English, she only spoke Comanche. She kept everything she owned underneath her bed. She was very close with her grandchildren."<sup>615</sup> Wimmerchy walked with Norman and his brother Robert down near the creek carrying a gunny sack. There were many oak trees on the farm and Wimmerchy collected the leaves of these trees. She and her grandchildren would collect the leaves and put them in the gunny sack. Once they had returned home she would take them out and allow them to dry. "We would collect those oak leaves and put them in the gunny sack and then take them back to the house. Then she took the leaves out of the sack and cut them and then stack them and lay them out to dry. Then when she was ready for a smoke she put her tobacco in the dried leaves rolled the cigarettes and smoked them."<sup>616</sup>

Living on the farm was a communal effort. One of the members of the family community, Ella Wimmerchy, was blind but she moved about the property gathering food and

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<sup>614</sup> Ibid.

<sup>615</sup> Ibid.

<sup>616</sup> Ibid.

collecting water from the well as if she possessed sight. Ruth Wimmerchy, Ella's daughter, assisted her mother. The pair were so close, when Ella died in 1953, Ruth soon followed, dying in the same year at the age of sixteen of what can only be explained as a broken heart. Along with hunting and fishing and listening to Comanche stories, Norman learned to pick cotton. More importantly, these summer trips, as well as the war years when he lived on the farm year round, provided him with a connection to his Numunu roots and the instruction necessary to instill in him the Comanche ethos.

Norman remembers well living in Oklahoma City on April 12, 1945, the day that the radio delivered the news that Franklin Delano Roosevelt had passed away during his unprecedented fourth term in office. Further, on the same day he remembers that he and his family had to rush to the cellar because a tornado had struck the city. Three days after the tornado the Lawton Constitution reported the toll in an article directly below a photograph of an honor guard standing at attention beside the casket on the special train carrying the body of President Roosevelt from Warm Springs, Georgia to Washington, "Oklahoma Saturday night battled serious floods that already had cost seven lives-possibly 10- bringing to 114 the known death toll in three days of violent weather."<sup>617</sup> After the War ended Norman and his younger brother Robert, along with their mother and father, moved back to the farm where Norman attended school in nearby Cache, Oklahoma.

Norman caught the school bus, which came down the dirt road that bordered their farm, and rode in each day. During this time John Tippeconnic was working for the Comanche

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<sup>617</sup> United Press, "State Floods, Tornadoes Result In Death to 114," *Lawton Constitution*, April 15, 1945.

County extension agent. While he was living at the home place, Norman entered a contest that was advertised on a box of Wheaties cereal. Some time later Norman was caught unaware one day while attending an assembly at Cache during his sixth grade year. During the assembly Norman was called up and received the news that he had won the contest that he had recently entered. The prize was a new Columbia bicycle. "Boy, I was really proud, I never had a bicycle, and this was a brand new one. I was so happy that I did not ride the bus home that day, I rode my bicycle all the way to the home place. It was about six miles, and in those days the roads were not paved."<sup>618</sup> Following the end of the 1946 academic year, John and Juanita picked up their family and moved to Mexican Springs, New Mexico, (on the Big Navajo Reservation) where Norman attended the seventh and eighth grades. Here Norman found himself in another one room public school that served the first through the eighth grade. Norman and another pupil were the only students in the seventh and eighth grade. The eighth grade graduation ceremony was held in Gallup, where other small communities all combined their ceremonies with Mexican Springs.<sup>619</sup>

When Norman reached high school age, his father was teaching on the eastern Navajo Reservation in New Mexico. John wrote a letter to the Navajo Methodist Mission seeking to enroll his oldest son in the boarding school just outside Farmington.<sup>620</sup> On June 21, 1947, Willard P. Bass, the Superintendent at Navajo Methodist Mission School, replied, stating that, "We appreciate the confidence which you express in our school by wanting your son to enroll here next fall. We have written the references you gave and as soon as we hear from them will

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<sup>618</sup> Tippeconnic Sr. Interview with author. November 10, 2006.

<sup>619</sup> Ibid.

<sup>620</sup> Navajo Methodist Mission is now known as Navajo Preparatory School



let you know our decision.”<sup>621</sup> The references checked out and Norman began his high school career at Navajo Methodist Mission. Each of Norman’s siblings, Robert, Tom, David, Mary Jo, John, and Joanie followed him there. Although many Indigenous youth had traumatic experiences at boarding school, Norman, like his father, thoroughly enjoyed his boarding school experience. He participated in football, basketball and track. Navajo Methodist Mission differed from federal institutions in that it did not encourage Indian students to abandon their cultural connections. Nor were students organized in military style units and forced to drill and march in elaborate routines.<sup>622</sup> Norman entered boarding school after key policy changes had trickled down from Washington during the Indian New Deal. In addition, he enrolled in a mission boarding school as opposed to a federal institution, nevertheless, there still remained many similarities meant to assimilate Indigenous students within the day-to-day operations of boarding schools, regardless of who was administering them.

However, Navajo Methodist Mission aligned its moral code with the federal institutions in regards to “Indian promiscuity”, “Most Indian societies lacked the rigid moral code necessary to govern sexual conduct along ethical, that is to say Christian lives.”<sup>623</sup> As a result, sitting rooms or parlors where males visited females were strictly chaperoned.<sup>624</sup> “We were allowed to visit our girlfriends once a week on Sundays and only in the parlor of the girl’s dormitory for one hour. We had to sit next to a chaperone and I had to place both my hands on the table.”<sup>625</sup>

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<sup>621</sup> W.P. Bass to John W. Tippeconnic, 21 June 1947, Letter, Navajo Methodist Mission School, (in the author’s possession).

<sup>622</sup> Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928*, 117.

<sup>623</sup> *Ibid.*, 173.

<sup>624</sup> *Ibid.*, 177.

<sup>625</sup> Tippeconnic Sr. Interview with author. November 10, 2016.

The separation of genders included mealtime gatherings as well. Once students reached their junior year, they were required to serve as head of a table of younger children. To school officials at federal and Christian boarding schools, Indians possessed no inherent tendencies toward morality and chastity, and they believed that until the students were totally Victorianized, cognizant of proper western gender roles, male and female students should be separated as much as possible.<sup>626</sup>

Another similarity between these two types of schools was the rigid schedule students had to follow. Norman often was assigned the work detail of milking cows before the school breakfasts. "I had to milk the cows beginning at 4:30 AM then get ready for school, following room inspection I went to breakfast and then school included Bible study. Then after school we would go to practice and then work in the fields until dinner after which we had study hall. Then we went to bed and started all over again."<sup>627</sup> The school did not have any technology to assist with the milking process; it was all done by hand. This parallel is evident in the federal schools, "As part of their vocational training program, students at Flandreau, Haskell, and other government boarding schools produced garden vegetables, eggs, grains, and dairy products themselves."<sup>628</sup> Regardless of this strict regimen, Norman enjoyed his educational experience at the mission school and credits it with the organizational skills he would utilize throughout his professional career.

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<sup>626</sup> Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience*, 178.

<sup>627</sup> Tippeconnic Sr. Interview. November 10, 2016.

<sup>628</sup> Child, *Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families, 1900-1940*, 35.

During Norman Tippeconnic Sr.'s tenure at the school, he and his younger siblings were the only Comanches there. They attended the mission school almost half a century after it opened its doors. In 1891, Mary L. Eldridge and Mary Raymond arrived in the New Mexico territory charged by the Women's Home Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church to build a mission to administer to the spiritual and medical needs of the Navajo people.<sup>629</sup> These two women journeyed to Navajo country from Lawrence, Kansas, through Durango, Colorado via stagecoach and covered wagon. Interestingly enough, Mary L. Eldridge had turned down a position at the Carlisle Industrial Indian School and Mary Raymond had declined a post in a federal school in the Dakotas.<sup>630</sup>

Mary L. Eldridge was born Mary Louise Deming and originally hailed from South Williamsport, Massachusetts. Massachusetts and New York produced many reformers who became involved in contemporary causes, such as abolition, temperance efforts and Indian reform movements. Following the death of her husband, Eldridge entered the United States Indian Service and subsequently was appointed as matron and head nurse at the Haskell Institute in Kansas. Before joining Eldridge on the journey to Navajo country Miss Raymond, who was born in Iowa, worked for the Woman's Christian Temperance Union in Nebraska and eventually ended up as the principal teacher amongst the Oglala Lakota at Pine Ridge. It was at Pine Ridge that Mary Eldridge and Mary Raymond met.<sup>631</sup> Both of these women felt that they

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<sup>629</sup> Navajo United Methodist Mission Timeline: 1899-Present- 1978, C: /Wpfiles/exhibits/Numm.doc (This timeline is in the authors possession. The School is now called Navajo Preparatory School and when I visited the location in Farmington to obtain archival information I was told all archival data for Navajo Methodist Mission was in the possession of Betty Dailey. I went to her residence in Albuquerque, NM and procured numerous documents and archival information as well as the aforementioned timeline.)

<sup>630</sup> Pauline G. Malehorn, "The Tender Plant: The History of the Navajo Methodist Mission Farmington, New Mexico 1891-1948." 1948, MS, 1.

<sup>631</sup> Ibid., 3.

had received a divine call to join the Woman's Home Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church (North), which soon granted them their wish to serve.

When the two educators journeyed to the San Juan valley they reached a location roughly twenty miles west of Farmington in a spot called Jewett, but commonly referred to as Hogback.<sup>632</sup>

As a traveler of the early days followed the river westward from Farmington, he would come to a place where the road that descended on the east side of the Hogback. The road proved to be only an Indian trail over the ridge, however. at the foot of the trail, Henry Hull, a man who loved the lonely life of a pioneer, had built a trading post. As this seemed a likely place for a mission station, it was selected. Within and around the rectangular plot began the Navajo Mission financed by the women of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Here, too, began the first permanent Protestant mission work for the Navajos.<sup>633</sup>

Once they arrived, they were justifiably met with suspicion by some of the Navajo people. The reason for the wariness, the two missionaries believed, was due to the Navajo's prejudice against people associated with boarding schools. In recent years some of their children had been taken against their will to distant boarding schools. The fear that their children would be stolen was based in reality for the Navajo's southern neighbors, the Chiricahua Apache had also experienced this trauma. "Descendants of the original Chiricahua

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<sup>632</sup> Ibid.

<sup>633</sup> Ibid.

prisoners have pointed to the removal of the children as the bleakest period during the twenty-two years of the Chiricahua incarceration, especially because diseases such as tuberculosis frequently ravaged the Apache children sent to boarding schools.”<sup>634</sup> In *Me and Mine*, Helen Sekaquaptewa notes a similar occurrence among the Hopi, “A small boarding school for Hopis was built at Keams Canon in 1887. At first they took only boys and girls whose parents gave consent, but later the policy changed. When Emory was five years old he was sleeping with his little brothers on the second floor terrace of his home in Old Oraibi. One September morning, early, without his mother’s knowledge, the school police took little Emory, still asleep, wrapped in a brand new blanket that his grandfather had made for him. They took him and deposited him in the schoolhouse down at New Oraibi before he was fully awake. He was bewildered and didn’t know where he was until he looked out of the window and realized that he was at the schoolhouse.”<sup>635</sup>

At Jewett Navajo fears seemed warranted when some of them brought an interpreter to enquire as to the size of the building the missionaries wished to construct. The missionaries marked off a space of about sixteen feet by sixteen feet. This response seemed to allay Navajo suspicions because they did not feel this building would be large enough for a school.<sup>636</sup> When it proved to be too small, the end of the first year saw another structure in place. Very little school work was undertaken at Jewett from 1891-1894, because most efforts were directed toward creating a working farm and digging irrigation ditches. In addition, there appeared to be

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<sup>634</sup> Child, *Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families, 1900-1940*, 6.

<sup>635</sup> Sekaquaptewa, *Me and Mine: The Life Story of Helen Sekaquaptewa*, 31.

<sup>636</sup> Malehorn, “The Tender Plant: The History of the Navajo Methodist Mission Farmington, New Mexico 1891-1948.”, 4.

little interest on the part of the Navajo people in turning their children over to the newcomers for schooling. Because of this reality, the two teachers found it extremely difficult to secure an interpreter to assist with curriculum instruction. Just a decade prior to the efforts at Jewett, Comanche parents expressed the same reluctance about sending their children to western schools. "An exasperated Commissioner Price pointed out in 1884 that although it was true that the United States had provided school facilities to accommodate only about one-fourth of the children of the three tribes, half of these seats were not occupied."<sup>637</sup>The Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Hiram Price, threatened to withhold rations if attendance did not improve.<sup>638</sup>

In 1894, Mary Eldridge accepted an additional position as field matron and her assignment meant further help was needed to make the mission school a reality. Mary A. Tripp of Round Lake, New York soon filled this role. Mary Tripp's previous teaching experience was working with African Americans in South Carolina and, according to the author of *The Tender Plant*, each of the strengths of these two individuals enhanced their goals for the mission. "While Mrs. Eldridge desired primarily to meet the pressing physical needs of the Indians, Mrs. Tripp's chief interest was in their mental and spiritual development. The two women complemented each other and worked together closely like a hand in a glove."<sup>639</sup> While the two made a good team, Mrs. Eldridge had additional responsibilities away from Jewett. From late 1894 to 1896 prayer meetings were held in the community. Initially these prayer meetings

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<sup>637</sup> Hagan, *United States-Comanche Relations: The Reservation Years*, 162.

<sup>638</sup> Ibid.

<sup>639</sup> Malehorn, "The Tender Plant: The History of the Navajo Methodist Mission Farmington, New Mexico 1891-1948.", 10.

were open only for white settlers. After an interpreter was secured, similar meetings were held for the Navajos.

By the fall of 1896, Mary Tripp opened her cabin as a short-lived day school for Navajo children. However, efforts to persuade Navajos of the merits of a western education were initially laborious and challenging. This was similar to those first Protestant missionaries in Comanche country who had difficulties convincing Comanches like Tippeconnic to accept Christianity. For the Navajo students, lessons were presented orally from a blackboard, and special attention was given to Bible instruction. The pupils assisted with cleaning and other housework. This day school operated for only two years. Few Navajo children attended because their parents moved from one location to another attending their flocks. Therefore, attendance was very irregular. According to Mr. Damon, the interpreter, the one accomplishment by this early school was that Miss Tripp taught a little Bible and some English to five boys.<sup>640</sup> Educating Navajo youth proved to be more difficult than the ladies expected. If inroads were to be made by these reformers a new model had to be explored. "After the early day school was found to be unsatisfactory, plans were made to open a boarding school. Both the red and the white parents in the vicinity wanted such a place, where their children could be taught the English language and other subjects."<sup>641</sup> In 1895, and just prior to the decision to open a boarding school for Navajo students, Tippeconnic sent a child, Abbie Tippeconnic to the Fort Sill boarding school.<sup>642</sup> Surely the initial decision Tippeconnic had to make to send his offspring to Fort Sill

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<sup>640</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>641</sup> Ibid.

<sup>642</sup> Indian Archives Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society Research Division. *Quarterly School Report*, Fort Sill Boarding School, 31 March 1895. Kiowa, Comanche and Apache Agency, Box 672. Fort Sill Boarding School, 1894-1896, Doc. No. 5-251.

Boarding School would be as difficult as many Navajo parents would now encounter seven hundred miles to the west.

From the Protestant perspective the time was now ripe. "It was decided to open an institution which the Indian youths could live throughout the school year. For the latter this would solve the problem of irregular attendance."<sup>643</sup> No record demonstrates whether the school officials considered the pain of separation and the emotional reluctance facing Navajo families who would have to give up their children for prolonged periods of time, however actions of these educators make it clear that they were aligned ideologically with U.S. officials dealing with Comanches a decade earlier. In 1882, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs Hiram Price had argued that the U.S. government cared so much for Indian children it was deemed necessary to remove them from their ignorant parents who did not realize the value of education.<sup>644</sup> What is known is that in order to accomplish the educational goal of Tripp and Eldridge, an estimated one hundred and fifty dollars would be required to construct a dormitory. Furthermore, food and clothing for the Navajo boarding students would cost an additional fifty dollars per student.<sup>645</sup> One of the early interpreters who provided services for the missionaries and the fledgling mission was Frank Damon, who proved to be a cultural broker due to his mixed Navajo and Scots-Irish heritage. Margaret Connell-Szasz in *Between Indian and White Worlds: The Cultural Broker*, described the historian Benson Tong's characterization of cultural brokers who straddled the cultural divide and, while proud

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<sup>643</sup> Malehorn, "The Tender Plant: The History of the Navajo Methodist Mission Farmington, New Mexico 1891-1948.", 15.

<sup>644</sup> Hagan, *United States-Comanche Relations: The Reservation Years*, 162.

<sup>645</sup> Malehorn, "The Tender Plant: The History of the Navajo Methodist Mission Farmington, New Mexico 1891-1948.", 15.



defenders of their people, on occasion these individuals became unwitting agents for change amongst their own people.<sup>646</sup>

The need for cultural brokers was very real in the New Mexico territory. “During the five centuries of contact between native and non-native people of the Americas, thousands of these intermediaries have moved across the cultural frontiers of the continent. Some were interpreters, others mediated spiritual understanding. Many served as traders; others, as diplomats. Some bridged native worlds marked by separate and distinct identities. Others forged bonds between native and outside cultures. Even those who entered this pathway through circumstances beyond their control gained multi-cultural perspectives along the way.”<sup>647</sup> Roughly two decades after Damon served as an intermediary between the Navajo and Protestant world, John Tippeconnic would become the intermediary between western education and Comanche people. John Tippeconnic’s accomplishments in education and his professional career qualify him as an agent of change amongst his own people and as a result, according to the definition provided by Connell-Szasz, a cultural broker. Just as John became the first Comanche to bridge an educational gap between the Comanche and the post-secondary world of western education, Damon not only provided an invaluable service, he also became one of the first converts after the arrival of the missionaries. Moreover, when funds were lacking in order to construct the dormitory, Damon invested part of his own salary in the school. This is significant for more than monetary reasons, and while his financial contributions

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<sup>646</sup> Margaret Connell Szasz, *Between Indian and White Worlds: The Cultural Broker*, ed. Margaret Connell Szasz (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994), 10.

<sup>647</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

were most likely meager due to the limitations of his salary, it demonstrated assent from some of the Navajo.

In addition to Damon's contribution, Mary Tripp invested a significant portion of her own money in the venture; the interest on her investment was utilized to assist with the necessary construction. "The schoolhouse was erected the latter part of 1898. All its three rooms faced the road, or eastward. The south room was used for a boy's dormitory; the north one, for the girls; and the one between served as a schoolroom."<sup>648</sup> The schoolhouse was a one story adobe building with three chimneys, three windows and a single door. In the room designated as the schoolroom stood a wood stove; Frank Damon, the interpreter, sat near the stove and next to him was a long table with folding chairs for the Navajo pupils.<sup>649</sup> The first Navajo students to begin school here ranged in age from five to seven years old. The young Navajo boys wore overalls and their female counterparts were attired in long calico dresses.<sup>650</sup> While this mission school differed significantly from the federal boarding schools, in many aspects the school was similar. For example, the educators expected the pupils to cut their hair according to the western standards of the day. "Their hair is nicely cut and combed"<sup>651</sup> Once again, while the federal boarding schools were notorious for their attempts to destroy Indigenous cultures and the mission schools were a bit less severe, the general ideology intended to break down the "savage" tendencies of the children and teach them so-called civilized traits. David Wallace Adams explains that "For boys the stripping away process began

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<sup>648</sup> Malehorn, "The Tender Plant: The History of the Navajo Methodist Mission Farmington, New Mexico 1891-1948.", 15.

<sup>649</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>650</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>651</sup> *Ibid.*

when the school sheared off their long hair.”<sup>652</sup> Furthermore, the short-hair policy was rooted in two considerations. First, it made it easier to control the problem of head lice...But the reason for short haircuts went deeper than cleanliness. At the heart of the policy was the belief that the children’s long hair was symbolic of savagism; removing it was central to the new identification with civilization.”<sup>653</sup> The earliest photos of John Tippeconnic at Fort Sill Boarding school demonstrate a departure from the long braids worn by Tippeconnic. Moreover, Norman’s hair was cut and worn short his entire life. Long hair certainly was not permitted by the time the time the fledgling Protestant boarding school opened its doors in 1899.

The Methodist school officially opened in January of 1899, before the Tippeconnic siblings would enroll.<sup>654</sup> During its first year of existence about twenty white children attended the school as day students and thirteen Navajos enrolled as boarding pupils.<sup>655</sup> According to the book *Tender Plant*, the first Navajo student to arrive during the first year was a young woman known as Kisbah. On one occasion her father came to visit his daughter and apparently made quite an impression on the mission staff, “The man who has just come to visit, is her father, a typical Navajo bedecked with turquoise and silver. He wears white muslin pants, a calico shirt, knitted socks and moccasins-all his own making.”<sup>656</sup>

The primary goal during the first few years of the mission, in terms of instruction, was to teach the English language to the Navajo children. Since the Navajos boarded at the school,

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<sup>652</sup> Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience*, 101.

<sup>653</sup> Ibid.

<sup>654</sup> Navajo United Methodist Mission Timeline: 1899-Present- 1978, C: /Wpfiles/exhibits/Numm.doc, 1.

<sup>655</sup> Malehorn, “The Tender Plant: The History of the Navajo Methodist Mission Farmington, New Mexico 1891-1948.”, 15.

<sup>656</sup> Ibid., 16.

they had to conduct housework, such as sweeping, dusting and washing dishes, as well as making their beds and other daily tasks. By the time Norman entered the Navajo Methodist Mission School this practice was cemented as part of the daily regimen. Each student was required to complete these tasks twice a day, before and after school. Since the school was sponsored by the Methodist Episcopal Church, there was of course, significant focus on Methodist instruction. "The children learned to speak and write in English and progressed steadily in the use of language so that throughout the fifth year that Miss Rykert taught them she never once had to call on the interpreter in school. The girls liked cooking, sewing and other housework; while the boys enjoyed farming and the use of carpenter tools. The children learned to understand also the use of numbers and later studied some physiology, geography and history. Much stress was placed upon religious instruction. Accordingly, the first hour in the morning was spent in Bible study and prayer."<sup>657</sup> In addition to these daily Bible study sessions, on Sundays Navajo students participated in Sunday school as well as attending regular Sunday church services. On Sundays, family members sometimes came to the church services and the students were employed as the interpreters. "Sometimes the oldest girl would interpret. Early lessons were Bible stories with illustrations. Later, Miss Rykert used picture cards which the pupils were allowed to take home. Charts, the blackboard, colored crayon and memory work added interest. . . The children were taught to pray. Having learned how, they were interested in praying for their own folks and in teaching their parents to pray for themselves."<sup>658</sup> Once

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<sup>657</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>658</sup> Ibid.

again, while structurally the federal boarding schools and church-run mission boarding schools differed in certain ways, both institutions focused on achieving long term cultural change.

The policy of the Women's National Indian Association was to establish a mission in the field, develop it for five or more years and then turn it over to an evangelical mission board for permanent care. The Women's National Indian Association (WNIA), a reform group created in Philadelphia in 1879, established missions among Indians. After a mission had been in place for five years, the WNI transferred it to the guidance of a specific evangelical missionary body. When the Navajo Methodist Mission came under this directive, the WNIA transferred it to the Presbyterians, who took over the established enterprise in 1902<sup>659</sup> It was April 1, 1903, before all the paper work was finalized and the Woman's Board of Home Missions of the Presbyterian Church took possession, however the school remained under Methodist direction until July of that same year, when the summer break began.

During the interim the Methodists selected a new site for their mission school, which was on the eastern edge of the reservation and four miles from Farmington at a location the Navajos called, "Tota" or between waters.<sup>660</sup> This location had better water than the previous Jewett site and it also had an additional advantage: the town of Farmington was erecting electric light poles, which would give the mission school access to telephone and telegraph connections with the outside world. Between July and December of 1903 work commenced at the new site. "In July, 1903, the Methodist workers vacated the school at Hogback. For

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<sup>659</sup> "Nineteenth Century Women and Reform: The Women's National Indian Association" *American Indian Quarterly*, Vol.14 no. 1 p.1. Winter, 1990.

<sup>660</sup> Malehorn, "The Tender Plant: The History of the Navajo Methodist Mission Farmington, New Mexico 1891-1948.", 23.

vacations the children went home; and Miss Rykert, to Farmington. The river was high; the ferry, disabled and the new buildings, not yet ready to use. Accordingly, Miss Tripp secured two large tents in which she and the children camped for a time across the river from the school. They were able to get into the new buildings the first week in November, and school resumed the first of December, 1903.”<sup>661</sup>

The new structure, a two story adobe dwelling with brick veneer was larger than the school at the Hogback location. It had six rooms, which were divided into kitchens, a pantry, dining room, girls dormitory and living quarters for staff. When an additional building was constructed, it served a dual purpose as the boys dormitory as well as the schoolroom. According to the missionaries, the school had seen much change in the first years and, “During this period (1903-07) the children were making good progress in their studies as well as on the industrial work. They were speaking good English. Some who, a few years before had come to school not knowing a word of our language, were now young men and women well-advanced in the school subjects and were writing intelligible letters.”<sup>662</sup> The desire of the mission school to teach English to young Navajo students was progressing nicely, and between 1908 and 1911, the enrollment fluctuated between twenty three and thirty one students.<sup>663</sup> Unfortunately, this was only the calm before the storm.

Beginning in September of 1911, rain began to fall in nearby Southwestern Colorado marking the first signs of a vast storm that would alter the history of the Navajo Methodist

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<sup>661</sup> Ibid.

<sup>662</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>663</sup> Navajo United Methodist Mission Timeline: 1899-Present- 1978, C: /Wpfiles/exhibits/Numm.doc, 2.

Mission. On October 4<sup>th</sup>, 1911 the rain reached Farmington and over the span of fourteen hours two inches fell. Soon after this, both the Animas and San Juan River banks were overflowing. This meant that crossing a suspension bridge that spanned the San Juan near the mission became a perilous affair. "Great concern was felt for the Methodist Mission, as it was located so close to the west bank of the San Juan and between the points of confluence of both the Animas and the La Plata."<sup>664</sup> However, while flood warnings were issued for Farmington, the mission staff felt that they were out of harms way because the river waters had never reached any of the school buildings in the past. School officials felt sufficiently comfortable to put all the children to bed. They did not sleep long. It was necessary to arouse them from their slumber around midnight on October 5, 1911 after a telephone call informed them that water levels in Durango had reached three feet, or roughly up to the horses' sides. The twenty-three children at the mission were told to get dressed, then given a loaf of bread and a blanket and transported to higher ground via wagons.

As the hours passed into the morning the waters continued to rise and eventually they delivered the destruction of the mission school. The schoolhouse and the other buildings washed away and by six in the morning on October 6th, 1911 all the buildings were gone. Navajo parents soon arrived and collected their children and took them to safety. Unfortunately, one adult worker at the mission lost his life in the flood.

The flood was ½ mile wide below the junction of the San Juan and the Animas Rivers and the main channel was 40 feet deep. It devastated 150 miles of bottom

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<sup>664</sup> Malehorn, "The Tender Plant: The History of the Navajo Methodist Mission Farmington, New Mexico 1891-1948.", 34.

land. Twenty-five miles of railroad track was destroyed and fifty homes were washed away. The only bridge remaining was at Aztec. The total loss to the county was \$500,000.00 With no insurance, the loss to the Methodist Mission was total and amounted to over \$34,000.00 Supplies were brought over by boat from the people of Farmington. Yet just one month after the flood, Mr. and Mrs. Gus C. Bero (Beer O) of Farmington were hired to supervise the reconstruction of the Mission.<sup>665</sup>

In this brief time those involved in the mission proved their determination as over one hundred and eighty five thousand bricks were fired in a kiln on the school site. As a result the school reopened on January 26, 1913. By the time the school had once again opened its doors, John Tippeconnic had begun his second year at the Fort Sill Indian School.

When the school reopened, Navajo parents were required to sign documentation indicating that they intended to leave their children at the school until they turned eighteen. Apparently, school officials wanted to ensure the investors that there would be a consistent student body needing instruction and dormitories as well. Ideologically there was more to it than that. Requiring students to remain for such long periods of time remained common practice in the federal boarding school system prior to 1934. For example, shortly after Carlisle opened in Pennsylvania, "Pratt began by asking parents to surrender their children to him for three years, with no vacation trips home, and in 1882 the term was extended to five years."<sup>666</sup> At federal boarding schools, once the academic year ended in the summer it was normal for

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<sup>665</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>666</sup> Hagan, *United States-Comanche Relations: The Reservation Years*, 163.



Indian students to remain, where they would work at the school or participate in outing programs. The outing program had begun at the Hampton Institute and continued under Pratt and Carlisle Indian Industrial School.

Under the basic program, students were sent out for the summer months only.

Placed in middle-class farm households, Indian youth were given the opportunity to live, work, and worship alongside other family members on a day to day basis.

A second version placed students with the family for one or two years. The advantage of this was that it permitted a much broader experience including that of attending the local school. From Pratt's perspective, this second version was the ideal situation, but in fact, the number of year round placements always remained a fraction of the total. In 1903, the peak year of the outing program, 948 were placed out for the summer, while 305 remained for the entire year. A third version emerged in the 1890s, when Pratt began to place students in industrial and urban settings where they could learn skills other than farming.<sup>667</sup>

Although it was not universal, this practice also occurred at church run mission boarding schools. A common belief amongst reformers was that the longer Indian students stayed away from home the easier it became for them to shed their own cultures. "Even with the all too obvious shortcomings of many government boarding schools, officials continued to argue that students were receiving an 'education for civilization,' that tribal ties must be severed, and that Indian children were better off at boarding schools."<sup>668</sup> In other words, academic institutions,

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<sup>667</sup> Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience*, 157.

<sup>668</sup> Child, *Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families, 1900-1940*, 74.

federal or religious, preferred to have Indigenous children grow up and mature under their auspices. This general attitude amongst both federal employees involved at the policy levels as well as by school officials working with Indigenous populations on the ground, prevailed well into the third decade of the twentieth century. Fortunately, by the time Norman enrolled at the Navajo Methodist Mission, he journeyed to Oklahoma each summer. By the late 1920s, however change was in the offing. In 1926, the United States Secretary of the Interior Hubert Work commissioned the Brookings institution to conduct a study, led by Dr. Lewis Meriam, to examine the status of Indian economies, health, and education and the federal government's administration of Indian affairs.

The Meriam Report revealed numerous problems in Native America. Meriam and his committee published *The Problem of Indian Administration* commonly referred to as the Meriam Report.<sup>669</sup> "The study describes the conditions of Indian people as 'deplorable,' noting among the many health-related problems the presence of high infant mortality and deaths at all ages from tuberculosis, pneumonia, and measles...The report further details the educational failures and poor living conditions found at the boarding schools and recommends increased funding for Indian health and education."<sup>670</sup> The report found that Indigenous children in boarding schools survived on a diet that was substandard in both quality and quantity and was the equivalent of slow starvation. It also observed that medical care provided by boarding

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<sup>669</sup> "The Problem of Indian Administration" (1928), General Summary of Findings and Recommendations, Chapter 1. <http://narf.org/nill/resources/meriam.html>, accessed September 7, 2016.

<sup>670</sup> "The Problem of Indian Administration" (1928), General Summary of Findings and Recommendations, Chapter 8, Part 1-3. <http://narf.org/nill/resources/meriam.html>, accessed September 7, 2016. And Duane Champagne, *Chronology of Native North American History: From Pre-Columbian Times to the Present* ed. Duane Champagne (Detroit: Gale Research Inc., 1994), 286.

schools was deficient, students lived in overcrowded conditions, worked like laborers and often suffered from corporal punishment. Margaret Connell-Szasz notes that, The Meriam Report also noted that boarding school were supported in part by the labor of the students and that often students started their day at five or six in the morning and did not get to bed until eight in the evening.<sup>671</sup> “It was for the sake of these children that the reformers attacked the education system of the Bureau. As their criticism intensified during the 1920s, they began to identify the boarding school as the symbol of all the evils of the Bureau education system.<sup>672</sup> Over the next few years, as a result of Senate hearings and the hiring of a new commissioner of Indian Affairs, changes were implemented. In fact changes began before Collier’s selection and some federal schools were shut down as early as 1928. “From 1928 to 1933, the number of boarding schools decreased from seventy-seven to sixty-five. Some of these schools merely changed from boarding schools to day schools, but a total of twelve stopped caring for children away from home entirely.”<sup>673</sup>

John Collier was nominated Commissioner of Indian Affairs by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and officially began his tenure on April 21, 1933.<sup>674</sup> Shortly thereafter, Collier introduced his objectives to the Indian Bureau, which included economic, structural, educational and civil reforms for Indigenous Americans. The changes implemented by Collier and his staff were rooted in the Meriam Report findings. Collier advanced some of these

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<sup>671</sup> Connell Szasz, *Education and the American Indian: The Road to Self-Determination since 1928*, 18.

<sup>672</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>673</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>674</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

reforms in the Wheeler-Howard Bill introduced in February of 1934. However, proposed changes to education were not first on the list of priorities.<sup>675</sup>

Education was less directly affected by legislation, with the exception of the crucial appropriation bills. In the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA)-the amended version of the Wheeler-Howard bill that was finally passed-education was addressed only in section 11, which provided that \$250,000 annually be made available for Indian children who sought special vocational or trade-school education. The primary concern of the IRA was with improving the economic condition of the Indians and facilitating political effectiveness at the tribal level. Consequently, its most significant measures were prohibition of further allotment of Indian land, and other features to enlarge the depleted land base; establishment of a revolving credit fund; development of methods for conservation of Indian resources; waiving of restrictions for Indians who sought civil service jobs; and establishment of provisions for tribal organization and incorporation.<sup>676</sup>

The Indian New Deal brought a vastly different approach to the education of Indigenous children in the United States.

Instead of trying to completely eliminate tribal cultures through education, federal policy now shifted to a progressive cross-cultural approach. Prior to this cross-cultural approach, boarding schools utilized a uniform approach to their curriculum, assuming that

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<sup>675</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>676</sup> *Ibid.*

Indians would simply adopt white culture. Reformers who viewed this as one of the primary weaknesses of federal boarding schools, called for the introduction of course work that infused parts of Indigenous cultures into the curriculum. This approach, coupled with the utilization of day schools at the onset of Indigenous children's formal education might enable native youth to see the relevance in education and how it could be applied in their home environments.

Connell-Szasz notes, "If he remained in his community for the first and most impressionable years of his schooling, then he would be able to relate to his own environment if he chose to return there after high school."<sup>677</sup> Norman Tippeconnic Sr. attended the Navajo Methodist Mission as a freshman beginning in the 1947-1948 academic year.

Evidence that the cross cultural approach was practiced at the Navajo Methodist Mission is illustrated in the 1948 "Mission Magnet" yearbook as senior class member, Carl Todacheene relayed the story of a Navajo wedding.

In the part of the Navajo Reservation which lies within the borders of the "Land of-Enchantment" lived Hosteen Nez, his good wife and their two boys and four girls. Life in their hogan-home was pleasant. To them, their immediate locality was world. Day after day, the boys were busy with their useful chores such as keeping the water barrel close by the hogan filled with fresh water from the distant spring, cutting and hauling a sufficient supply of firewood and checking on the whereabouts of the grazing horses. The girls did their share of work by assisting with the cooking and the rug weaving and also by taking turns at herding the sheep. Theirs was a truly

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<sup>677</sup> Ibid., 34.

happy Navajo Family life. One day, just as Naswood, the older son, had turned eighteen, his parents had a long, serious talk. They discussed the matter of arranging a suitable marriage for their son, according to the age-old custom of the Navajos. First they would have to decide upon some girl who would be a fitting companion for their boy. She would have to be from a clan other than their own. Then they would have to decide upon the gift which they might be able to offer the parents of the girl. The usual maximum price was twelve horses, or gifts of equal value. Hosteen Yazzi, who lived fifteen miles across the desert from the Nez home, had three daughters. Having gained the consent of Naswood, his parents decided to ask for the sixteen year old daughter, Bilnibah. She was attractive and industrious, and would make a very good wife for their son. It was agreed twelve horses were not too high a price to offer for Bilnibah, but since they had only nine horses to spare, they would include in the gift, a string of fine turquoise beads and a silver belt. Soon the day arrived when Hosteen Nez would go to the home of Hosteen Yazzi to try and arrange the marriage. He started long before sunrise so that he might arrive before Hosteen Yazzi should leave his hogan for his day's work. With a free and easy gallop his young, fresh pony carried him swiftly across the fifteen miles of desert trail in cheerful mood. As he rode, he reviewed in his mind what he would say to the Yazzi's when he had arrived. As he approached the Yazzi hogan, he could tell by the smoke which rose from the stove-pipe through the roof that they were preparing breakfast. When he came a little closer to the hogan, his coming was announced by the loud barking of three dogs. Hosteen Yazzi

soon recognized him and Bilnibah dutifully placed a sheepskin on the floor beside that of her father. Without pausing to knock, Hosteen Nez entered the hogan, shook hands with the parents, and was invited to share the family breakfast of black coffee, fried Navajo bread, and mutton stew. While breakfast was being eaten, news of each locality was exchanged. Hosteen Nez was careful to test the mood of the Yazzi's before he should relate the purpose of his errand. When he was sure that the time was favorable he disclosed his reason for coming. The Yazzi's were not surprised, for they realized that it was about time for their daughter to set up a home of her own. They were somewhat pleased with the thought that Naswood Nez would make an acceptable son-in-law. Bilnibah's mother made known her preference that her daughter should marry a young man who would really love her rather than an older man who might offer more property but less devotion. The amount of the gift which Hosteen Nez offered was satisfactory too, so the marriage was arranged. There were four days in which to prepare for the wedding. Naswood bought a new "ten-gallon" hat AND A FINE NEW SADDLE for his pony. He even took time out of work to take a good sweat-bath in the old sweat hogan. He also helped to select nine horses which were to form a part of the gift for his bride. At Hosteen Yazzi's home, meanwhile, Bilnibah also was preparing for the new venture. She bought a beautiful new Pendleton shawl and some additional turquoise jewelry. Her father and her brothers were busy building a new hogan for her. The wedding would take place in the new hogan. Relatives

were invited to attend and to help prepare the food for the wedding feast. On the morning of the wedding day, large quantities of bread were baked. Several sheep were slaughtered and prepared for the mutton stew. Numerous other items of food were made ready to feed a large number of guests. For the parents of the bride were expected to entertain all who cared to attend. As evening approached, on the day of the wedding, many more of the Yazzi clan from distant places arrived. And at the Nez hogan the relatives of Naswood were assembling to make the fifteen mile trip to the wedding in a group. Naswood, as he placed the new saddle upon his pony, was a bit nervous, but he would not admit it. In the late afternoon the groom's party, consisting of eighteen members of the Nez clan, mounted on their finest horses, set forth on their journey, driving before them the nine horses which were to be a part of the gift to Hosteen Yazzi and his wife. Naswood's father also carried the string of turquoise beads and the silver belt in a small bag. When the grooms party arrived at the Yazzi hogan, just as the sun was setting, they found that Bilnibah had properly built a fire in her brand-new hogan and that she was inside the hogan awaiting the arrival of her husband-to-be. She had prepared the place a little to the south of the center of the hogan where she and Naswood would be seated on new sheep-skins for the ceremony, facing north. Her excitement, though well concealed, could easily be imagined. Only once, about a year before, at a neighboring trading post, had she seen the young man whom her parents had chosen



for her. As her father brought into the hogan Hosteen Nez and his wife and son, she dared not look up. At once, Naswood took his place on the sheep skin to Bilnibah's left. All the guests who could enter followed the groom into the hogan and were seated on the floor, the ladies on the side of the groom and the men on the side of the bride. Just as darkness was falling, the marriage ceremony began. Hosteen Yazzi brought into the hogan a saucer-shaped basket pointing directly eastward. An earthen jar of water was also brought in, and a gourd dipper was handed to the groom. With it, he dipped some water from the jar and poured it over the bride's extended hands as she washed them. Next the bride took the same dipper and poured water for the groom to wash his hands. Following this act of cleansing, Hosteen Yazzi removed from his pocket a pouch of precious corn pollen, and sprinkled a pinch of the pollen across the basket of corn meal, being careful that as he sprinkled it his hand moved in the direction away from the young couple, and from south to north. Then he turned the basket clockwise one-half turn. That done, the groom dipped his fingers into the water and then into the corn meal, and taking some of the meal, he placed it into his mouth. The bride followed this move of the groom, taking her corn meal from the exact spot in the basket from which the groom had taken his. This act was repeated until a pinch of the moistened meal was taken by both the bride and groom from the north, south,

east and west edges of the basket. Finally, the young couple began eating the meal from any part of the basket, but each time the bride dipped her meal only from the same spot as the groom. Meanwhile, the guests had been served the wedding feast in silence and when the young couple began to dip into any part of the basket for their corn meal, the feasting began. There was abundance of food and when each had eaten his fill, he was privileged to place some of the surplus into a small bag which he had brought with him for the purpose, to be taken home. Only one thing more remained to make the wedding complete. Each guest who cared to do so might advise the young husband and wife on their duties toward one another. This was the sanctioning of the marriage by the members of the Clans represented. Several hours were spent in giving of advice and in general socializing. Then the guests began to leave. But the close relatives of Bilnibah remained for the night. The next morning they were on hand to share in the distribution of the nine horses to the Yazzi clan. And before Hosteen Nez and his party left the scene of the wedding, he presented to Hosteen Yazzi the string of turquoise beads and the silver belt. Eventually all the guests were gone and Bilnibah and Naswood were alone in their comfortable new hogan to work out their problems together. They learned to love one another, and each proved to be a true companion to the

other.<sup>678</sup>

This story offers clear evidence that the school practiced its own version of a cross-cultural approach to education. While the Navajo wedding ceremony is still practiced today, there are elements in this version that connect the modern era with the nineteenth century and still further back in time. For example, the exchange of horses for the hand of a daughter, the motions to the four directions, the specific gender roles and the sanctioning of the marriage by the clans. In other documents, like the *Tender Plant*, the relationship between the missionaries and the Navajo students was certainly more paternalistic and showed little value for Indigenous culture. I am not suggesting that this version of cross-cultural education was a significant or even occasional part of the Navajo Methodist Mission curriculum. I am only relaying that this small step to recognize a very important part of the Indigenous culture that the mission primarily worked with was a positive departure from previous years in which absolutely nothing within this Indigenous culture was deemed sufficiently relevant to merit its recording.

In the two decades prior to Norman's arrival at the Mission, the Meriam Report appeared and the Indian New Deal introduced new approaches. Both effectively changed federal attitudes to the education of Indigenous populations. While attendance at a mission boarding school varied in many ways from federal institutions, there were still numerous similarities and while major changes were implemented in federal schools during the 1930s, the mission schools still employed practices that federal reformers viewed as exploitation, such as

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<sup>678</sup> Navajo Methodist Mission, Mission Magnet 1948 Yearbook, 33-35, in author's possession.

student labor; however, economic reality necessitated their continuation. During the Great Depression even federal schools continued the utilization of student labor. “In spite of these changes, most boarding schools in the 1930s continued to be supported in large part by student labor. The Depression made it necessary for them to become partially self-sufficient and imposed standards that later served as guidelines during the lean years of World War II. Grains, truck gardens, and orchards supplied much of the food, which was then canned or dried. Many schools also had their own milk cattle and sheep.”<sup>679</sup> In addition, students did the laundry, clothes mending, assisted in the kitchens and helped to maintain school grounds.<sup>680</sup>

In 1939, the first High School class graduated from the Navajo Methodist Mission. They were the first students to attend the mission school from the first grade through high school.<sup>681</sup> In 1940, the Navajo Methodist Mission still relied on the student body to plant, harvest and prepare their own food. By this time the mission relied on a land base of around one hundred acres. The campus covered ten acres, while eight acres were dedicated to orchards, another sixty acres for crops and twenty acres for pasture. An additional two acres were allotted for small gardens.<sup>682</sup> Enrollment at the school was one hundred and ten students. In 1940, just seven years prior to Norman’s arrival at the mission, twenty eight thousand pounds of potatoes, fifteen thousand pounds of flour, nearly seven thousand gallons of milk, another six thousand pounds of meat, four and a half thousand pounds of vegetables, three and half thousand pounds of butter and oleo, two thousand gallons of fruit and four hundred and fifty

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<sup>679</sup> Connell Szasz, *Education and the American Indian: The Road to Self-Determination since 1928*, 64.

<sup>680</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>681</sup> Navajo United Methodist Mission Timeline: 1899-Present- 1978, C: /Wpfiles/exhibits/Numm.doc, 6.

<sup>682</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

pounds of jellies were consumed at the mission.<sup>683</sup> “Some of the major crops raised in 1940 were: Alfalfa 50 to 60 tons for dry feed, Corn- 50 tons for ensilage, Tomatoes- 10-15 tons, Carrots- 3-4 tons, Beets- 3-4 tons, Cucumbers- 1 and ½ tons, Onions- ¼ ton, Cabbages- 1000 heads.”<sup>684</sup> Other vegetables produced in smaller quantities were Green beans, Asparagus, Cauliflower, Chard, Lettuce, Okra, and Peas.<sup>685</sup> In addition, “Eight cows produced over 30 gallons of milk daily. Chickens laid 80 dozen eggs per week.”<sup>686</sup> Students were responsible for much of the food production in all of its stages. Norman’s experience working with multiple crops during his time on the family farm in Oklahoma eased the transition to working at the school farm. Similarly, years later, Norman found some elements of basic training simple once he had joined the U.S. Navy. Again, his experience in boarding school had paved the way.

By the time Norman entered the mission for his freshman year in 1947-1948, enrollment had reached one hundred sixty eight, and it was officially the school’s fiftieth year of existence.<sup>687</sup> The Mission Magnet recorded Norman’s path to the school. “One thing which seems to distinguish the class of 1951 may be expressed in the term ‘distance.’ By that we mean, first, the distance of space from which the members of our class came to become associated as a group. And secondly, we mean the distance of time between the ninth and twelfth grades. As to the distance of space, one of our members, Norman Tippeconnic began his education climb at Valentine, Arizona and travelled all the way to Oklahoma and back to New Mexico before he found in Navajo Methodist Mission School the exact spot he was looking

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<sup>683</sup> Ibid.

<sup>684</sup> Ibid.

<sup>685</sup> Ibid.

<sup>686</sup> Ibid.

<sup>687</sup> Navajo Methodist Mission, Mission Magnet 1948 Yearbook, 6, in author’s possession.

for in which to complete his study through high school.”<sup>688</sup> The senior class had fifteen students. While the students still were required to spend a significant amount of time working in the orchards, pastures and fields, the mission noted that, “With modern machinery and conveniences, students are able to spend more time at their studies and less time working for their room and board. This decreases the number of years spent obtaining an education.”<sup>689</sup> Certainly living on a one hundred acre, self-sufficient farm had its benefits for more mischievous teens, Norman fondly remembers, “At night we would sneak out of the dorms and make our way into the watermelon patch to get some treats, we would cut out a section of the watermelon to see if it was ripe and if it was not we just replaced the plug. Sometimes we plugged twenty watermelons before we found one that was ripe.”<sup>690</sup> Norman also found activities that were not frowned upon, which made his time at Navajo Methodist Mission memorable.

Like his father, and in future years his own children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, Norman was heavily involved in athletics. Norman participated in football, basketball and track. When he was a freshman in 1947-1948 the basketball team reached the New Mexico state finals. During his junior year of 1949-1950, the basketball team once again made a mark in New Mexico high school athletics. During an era when classifications did not exist, the basketball team amassed an impressive record. During the regular season, which included the Farmington Invitational, the squad emerged victorious nineteen times against only

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<sup>688</sup> Navajo Methodist Mission, Mission Magnet 1951 Yearbook, 19, in author’s possession.

<sup>689</sup> Navajo United Methodist Mission Timeline: 1899-Present- 1978, C: /Wpfiles/exhibits/Numm.doc, p8.

<sup>690</sup> Tuppeconnic Sr. Interview with author. November 10, 2006.

three defeats.<sup>691</sup> Navajo Methodist Mission co-hosted the 1950 Farmington Invitational Tournament and placed third. This tournament featured teams from each state in the four corners region. "In the Four-State Invitational at Farmington, we joined the Scorpions as co-hosts. Our first game was with St. Mary's. They trounced us, 37-28, but we sprang right back to take the consolation after soundly drubbing Blanding and Wingate."<sup>692</sup> In the District 8 tournament the team defeated all comers to take the crown. "In the District Tournament at Aztec, we first turned back Kirtland and Aztec. That gave us our chance at the District Championship with the Scorpions pitted against us. We took their measure and the trophy."<sup>693</sup> The final score saw the Mission Eagles defeat Farmington by a count of forty to thirty-two.<sup>694</sup>

The basketball squad next played in the New Mexico State tournament in Tucumcari. Each year the Senior class took a trip prior to graduation.

This year it seemed the appropriate time for such a trip would be at the time of the state Basketball Tournament at Tucumcari. Three of the Senior boys were on the team which won the District Eight Championship and they were due to go to the State Meet with the team. Thus the seven girls and one of the remaining two boys piled into the station wagon of Miss Dunbar and into the carry-all of Miss Adams. With us we took quite a store of quilts, comforts and cots and also plenty of eats. We started at about 7:30 and arrived at Tucumcari at six that same evening.

We had previously arranged to make the basement of the Methodist Church our

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<sup>691</sup> Navajo Methodist Mission, Mission Magnet 1950 Yearbook, 19, in author's possession.

<sup>692</sup> Navajo Methodist Mission, Mission Magnet 1950 Yearbook, 18, in author's possession.

<sup>693</sup> Ibid.

<sup>694</sup> Ibid.

headquarters.<sup>695</sup>

On March 8, 1950, the boys got off to an impressive start by downing El Rito by three points. However, they fell just a bit short in their next game. “Against Eunice, our second opponent we played ‘the game of the tournament’, but we lost in the last few minutes 49-43.”<sup>696</sup> In addition to playing football and basketball, Norman also participated on the track team. Norman placed second in discus at the district meet in Gallup on April 29, 1950.<sup>697</sup>

Norman and his teammates played football under some challenging conditions. “Our football field was known as the rock bowl because we didn’t have grass or dirt, we had rocks. Before each game we had to all go out and collect the biggest rocks and throw them off of the field. No one wanted to play us at home because of the condition of our field. It was bad, people would get hurt and leave the field bleeding.”<sup>698</sup> “A few days after school began in September, 1949, about twenty-five crimson-clad gridiron prospects eagerly trotted onto our familiar maneuvering ground, the Rock Bowl. To this group of aspiring warriors was added a new pigskin mentor, Mr. Max Norman of Paris, Illinois. He had graduated from Wheaton College, where he had starred in athletics. Thus it was that the eager Eagles toiled and sweated to the tune of the booming bass voice of their new coach. For three weeks we were groomed in the fundamentals and in the mastery of intricate plays.”<sup>699</sup> Norman was one hundred forty two pounds dripping wet and played guard for the Eagles. The lightest member of the squad

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<sup>695</sup> Navajo Methodist Mission, Mission Magnet 1950 Yearbook, 26.

<sup>696</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>697</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>698</sup> Tippeconnic Sr. Interview with author. November 10, 2016.

<sup>699</sup> Navajo Methodist Mission, Mission Magnet 1950 Yearbook, 20.



weighed in at ninety-eight pounds.<sup>700</sup> The Mission team was small compared to most of the teams they faced but they had heart and, at least at home, the rock bowl advantage. Each time the team took the field at home, they emerged victorious or tied.<sup>701</sup>

Growing up in a Tippeconnic household, I did not ever feel pressure to play sports, it is just what everyone did. As previously discussed, Comanche children were involved in athletic endeavors prior to the reservation era. When John attended boarding school and college he thrived in athletics. I firmly believe that by doing so he was better able to cope in a western educational setting and thrive. Therefore, John set the standard for which each subsequent generation of the family would strive. When Norman began his senior campaign at Navajo Methodist Mission he was simply continuing the tradition.

Norman enrolled for his senior year at the school on September 5, 1950. Shortly thereafter football practice commenced on September 7.<sup>702</sup> "At the opening of the 1950 football season, twenty-seven enthusiastic boys appeared for their first drill. There were prospects for a pretty good team. Many of the 'greenies' of last year had put on a bit of height and some much-needed weight over the summer months, and there were several that came out for the first time to absorb their share of the punishment."<sup>703</sup> Norman and his teammates opened the season on September 23, 1950.<sup>704</sup> The team journeyed to Ganado and although their performance was a little rusty, they defeated the Panthers 26-0.<sup>705</sup> The next game

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<sup>700</sup> Farmington High School Football Program, Farmington Scorpions vs Mission Eagles, 13 October 1950 (in author's possession).

<sup>701</sup> Navajo Methodist Mission, Mission Magnet 1950 Yearbook, 19.

<sup>702</sup> Navajo Methodist Mission, Mission Magnet 1951 Yearbook, 74.

<sup>703</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>704</sup> Ibid.

<sup>705</sup> Ibid.

resulted in a victory for the Eagles as the Albuquerque Highland B squad seemed to be preoccupied with trying to maneuver around a field of rocks. Consequently, they would become victims of the rock bowl and the Indian boys that called it home.<sup>706</sup> Norman and the squad followed this up with a trip to Kirtland and defeated the Bronchos on a chilly night 19-12. October 13, 1950, marked the annual battle with Farmington High School. "An air of tightness hung over the field that crisp, cool night. Or maybe we were just jinxed by Friday the thirteenth. They scored soon after the first kick-off and from that time to the end of the fracas, it was their game. We did right well, but they just outplayed us that evening, 31-0."<sup>707</sup> Warren Ratliff refereed the blowout with a crew of five officials.<sup>708</sup> By their standards, the Eagles had beefed up for the 1950 campaign but they did not measure up to the heft of coach Louis Cullen's Scorpion squad, which included a two hundred and twenty pound Royce Elkins at tackle.<sup>709</sup> Perhaps limping a bit from this thrashing, the Eagles dropped the next two contests to Cortez and Fort Wingate. Prior to the homecoming game across the campus colorful banners and other decorations could be seen. Much scurrying of students and staff members from building to building seemed to indicate last minute preparations.<sup>710</sup> On November 4, 1950, these light but determined gridiron warriors, ". . . entertained the Aztec Tigers in our Rock Bowl...It was a tough battle all right and until the closing minutes it looked like a scoreless draw. Then one of our fleet backs ripped through the opponents line and hot-footed it for the goal. We took the

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<sup>706</sup> Ibid.

<sup>707</sup> Ibid.

<sup>708</sup> Farmington High School Football Program, Farmington Scorpions vs Mission Eagles, 13 October 1950 (in author's possession).

<sup>709</sup> Ibid.

<sup>710</sup> Navajo Methodist Mission, Mission Magnet 1951 Yearbook, 62.

game, 7 to 0.”<sup>711</sup> Following the game, at 5:30 in the evening the dining hall was the setting for the annual alumni banquet as the graduates, former students, staff members and seniors assembled to enjoy a feast. Tales of the good old days were abundant followed by an open-to-all volleyball game.<sup>712</sup>

During his senior year, Norman again suited up for the basketball team, wearing the same jersey number he donned during football season, seven. The team won fourteen games against nine losses during the campaign, however the highlight was winning the Farmington Invitational Tournament championship. “During the week-end of January 19 and 20, we entered the Farmington Invitational Tournament. We won against Fort Sumner quite easily, but then came up against a fighting Scorpion squad. After a real ‘nip and tuck’ game we finally edged them out and went into the finals. Where we met the Cortez Panthers for the highest honors, we were at our best and romped rough-shod over them to take the trophy with a margin of twenty-one points to spare.”<sup>713</sup> Conversely, if there was a low moment for Norman during the season, it was on February 9, 1951, when the mission hosted Kirtland. “I was so excited for the game and I quickly got dressed. As our team ran out onto the court for warm ups, I went up for my first layup and soon discovered that I had forgotten to put on my jock. I was so embarrassed, amidst the laughter coming from the crowd in our tiny gym that I immediately ran back into the locker room to fix the problem.”<sup>714</sup> Unfortunately Norman and the rest of the team fell just a strap short in losing the contest by two points, 45-47.

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<sup>711</sup> Ibid.

<sup>712</sup> Ibid.

<sup>713</sup> Navajo Methodist Mission, Mission Magnet 1951 Yearbook, 56.

<sup>714</sup> Tuppeconnic Sr. Interview with author. November 10, 2006.

The students participated in numerous extracurricular activities including tape recorded broadcasts in the Navajo language. "Our school has had the privilege, during the past year, of taking part in a weekly Navajo hour broadcasts of station KIUP of Durango. This is a religious service of that station to the Navajo people and the missionaries who minister to them. Gospel messages in sermon and song have been sent forth in the Navajo tongue and reports indicate that the Navajo folks who do not understand the English language listen earnestly to these messages."<sup>715</sup> KTNN in Window Rock, Arizona began broadcasts in the Navajo language on 660 AM in 1986. Data does not exist in terms of how many Navajos "earnestly" followed these early broadcasts from Durango, however it is safe to surmise that they were some of the first Navajo language broadcasts that reached this reservation.

Norman thoroughly enjoyed his four years at Navajo Methodist Mission where he certainly found a sense of belonging among Navajos. Anthropologist Sally McBeth suggests that the pervasive nature and number of symbols that express group identity reveals a perception of oneself as a member of a group which allows the group to continue to exist as a meaningful and distinctive entity. "The Indian boarding schools seemed to foster a sense of belonging and eventually became acceptable symbols of an Indian ethnic identity."<sup>716</sup> It can be argued that boarding school for both John and his son provided a type of pan-Indian ethnic identity. However, the actions of both of these men reveal two individuals firmly grounded in the Comanche Ethos.

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<sup>715</sup> Navajo Methodist Mission, Mission Magnet 1951 Yearbook, 64.

<sup>716</sup> McBeth, *Ethnic Identity and the Boarding School Experience of West-Central Oklahoma American Indians*, 114-115.

At the mission Norman listed as his immediate goal, “higher education.”<sup>717</sup> This demonstrates that Norman wanted to emulate his father and reinforces the assertion that John changed the vehicle traditionally used to achieve prestige in Comanche society, from the horse to education. Norman’s words expressed his sentiments towards Navajo Methodist Mission. “I shall never forget the friends I have made through my years in high school. They have been a real inspiration to me...the members of the staff contributed in a very definite way to my life...it’s going to be hard to bid the mission farewell, but the memories of my years here I shall always cherish wherever I may be.”<sup>718</sup>

The football field, basketball court and the track were significant aspects of the boarding school experience that provided Norman with confidence and self-esteem, which in turn, helped mold him as an adult. In addition, this confidence coupled with the Comanche Ethos provided Norman with the tools that he would take with him to College and into the Navy and would sustain him throughout his professional career in the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

The Comanche Ethos instilled in Norman by his father and relatives like Wild Boy helped him adjust effortlessly to the rigors and structure of the boarding school experience. The structure at Navajo Methodist Mission was certainly rigid and the discipline strict, however, there were moments when students found humor as well. Each meal was preceded by a prayer and a hymn. Norman recalled that on one occasion the head nurse stepped up to lead the hymn, “She said ok, now we will all sing ‘Jesus Savior, Climb a Tree’ and everyone started laughing and giggling, and we didn’t dare laugh too loud because we would get scolded. She

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<sup>717</sup> Navajo Methodist Mission, Mission Magnet 1951 Yearbook, 13.

<sup>718</sup> Ibid., 15.

realized her mistake and said, excuse me, I meant 'Jesus Savior, Pilot Me'"<sup>719</sup> During weekends, students were not required to work on the farm or in the orchard. In addition, they were allowed to go into town for a single hour. Once again, students were separated by gender during these ventures. First, the high school boys would go in and shop or buy a soda and when they returned the high school girls were allowed to go for the same period of time.<sup>720</sup> Norman and his classmates were quite resourceful during winter months. "The San Juan River runs through Farmington and it could get pretty cold during the winter. Sometimes the river would freeze up and we would go down and cut big blocks of ice and bring them back to school and make homemade ice cream."<sup>721</sup> Norman was well respected by his peers at school and he was described in his junior year book as follows, "A well-bred boy, of manners mild, and always full of cheer; Nor man, nor woman, nor yet child could miss his name so clear."<sup>722</sup> In a short student essay in 1951 Norman displayed his view of arrogant individuals.

A snob is a peculiar type of person. He is a person who admires and seeks association with persons of higher rank than himself. And he looks down upon persons whom he considers of lower rank. For instance, take the wealthy class of people who think it is a crime to mingle with the common people of limited means. They do their best to stay away from their affairs. They have their own social interests and wouldn't dare invite anyone of lower class. The snob likes to boss people around, but the moment someone tells him what to do he really gets angry. I wouldn't want to be a snob and

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<sup>719</sup> Tippeconnic Sr. Interview with author. November 10, 2016

<sup>720</sup> Ibid.

<sup>721</sup> Ibid.

<sup>722</sup> Navajo Methodist Mission, Mission Magnet 1950 Yearbook, 12.

lose my friends.<sup>723</sup>

Norman's characteristics were similar to those of his father and grandfather and this is evident in the manner in which his classmates remember him as well as in the subject he chose to write about in his short essay.

Norman's academic career at the mission did not get off to a roaring start. He received less than stellar grades in Bible class, Civil Government and English in the first semester of his freshman year. In addition, he ranked ninth out of nine students in his class. However, Norman eventually turned things around and by the final semester of his senior year he ranked first out of the eight students in his graduating class.<sup>724</sup> Norman grew up at Navajo Mission, he arrived as a young boy and emerged in 1951 as a young man. His parents, John and Juanita visited Norman about once a month during his first year at boarding school. They also made an effort to come up as often as they could to watch him participate in athletic contests.<sup>725</sup> Norman not only grew up at the mission, he was baptized there on March 20, 1949.<sup>726</sup> "Navajo Mission taught me about life, it taught me how to associate with others and it gave me a good beginning in my spiritual life."<sup>727</sup> For many Indigenous youth who experienced boarding school it was a time to forget. However, Norman only speaks positively about his time at the mission. Later in life he was an intricate part of the organizing committee as President of the alumni association that planned a reunion for all classes on July 9-11, 2010.<sup>728</sup> He graduated on May

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<sup>723</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>724</sup> Navajo United Methodist Mission High School Transcript, 16 May 1951, Oklahoma State University.

<sup>725</sup> Tippeconnic Sr. Interview with author. November 10, 2006.

<sup>726</sup> Ibid.

<sup>727</sup> Ibid.

<sup>728</sup> Navajo Methodist Mission School Reunion Program, 9, 10, & 11 July 2010, in possession of author.

16, 1951 along with classmates, President Phyllis Nahkai, Vice President Verne Curtis, Secretary Eleanor Henderson, John Dodge, Rita Kyselka, Kenneth McCabe, and Bessie Spencer.<sup>729</sup> Norman received recognition and congratulations in 1951 from United States Senator Clinton P. Anderson.<sup>730</sup>

Following graduation, Norman enrolled at Oklahoma A&M and during the summer breaks he worked either picking cotton or on the wheat harvest, utilizing skills taught to him by Wild Boy on the home farm. Norman never kept any of the money he earned from the summer jobs and instead sent it all home to his parents, who now needed money to pay for his siblings' college tuition. Following his studies at Oklahoma A&M, Norman joined the Navy. "When I signed up for the Navy I left on a train from Albuquerque to Los Angeles and then I transferred to another train to San Diego. The military police accompanied us on the last leg and when they showed up it felt like we were already in basic training."<sup>731</sup> In boot camp Norman was stationed for sixteen weeks at Camp Elliott, and like many Indigenous young people who had attended boarding school he had little problem with the discipline. He knew how to make his bed in military fashion, shine his shoes and keep general order.<sup>732</sup> Following boot camp, Norman was stationed in Pensacola, Florida for two years, where he was assigned to the special services and participated on naval baseball and basketball teams. "We played against all the different branches of the military and on one occasion we traveled to Baton Rouge, Louisiana and played basketball against LSU when Bob Petit, a 6' 9" power forward, was on their squad. Bob Petit

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<sup>729</sup> Navajo Methodist Mission High School Commencement Program, 16 May 1951, in possession of author.

<sup>730</sup> Clinton P. Anderson, United States Senator to Norman Tippeconnic, Letter, 1951, in possession of author.

<sup>731</sup> Tippeconnic Sr. Interview with author. November 10, 2006.

<sup>732</sup> Ibid.



went on to play in the NBA for eleven years. We must have lost by fifty or sixty points.”<sup>733</sup> In the South Norman experienced segregation first hand. He and another naval seaman, who happened to be African American, went into a restaurant and Norman’s friend was told that he had to move.<sup>734</sup> The entire time Norman was in the Navy he sent his pay home to his mother and father.

After two years in Pensacola, Norman was sent to Norfolk, Virginia where he became the storekeeper aboard the USS Healy.<sup>735</sup> As a storekeeper Norman took care of the ordering of a wide variety of items from ammunition to food. This experience would serve Norman well after he left the Navy and began working for the Bureau of Indian Affairs. On one occasion, when the U.S.S. Healy was docked in Copenhagen, Denmark, he and a shipmate were walking along the harbor on shore leave when he was run over by a young seventeen-year-old woman on a bicycle who was venturing home from work. He and this young woman struck up a conversation and met for the next few days. These encounters were followed up by daily letters exchanged over the next nine months. Norman was honorably discharged from the Navy in 1956, he then planned to journey to Denmark where he prepared to marry Kirsten Christensen.<sup>736</sup> Following his honorable discharge Norman would board a ship in New York departing for Copenhagen. After his departure, Kirsten sent him a telegram to make sure he was on the ship, “Please call me, minera 1986 between 2-5 AM, waiting anxious, Love, Kitty.”<sup>737</sup>

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<sup>733</sup> Ibid.

<sup>734</sup> Ibid.

<sup>735</sup> Ibid.

<sup>736</sup> B. E. Campbell, LTJG, USNR. to Norman Tippeconnic, Honorable Discharge Certificate from the United States Navy, June 17, 1957, in author’s possession.

<sup>737</sup> Norsk Marconikompani, Stavangerfjord København telegram nr. 10/17 to Passenger Norman Tippeconnic Stavangerfjord Bergen Radio, February, 4 1957.

Realizing that she made a mistake she quickly sent a follow up message, “PM of course, Love, Kitty.”<sup>738</sup> Norman Weeks Tippeconnic and Kirsten Christensen were married on Saturday February 14, 1957 in Vigerslev Church.<sup>739</sup>

In December of that year the couple welcomed their first child into the world and named her Linda. Linda and their second child, Norman (April 1959) were both born in Santa Fe at the Indian Health Service hospital. Norman was born on Kirsten’s birthday. In 1959 Norman was hired by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) as the Purchasing Agent in the Navajo Area Office. He remained in that position until 1965. Five years earlier Kirsten and Norman had their third child, Charles, while living in Gallup, New Mexico. On September 27, 1961 Norman took on, in addition to his position as Supervisory Purchasing Agent, additional responsibilities as Acting Assistant Procurement Officer.<sup>740</sup>

One of the assignments Norman worked on as the Supervising Purchasing Agent was a special project converting the old Fort Wingate laundry building into a dormitory to house one hundred boys. Julian R. Franklin, the sub agency Superintendent wrote, “We feel especially indebted to Norman Tippeconnic, Purchasing Agent, for the excellent assistance he provided us in developing specifications, securing quotations, and in writing purchase orders. This hard work has paid off in the timely delivery of materials which allowed the work to proceed

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<sup>738</sup> Norsk Marconikompani, Stavangerfjord København telegram nr. 13/20 to Passenger Norman Tippeconnic Stavangerfjord Bergen Radio, February, 4 1957.

<sup>739</sup> Vielsesattest, Student Norman Weeks Tippeconnic to Kontorist Kirsten Christensen, Vigerslev, København, 20, February 1957.

<sup>740</sup> United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs Gallup Area Office New Mexico, Eugene A. Leon to Norman W. Tippeconnic, letter, September 27, 1961.

uninterrupted. To him we offer a hearty 'thank you' for a difficult job well done, and commend his efforts to you as being worthy of special recognition."<sup>741</sup>

Norman was extremely comfortable living and working amongst Navajo people, however soon he would have a change of scenery. In 1965 he transferred to a position on the Mescalero Apache Reservation in New Mexico and served as the Administrative Officer at the Eight Canyon Job Corps Center.<sup>742</sup> In 1964 a committee composed of Mescalero Tribal officials as well as BIA officials notified the Superintendent of a site that was deemed desirable to build a job corps center. "This information was passed on to the Area Director, Gallup, New Mexico by the Superintendent, Mescalero Agency and so begun the initial steps in planning where now the Eight Canyon Job Corps Center is located...Mescalero Apache Tribe Resolution No. 65-16 approved lease of this acreage to Bureau of Indian Affairs for placement of job corps center was enacted under authority of article XII, Section 1 of the revised constitution on May 14, 1965."<sup>743</sup> Construction on the site commenced in May of 1965, 7,650 feet above sea level. Its location on the Mescalero Apache Reservation was eight miles from the agency headquarters. By March of 1966 the center had provided services for 300 corpsmen. The majority of corpsmen were inner city African American youth from New York, Baltimore and Washington D.C. These young men did not possess a high school education. Further, some lacked the ability to read. Therefore, the center was charged with their education and providing them with a GED, in addition to helping them with a trade that they could utilize to enter the work force once they returned home. By

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<sup>741</sup> United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs Crown Point Subagency New Mexico, Julian R. Franklin to Norman Tippeconnic, letter, September 19, 1961.

<sup>742</sup> Norman W. Tippeconnic, Personal Resume 1957-1991.

<sup>743</sup> United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs "Conservation Center History 1965-1966," Eight Canyon Job Corps Conservation Center, New Mexico, vol. 1, 4.

1966 the corpsmen had worked on multiple projects including the expansion of the Mescalero tribal ceremonial grounds and the expansion of the grandstand facilities and feast grounds. Furthermore, they constructed sanitary facilities at the ceremonial grounds and rebuilt rodeo corrals. They also built sidewalks, retaining walls, and worked on water projects.<sup>744</sup> While Norman worked at Eight Canyon as the Administrative Officer, he was second on the organizational chart and reported directly to the Center Director John J. Hawkins.<sup>745</sup> This was a promotion from the position he held in Gallup, and with new responsibilities, he had the opportunity to work with numerous influential leaders in Indian country.

Norman worked with many tribal chairmen during his thirty-year BIA career, but one of his favorite was President of the Mescalero Apache Tribe, Wendell Chino. He and Wendell became good friends and would remain close as their careers progressed. "I always had the utmost respect for Wendell, he did so much for his people. He knew the law and worked tirelessly for the Mescalero Tribe."<sup>746</sup> Norman's feelings for President Chino also reflected the way he felt about the Mescalero Apache people as well as his experiences at Eight Canyon save for two.

Early in 1965 Kirsten suffered a miscarriage. However, on August 18, 1966, Norman and Kirsten had their fourth child, Annette. While a young girl in Denmark, Kirsten spent a significant amount of time during each winter ice skating. When the lake froze over near the job corps center she retrieved her blades and took to the ice. She skated near the middle of the

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<sup>744</sup> Ibid., 10-11.

<sup>745</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>746</sup> Tippeconnic Sr., interview with author. November 10, 2006.

frozen lake when suddenly the ice broke and she fell through. Norman and some corpsmen hurried out onto the ice, however the sheet began to break. Norman ran back to one of the buildings and grabbed a fire hose which he and the corpsmen used to pull Kirsten to safety. Kirsten was in the water for nearly twenty minutes before they could pull her out.<sup>747</sup>

In 1969 Norman took a new position in Nome, Alaska as the Contract Officer for the Indian Affairs Data Center.<sup>748</sup> He soon discovered that a road system did not exist here and that he would need to fly to each of the twenty-four schools his office serviced. Most of these schools lay in remote villages. One of the schools happen to be located on an island in the middle of the Bering Sea called Little Diomede. This island was but a short, visible, distance from Big Diomede Island. To access the island, which did not have a landing strip, Norman had to travel in a single engine prop airplane and land on the Sea. "During the winter we had to fly in on a plane with skis and land on the ice. We had to be careful about staying out of Russian airspace."<sup>749</sup> This was in the midst of the Cold War and Big Diomede was in the possession of the Soviet Union. "It was very sad because families could not visit their relatives on the other island because of the political situation."<sup>750</sup>

The house where the family lived in Nome happened to be built upon skids. "Each spring when the permafrost melted the house ceased to be level and would tilt. So it had to literally be jacked up to make it level again."<sup>751</sup> Norman flew to the remote villages of Kotzebue where the bureau operated a boarding school as well as to the villages of Unalakleet, White Mountain

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<sup>747</sup> Ibid.

<sup>748</sup> Norman W. Tippeconnic, Personal Resume 1957-1991.

<sup>749</sup> Tippeconnic Sr. Interview with author. November 10, 2006.

<sup>750</sup> Ibid.

<sup>751</sup> Ibid.

and Savoonga.<sup>752</sup> Norman's work in Alaska was filled with many memorable experiences. One such project, which involved an attempt to domesticate the reindeer herds, included the BIA, the University of Alaska and several villages. The goal was to study the reindeer in order to find out how to best harvest their meat in order to generate revenue for the villages. The BIA employed Inuit personnel who followed the reindeer vast distances as herders. This economic development program was only in the developmental stage before Norman left Alaska.

Just prior to leaving Alaska, Norman and Kirsten welcomed a fifth child into the world. The tiny Maynard McDougal Memorial Hospital was the site of Kirsten's final delivery. The hospital staff included one doctor and one nurse. Kirsten had to rely on the nurse to deliver the baby after the doctor ventured home for lunch. After she successfully gave birth, the nurse left for lunch herself. At this point an Inuit woman in the next bed went into labor. With the hospital staff enjoying their mid-day repast, Kirsten stepped in and helped the woman deliver her first child.<sup>753</sup> Next, Norman took his expanding family for a brief two year stint working for the BIA in Albuquerque. During this period he was contacted by the Hoopa Valley Tribal Council, who asked him to apply for the Superintendent position at the Hoopa Agency in California.

Norman served as the Superintendent of the BIA at the Hoopa Agency from 1971-1977. On numerous occasions, following trips into town to procure groceries, he would arrive home to find a large salmon wrapped in newspaper deposited in his kitchen sink. His position was the modern-day version of the BIA Indian Agent, whose responsibility it was to disperse the federal funds, annuities, and rations to the Indian populations. During his tenure at Hoopa and

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<sup>752</sup> Ibid.

<sup>753</sup> Ibid.

elsewhere he empowered tribal communities by hiring their own people to fill positions following the Indian preference policy established by the Bureau of Indian Affairs in 1934.<sup>754</sup> On one occasion when he was visiting a small community along the Klamath River, he was asked if he would like to take some eels home. True to his native culture he did not dare refuse the offer for fear of offending the individual. "I followed him out back behind his house near the river where he pulled back a cover to reveal a small boat filled with water. Inside were hundreds of eels swimming around and the man said 'go ahead and take what you want'. Even though I hated to do so I reached in and grabbed the snake like eels. The man put them in a bag and I placed them under my seat and I just knew that during the drive home they were going to escape."<sup>755</sup> Norman's Superintendent position called for him to work with the tribes of the five northern counties of California, Shasta, Siskiyou, Del Norte, Humboldt and Trinity.<sup>756</sup> During this period he and his family lived on the Hoopa Valley Reservation.<sup>757</sup> At Hoopa Norman worked directly with the tribe on the 34,000 square foot Hoopa neighborhood facilities complex.<sup>758</sup> At the beginning of his tenure in Hoopa, the Karok people lacked federal tribal recognition. Norman worked with the Karok in order for them to secure just that. This project was one of the most rewarding experiences of his career; assisting the Karok with securing a land base to

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<sup>754</sup> Kevin N. Anderson, *Indian Employment Preference: Legal Foundations and Limitations*, 15 *Tulsa L. J.* 733 (1979). pg 734-735. (Officially, employment preference in hiring Indians for federal positions has existed since 1834 however, early statutes were unsuccessful because Indians were required to qualify under civil service standards and to compete with non-Indians. Because most Indians were denied access to education or possessed limited educational opportunities and were given no credit for their life knowledge and skills obtained outside the parameters of formal education. The Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) of 1934 abolished the disadvantages to Indians in these hiring practices. Section 12 of the IRA gave preference to Indian candidates in hiring for positions within the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) without regard to civil service laws.)

<sup>755</sup> Tippeconnic Sr., interview with author. November 10, 2016.

<sup>756</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>757</sup> Although only 16 square miles the Hoopa Valley Indian Reservation is the largest in California.

<sup>758</sup> Peter H. Masten, Jr., Chairman Hoopa Valley Business Council to Norman Tippeconnic, letter, September 28, 1976.

establish a reservation and federal recognition.<sup>759</sup> The Karok Tribe expressed their appreciation, “The Orleans Karok Council would like to sincerely thank you for all your help and support that you have given us at Hoopa. You have always been very cooperative and helpful to us with any projects we have undertaken. Our council is young and inexperienced in many ways, more than we could count. We will miss you very much and it is our sincere hope that you will be happy with your new assignment and that they will be as happy with you as we are.”<sup>760</sup>

Throughout his thirty years of service in the BIA, Norman, like his father, served as a cultural broker. In an era when the BIA was often depicted in a negative light, Norman was known for demanding Indian preference when involved with hiring contractors and procuring services regardless of his assignment. Hopi Tribal Chairman Ivan L. Sidney notes this, “This is to formalize our mutual understanding that the ‘Indian Preference Regulations of the Hopi Tribe,’ was included in the Hopi Jr./Sr. High School project #W56-127...Many long hours of hard work have been put into this project to finally arrive at this stage of bidding the Hopi High School project. Therefore, I am hereby extending to you our appreciation for the assistance you have given to us on this long sought dream of getting a high school on the Hopi Reservation. Sincerely, Ivan L. Sidney, Chairman, Chief Executive Officer.”<sup>761</sup>

Norman’s insistence for Indian preferential hiring met with the greatest resistance from non-Indian administrators within the BIA. However, this hard line was met with appreciation from Indigenous leaders. On June 9, 1986, he was asked to speak at a gathering of the National

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<sup>759</sup> Tippeconnic Sr. Interview with author. November 10, 2006.

<sup>760</sup> Kathleen M. McCovey, Liaison Manager Orleans Karok Council to Norman Tippeconnic, letter, September 19, 1977.

<sup>761</sup> Ivan L. Sidney, Chief Executive Officer The Hopi Tribe to Norman Tippeconnic, letter, May 18, 1984.



Congress of American Indians on this topic by the Kiowa Tribal Chairman. “I am requesting your participation as the speaker for the Indian Preference Committee of the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) during NCAI’s mid-year conference, June 18-20, 1986 at the Clarion Four Seasons Hotel in Albuquerque. The topic I would like for you to address is the relationship and understanding between the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Indian tribes in relation to Section 7(b) of the Indian Self-Determination and Education and Assistance Act.”<sup>762</sup>

While working for the BIA on the San Carlos Apache Reservation from 1977-1980, Norman worked closely with Chairman Buck Ketcheyan and his successor Ned Anderson. In July of 1979, Chairman Anderson recognized Norman’s contributions towards the San Carlos Apache Tribe’s economic development effort—the construction of a dam project in conjunction with the Drought Relief Program.<sup>763</sup>

Norman’s responsibilities during his career with the BIA ranged from large scale building projects, tribal economic development initiatives, education, federal law and even an occasional clean-up project.<sup>764</sup> Norman’s reputation as a fair and honest Indigenous federal employee was well known throughout Indian country and he was often courted by tribal leaders. “Dear Mr. Tippeconnie: The Comanche Business Committee recently moved to support you in filling the vacancy of the Superintendent of the Anadarko Agency. The Committee is

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<sup>762</sup> Robert E. French, Chairman, Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma to Norm Tippeconnie, letter, June 9, 1986.

<sup>763</sup> Ned Anderson, Chairman The San Carlos Apache Tribe to Norman Tippeconnic, letter, July 17, 1979.

<sup>764</sup> Peter H. Masten, Chairman Hoopa Valley Business Council to Norman Tippeconnic, letter, October 4, 1971.

impressed with your ability and feels you are qualified to hold the position. We hope you make the important decision to seek the post.”<sup>765</sup>

Norman’s thirty-year BIA career took him to Indigenous communities from the San Carlos Apache Reservation in Arizona to the Hoopa Valley Reservation in California, the Mescalero Apache Reservation in New Mexico, and to Nome, Alaska amongst Iñupiat peoples. Even though he did not specialize solely in education, he followed in his father’s footsteps by working for various Indigenous populations throughout the United States. It was the foundation in the Comanche Ethos Norman received in his early years as well as his educational training that allowed him to succeed professionally. Tippeconnic provided the Comanche Ethos for his son John, who passed it on to his own children, including Norman. John made a cultural shift: instead of utilizing the horse as a primary mode of education, he utilized western education as the tool that allowed him to affirm what it was to be Comanche. The lifestyle changes for the Comanche were involuntary, however, John consciously found a new tool to relay the Comanche Ethos. Norman benefited from this cultural shift, and it was the foundation that John discovered through education that allowed Norman to procure employment with the federal government. In just three generations, Tippeconnic, John Tippeconnic and Norman Tippeconnic, these Comanches experienced multiple, life altering realities. Tippeconnic lived his early years as a Comanche in the pre reservation era, then through the reservation years, and finally, during allotment. John was the first generation of the Tippeconnic family to receive a formal western education. Norman benefited immensely from the efforts of both of these men

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<sup>765</sup> Richard Asensap, Tribal Administrator Comanche Indian Tribe to Norman W. Tippeconnic, letter, February 16, 1977.

who had managed to remain Comanche amidst involuntary changes forced upon them as Comanche people.

Throughout his career Norman carried with him the Comanche values that connected him to Tippeconnic. Norman Tippeconnic's father did not teach him the Comanche language, probably due to the patriotic climate of the war years as well as a conscious decision that he needed to perfect his English to succeed in school. Regardless of this reality, Norman Tippeconnic's generosity and humble nature have ensured that he remains, like his father John and his grandfather Tippeconnic, a traditional Comanche man.

## CONCLUSION

The Comanche originated as Shoshones from the Rocky Mountain region of the present day United States. Scholar Stanley Noyes notes in *Los Comanches: The Horse People 1751-1845*, note, "The Comanches were Shoshones, who, on obtaining horses, split off from their parent tribe in the seventeenth century, riding from the mountains of present Wyoming southeast onto the great plains."<sup>766</sup> Adopting a different analysis, Gerald Betty argues that some Comanche were already living amongst their Ute relatives when they were introduced to New Mexican horse herds. Both statements are plausible: it is accurate to say that the Comanche split off from the Shoshones and it is likely that some married Utes and lived amongst them just north of the Spaniards. A position that enabled them to witness the advantages that the horse could provide. While the first documented appearance of the Comanche by Spaniards did not occur until 1706, it is certain that they had ventured to New Mexico prior to this date.

What is indisputable is the Comanche were drawn to the New Mexican horse herds, where they quickly capitalized on this new technology. Comanche raids into New Mexico increased in frequency in the early eighteenth century and efforts by Spaniards to prevent Comanche expansion were generally unsuccessful. After the Comanche acquired the horse (God Dog), they pushed south and east into the Great Plains, eventually driving the Apache from their homes. Their success as horse breeders enabled these Shoshonean people to expand their herds even further, and by the mid eighteenth century, they possessed more horses than all other peoples of North America, including the Spaniards. Ernest Wallace and E.

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<sup>766</sup> Noyes, *Los Comanches: The Horse People 1751-1845*, 12.

Adamson Hoebel called them the richest of all tribes.<sup>767</sup> For the Comanche the horse signified more than a means to facilitate their expansion; the horse also became a measurement of wealth and functioned as currency. Wallace and Hoebel note that the Comanche Post Oak Jim said, some Comanches loved their horses more than their wives.<sup>768</sup>

The horse also provided a way to educate young children and it became the tool that young men utilized to secure prestige and social standing amongst their people. The horse helped to facilitate the transformation of these Numunu into the most politically powerful and martially dominant group on the Southern Plains. However important the horse was to this ascension, it was not the sole factor. It was the Numunu ethos that enabled them to take full advantage of the horse. After all, the Comanche were not the only tribe to be cognizant of the Spaniards' herds. The Numunu/Comanche ethos provided the Comanche with the ambition to fully exploit this resource. This study has demonstrated that the horse has affected the expansion of Comanche domain, their hunting, warfare, procurement of captives, trade, and all other aspects of their society. Without the horse, the Comanche would not have influenced the region they made their own.

The Comanche ethos, which taught values from an early age, not only allowed them to become the dominant plains horse culture, it provided them with the ability to deal with the involuntary changes impressed upon them as their way of life on the plains ended when the reservation period began. The Comanche ethos was ingrained in most aspects of rearing children. This was accomplished through activities like storytelling, running races, swimming,

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<sup>767</sup> Wallace and Hoebel, *The Comanches: Lords of the South Plains*, 34.

<sup>768</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

role playing, hunting, weapon making, and riding horses. The horse was the conduit for knowledge transference, a skill that gave Comanche the ability to thrive and expand on the southern plains. Comancheria encompassed 240,000 square miles. The Comanche lost this expansive land base when they lost the Red River War and were forced to give up the lifestyle they loved and cherished and make their way onto a reservation. The reservation era delivered a severe cultural blow to the Comanche; it completely altered their lifestyle and severely depleted their land base. This forced young Comanche men to find new methods to achieve social recognition.

Like most people who have been subjugated by others, the Comanche resisted. Initially they opposed outside efforts to educate their children as well as those intended to them to Christianity. Following an extremely difficult transition, the Comanche ethos allowed the People to adapt, adopt and most importantly, survive. However, roughly twenty-five years into the reservation period yet another involuntary change was forced upon them. The Dawes Act dismantled the Comanche reservation into one hundred sixty acre allotments in an effort to facilitate assimilation and to break up their tribal community. However, the Comanche responded to these attempts; some began to worship with peyote, and still others joined mission churches. Regardless of which route the Comanche chose, they utilized the changes to advance their own interests. Members of Tippeconnic's family and many other Comanches used churches to form new communities.

Still some the Comanche, like Tippeconnic, continued to resist. Tippeconnic continued to wear his braids long, speak Comanche and practice his traditional medicine. However, even Tippeconnic knew that in order for his children to succeed in the twentieth century they would

need to learn the English language and procure a formal western education. John Tippeconnic was not the first member of his family to attend school however he would go the furthest. Tippeconnic provided his son with valuable lessons and a traditional Comanche education. By the time John ventured off to Fort Sill Indian Boarding School, he possessed this ethos. By the time he ventured to Bacone College, he not only had these values, he had experienced success in an educational setting that many of his peers hated.

The son of Tippeconnic and Wimmerchy, John Tippeconnic arrived in the month of August of 1901. He entered a world that had changed drastically for his people. This study demonstrates that while Tippeconnic adamantly opposed certain markers of Euro-American culture, he did realize that times were rapidly changing. It is difficult to imagine the life altering circumstances that Tippeconnic faced between 1876 and 1901. However it is not difficult to imagine the tools he utilized to help him cope with changes; primarily the Comanche ethos. As this study illustrates, during this difficult time the primary code to relay the Comanche ethos would no longer be the horse. John explored how education and the Comanche ethos could be transmitted from the horse to western education. John Tippeconnic set the standard and paved the educational road that many of his people would follow, including the author. Further, this study shows that John's accomplishments are as significant, in terms of influencing and guiding his people, as earlier achievements like Cuerno Verde, Ten Bears, and Quanah Parker. This study shows that while John did not consciously set out with the goal of shifting the primary method of conveying Comanche knowledge from the horse to education, this is exactly what he did.

John's story at Bacone is key to understanding the story of his life and the lives of those that followed however, in order to put John's story in the proper context, it is necessary to look back at the earliest efforts to provide indigenous people with a western based education. The earliest efforts to educate indigenous people took place before the United States formed, long before anyone imagined the nation. In seventeenth century Virginia English settlers crafted plans to teach Indigenous youth in English homes. By 1693, when the College of William and Mary was chartered, it was dedicated in part to the education of Native children. Additional efforts were underway in New England, where the education of Native youth and Christianity were even more closely linked. Chapter 3 has demonstrated that figures like John Eliot took upon themselves to procure funding for additional conversions and schools for Native youth. In the eighteenth century, the Mohegan Samson Occom, who became a Presbyterian preacher, was the most successful Algonquian convert in the colonial era. During the post -Civil-War years Richard Henry Pratt organized classes for southern plains Indigenous prisoners of war in St. Augustine, Florida. In the eyes of national officials Richard Henry Pratt's experiment was a success. In 1879, after a gentle nudge from the U.S. Government, Pratt opened the first off reservation boarding school for Indian students. For many Indigenous students their experiences at federal boarding schools were filled with pain, both figuratively and literally. Federal sponsored attempts to eradicate Indigenous culture in boarding schools focused on the children; for many of them and their descendents, the legacy continues.

This study proves that John Tippeconnic took the opportunity he found at Fort Sill Indian Boarding School to catapult himself toward a post-secondary education. While many of his classmates sought to forget the boarding school, John thrived there, as he would at Bacone.



Although the proximity of the school to his home was a positive feature, for John, the most important instruction that allowed him to complete his Fort Sill schooling was the Comanche ethos.

At Bacone these same values allowed John to persevere and graduate from high school. John utilized the lessons and values provided in his traditional Comanche education to survive and thrive in formal western educational settings. At Bacone, John grew from a boy into a man. This study proves that this man had a foot in two worlds, the Comanche and the Christian. It demonstrates that John was able to combine these two worlds because of their shared traits. Many basic moral concepts of Christianity directly translate to concepts of the Comanche ethos. When John made his transition into manhood at Bacone, part of that transition involved Christianity. This study has illustrated that at Bacone John reaffirmed what it was to be Comanche. Yet he was both Comanche and Baptist, and he combined these two worlds to help him go places no other Comanche had gone.

When John ventured to Ottawa University, he had no idea that its founders were involved in highly dubious land schemes. The Ottawa people, once at home in the Great Lakes Region were forced farther west on multiple occasions. In Kansas, these people lent their name to a University that espoused its dedication to educating their youth. The corrupt founders had been exposed but by the time John arrived in Ottawa there were little traces of the Ottawa tribe. John thrived at Ottawa and played football all four years. When John graduated from Ottawa University he accomplished something no other Comanche before him had achieved. He was a college graduate. Since John first went off to school with sweet potatoes in his pockets, he took with him traditional Comanche traditional knowledge. This Comanche ethos

provided the moral foundation for John's educational success. John was not done and upon his graduation from Arizona State Teachers College, he once again raised the bar. He became the first Comanche to receive a master's degree and the first Indigenous person in the state of Arizona to achieve a master's degree.

John did so much more than become the first Comanche to achieve both a bachelors and masters' degree he successfully found the new Comanche horse, education. His accomplishments were as significant as any Comanche leader that preceded him. In addition, John found a new conduit that could serve to transmit Comanche knowledge and values. By achieving an education, he now had a platform in which he could successfully transmit his ideas to more than just his immediate family.

John's first son Norman Tippeconnic, was born into a unique situation. He was the eldest son of a college graduate. This position would be impressive amongst the majority of Americans in 1933, however it is momentous because John's father was born before the reservation period. John's eldest son was the beneficiary of the cultural shift exemplified by his father. Norman attended a Christian boarding school just as his father. Just as his dad had found himself at Bacone and essentially become a man, the same can be held true for Norman and the Navajo Methodist Mission. Of course what helped Norman was that he was raised with the Comanche ethos and would utilize it to fashion a successful career as a cultural broker working for the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Throughout his thirty year career he demonstrated that the Comanche ethos that preceded the reservation period was alive. In the pre reservation period the horse was the conduit for a great deal of Comanche knowledge as well as a way to earn prestige. Through his success and perseverance in post-secondary institutions John

successfully changed the path that he and many other Comanche would follow toward prestige and social recognition. John accomplished this goal because of his Comanche values.

John Tippeconnic worked among numerous Indigenous nations across the country however he spent the majority of his professional career in the small Navajo community of Canoncito. Here John had the platform he needed to implement his personal educational ideas amongst a community of Indigenous people. John ventured out of the school and into the actual homes of family members and invited family to school to get involved. He utilized lessons that involved their culture and gave them knowledge they valued and appreciated. John's legacy lived on through his son Norman, Norman's career provides ample evidence that education would remain the Comanche horse well into the twenty first century. He traveled further and worked with more Indigenous people than his father. But every time Norman traveled he carried with him the Comanche core values that make him, like his dad, and his dad before him, a traditional Comanche.

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