

**Save the Date!**  
**Wednesday May 4, 2016 at 11:00 a.m.:**

**Quanah Parker Arrow  
to be  
Installed at the  
Historic Four Sixes Ranch  
in Guthrie, Texas**

**To Stand as a Symbol of the Friendship  
Between  
Samuel Burk Burnett and Quanah Parker**

**by Dr. Holle Humphries**

The Four Sixes Ranch of Guthrie, Texas has a powerful and significant link to Quanah Parker, signified by the close friendship that evolved between Captain Samuel Burk Burnett, founder of the Four Sixes "6666" Ranch, and Quanah Parker, Comanche chief, beginning in the 1880s and lasting until Quanah's death in 1911. This friendship had its beginnings in a pragmatic business deal brokered by Quanah with Burnett, one of the "Big Five" ranchers of West Texas, in the post-reservation period to bring badly needed income to his people to help them survive. It ended with each man acknowledging and valuing the other as a close friend.

### **Nomadic Life Ends, Reservation Life Begins for Quanah**

Reservation life for Quanah began in 1875. Up to May of that year, Quanah as war chief and Isatai as principal chief of a Kwahada Comanche band had managed to guide their warriors in successfully evading U.S. Army efforts to find and defeat them on the Texas plains. On May 1, 1875, emissary Dr. J. J. Sturm, led by three Comanche guides, arrived to their camp on Bull Creek near present day Gail, Texas. Sturm delivered to them Colonel Ranald S. Mackenzie's surrender orders. After deliberation, Quanah and Isatai accepted Mackenzie's terms to come into the reservation at Fort Sill voluntarily. Mackenzie promised that if they did so, their warriors would not be imprisoned and their families would be provided for. If they did not do so, Mackenzie made it clear that all would face elimination by the U.S. Army out on the Texas frontier. By making the decision to spare his people further privation and hardship, Quanah showed signs of a leader who would seek ways to ensure his people's survival, rather than fight to the death as a warrior in the name of valor. The arrival of his band of Kwahada Comanche to the Ft. Sill gate on June 2, 1875, helped bring to a close the titanic clash between two cultures collectively referred to as the Red River War of 1874-75.

### **Men of Two Different Cultures Find Common Ground**

The friendship that evolved between Samuel Burk Burnett and Quanah Parker over the next few years revealed that wise and insightful men of these two different cultures could in fact find

common ground. Both harbored a love for the land, one from the vantage point as a cattleman, the other as a former nomadic warrior. Each came to respect the other for mutual efforts made to serve as custodians of the land they loved and preserve a way of life derived from it that left it largely intact. This dream ended for Quanah when Comanche/Kiowa reservation lands were opened for white settlement after 1901 to be fenced off and put under the plow for family farms. This dream continues today for descendants of Samuel Burk Burnett on Four Sixes Ranch land where cowboys and horses can still roam.

### **Big Pasture**

Quanah and Burnett's friendship had its beginnings in a business deal. In 1878, Texas cattlemen were driving their cattle north, crossing Indian territory, to reach railheads. It was not lost on Quanah that cattle being driven north would continue to utilize the grass resources of Comanche and Kiowa lands with or without government sanction. He faced the challenge of trying to figure out a way his people could benefit from the cattle feeding on tribal land resources. By this time, drought conditions in the 1880s forced Texas ranchers to drive cattle to the waters of the Red River that divided Texas from Indian territory. In December of 1884, the Comanches, Kiowas and Apaches met in council and agreed to lease part of their reservation lands to the Texas cattlemen. In 1885, Quanah began lease negotiations with Burnett to permit the Big Five Texas cattlemen -- S. B. Burnett, D. W. Waggoner, E. C. Suggs, J. P. Addington and C. T. Herring -- to graze their cattle in the "Big Pasture" just north of the Red River in the Comanche/Kiowa reservation. Quanah continued to negotiate leases with the Big Five from 1885 to 1906. Although not all Indians were in favor of the arrangement, the lease monies benefitted the Comanche and Kiowa Indians with income derived from cattle ranging over their lands for a decade. This income preserved for them somewhat aspects of living a nomadic life without forcing them to wrest a living from the soil by becoming farmers, instead.

### **Star House**

Good businessmen never forget what side their bread is buttered on. In the 1880s, the federal government began building houses on reservation lands for Indians who cooperated with policy and for chiefs who served as intermediaries between their people and those charged with administering Indian affairs. After one decade on the reservation, Quanah was functioning in all respects as chief of the Comanches, chosen to serve in this capacity by reservation officials. By 1892, he felt he needed a dwelling that would reflect this status and aid him in delivering the hospitality he was by then expected to provide as a leader to a constant stream of out of town guests. Yet, the government refused to help finance and build Quanah a house owing to the fact that he had multiple wives and had rebuffed pleas and demands to abandon them all save one. Burnett stepped in to help him finance and build him a house in exchange for the efforts Quanah had made to procure leases for the Texas cattlemen. This house became known as "The Star House" owing to the upside-down stars Quanah had painted on its roof to mimic the symbols that he had learned only generals in the U.S. Army could wear.

## **Guest Appearances at the Fort Worth Fat Stock Show and Dallas State Fair**

The business relationship between Burnett and Quanah expanded to wider spheres of influence. Just as Quanah had acted as an intermediary to provide business access to Indian lands for Texas cattlemen, beginning in the mid 1900s, Burnett reciprocated by arranging for Quanah and his family and friends expanded social opportunities. This included invitations to hunt deer on Texas Ranches, attend the Fat Stock Show in Fort Worth, and then the Texas State Fair in Dallas. Quanah would bring his family and a contingent of Comanche people into town to make an appearance mounted on horseback and arrayed in their Indian regalia, sometimes with teepees erected on fair grounds.

The rancher also facilitated an opportunity for Quanah to hobnob with the President of the United States. Burnet organized a wolf hunt for April 8 to 13, 1905 hosted in Frederick, Oklahoma, by Jack Abernathy. He invited the newly inaugurated President of the United States, Theodore Roosevelt, and included Quanah on the guest list. Earlier that year, Quanah had been asked by the newly elected President to march in his inaugural parade in Washington, D.C.. The wolf hunt organized by Burnet, however, gave Quanah the opportunity to talk one-on-one with Roosevelt. Purportedly, in the conversation that ensued, Quanah asked the President to "bring the buffalo back" to the Wichita Mountains.<sup>1</sup> Two years later, Quanah's wish came true. In all ways such as this, Burnet contributed toward enhancing Quanah's stature as an icon and celebrity of the American West by opening doors of power and influence for him..

## **Shared Hospitality**

The two men became close friends and exchanged hospitality at one another's homes. Quanah entertained Burnet at the Star House. When Burnett reciprocated, inviting him to the big house at the Four Sixes Ranch in Guthrie, Texas, Quanah and his fellow Comanches gained the opportunity to revisit the lands that formerly had been theirs to roam at will when they had reigned as "Lords of the South Plains."

In a *Dallas Morning News* story of October 9, 1905, a reporter in Guthrie interviewed Quanah after he arrived with a party of ninety Comanche family members and friends to see Burnet and stay for nine days at the Four Sixes Ranch:

[Quanah Parker] said that thirty-five years ago while a boy...he remembers passing through this country, the old Indian trail that led by two mountain peaks one mile south of where Guthrie is now located on the south fork of the Big Wichita River.

These twin knobs -- not really mountains -- can still be seen today in the pasture lands of the Four Sixes Ranch when travelers pass by east/west on U.S. Highway 82/114, or north/south on U.S. Highway 83. The significance that Quanah and the Comanches attached to this area was highlighted further by the remarks of two elderly Comanche women who had accompanied Quanah:

[They] well remember the old Indian camp grounds near where Guthrie now stands, and point to them with pride of long ago: how the country abounded with buffalo, great herds of wild horses, antelope, deer, and other wild game in abundance.

The Comanche guests revealed that the lands where the Four Sixes Ranch and Guthrie now stand served as a gateway Indians used in their travels to "the east, south and southeast" after rendezvousing in Tule and Palo Duro Canyons.

Three days later, on October 12, 1902 a *Dallas Morning News* reporter in Fort Worth interviewed Burnett, after the rancher had returned there from Guthrie.

Mr. Burnett...left Fort Worth over two weeks ago to go to Guthrie and make preparations for the entertainment of chief Quanah Parker and his friends.

The reporter noted that prior to his departure to Guthrie, Burnett had remarked to friends,

"It may be the last time that I will have an opportunity to do so and I want to make the soul of that good old Indian happy once more if I never do another kindly act on earth."

### **Legacy of a Friendship**

While speaking to the *Dallas Morning News* reporter in Fort Worth, Burnett described the nature of the mutual give-and-take that he experienced in his business relationship with Quanah which gave rise to their sense of respect for one another and their friendship over the years:

"Quanah Parker has been my friend for twenty-five years; we've had a great many business transactions; he has aided me in many ways to prosper off the Indian lands for grazing purposes and I have reciprocated whenever the opportunity presented itself by helping his people."

This feeling of regard was reciprocated. Quanah gave as gifts to Burnett many of his prized possessions emblematic of his stature as a Comanche chief. These included traditional deer-brain tanned buckskin clothing, ceremonial headdresses, American Indian as well Western weaponry, and intricately feathered, beaded and fringed regalia representative of Southern Plains Indian tribal cultures. This collection of gifts given by Quanah to Burnett as a token of his regard for his good friend, in turn was given by the Burnett family to the National Ranching Heritage Center at Texas Tech University.

The Burnett family history recounted on the Four Sixes Ranch Web site notes that:

The cattle baron had a strong feeling for Indian rights, and his respect for these native peoples was genuine. Where other cattle kings fought Indians and the harsh land to build empires, Burnett learned Comanche ways, passing both the love of the land and his friendship with the Indians to his family. As a sign of their regard for Burnett, the Comanches gave him a name in their own language: "MAS-SA-SUTA," meaning "Big Boss."

And so it is that May 4, 2016 will herald the installation of a Quanah Parker Trail Arrow on the grounds of the historic Four Sixes Ranch founded by Samuel Burk Burnett, Texas rancher, on lands once upon a time roamed freely by his good friend Quanah Parker, Comanche Indian, to symbolize the enduring friendship between the two men in the Texas Plains Trail Region.

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#### Endnote

<sup>1</sup> Prior to the April 1905 wolf hunt, Quanah already may have known that a movement was afoot to bring bison back to the Wichita Mountains region. At the wolf hunt, if in fact he bent Roosevelt's ear to that effect, his intention may have been to add his voice to a conversation he already perceived was underway.

Early in 1905, the American Bison Society had been formed to save the bison from extinction. Founders Ernest Harold Baynes, with William T. Hornaday serving as president; and Theodore Roosevelt as honorary president, sent member Professor Morton J. Elrod of Missoula, Montana to scout for potential sites where a bison park could be created. By March of 1905, Professor Elrod had visited the Wichita Mountains Forest Reserve located on lands that had set aside from Comanche/Kiowa/Apache lands in 1901 by President McKinley, to see if it might offer a suitable habitat for the animals. So clearly wheels already were set in motion prior to the wolf hunt of April 1905, to bring bison to the area. Word of Elrod's visit to that effect already may have reached Quanah's ears.

Upon determining that the Wichita National Forest Preserve provided an ideal site, in March of 1905 the New York Zoological Society offered to donate fifteen animals to start a herd there, if Congress would allocate funds to provide for fencing and maintenance. Congress approved \$15,000 for that purpose. On June 2, 1905, President Roosevelt issued Proclamation 563 which re-designated the Wichita Mountain Forest Reserve as a Forest *and* Game Preserve. This set the stage for bringing the bison back to native habitat that once had been part of its southern range.

Two years later, on October 18, 1907, Quanah's wish came true. Fifteen bison from the New York Zoological Park representing divergent bloodlines -- to include those descended from the few saved by Charles and Molly Goodnight in Texas -- arrived by train to Cache, Oklahoma. A crowd of soldiers, cowboys, townsfolk, and an entire host of Native Americans arrayed in full regalia went down to station to greet the bison when they arrived. It is said that such was the reverence with which Quanah Parker and his fellow Comanches welcomed the great shaggy beasts back that tears glimmered in the eyes of bystanders. The roads were lined with people to watch as the bison were unloaded in their crates onto wagons for the last stage of their journey to the newly renamed Wichita National Forest and Game Preserve (renamed in 1936 as the Wichita Mountains National Wildlife Refuge). A little bit of the wild in the American West had been restored at last, literally in Quanah's backyard.

So although cherished stories infer cause-and-effect: that Quanah's request initiated Roosevelt's executive action to "return buffalo to the Wichita Mountains," in reality the wheels of motion to

do so were already underway by the time Quanah may have gained Roosevelt's listening ear at Jack Abernathy's Wolf Hunt in April 1905, thanks to arrangements made by Samuel Burk Burnett.

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