

Myth, Memory, and Massacre: The Pease River Capture of Cynthia Ann Parker

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The pages of history books are filled with unreliable information written by educated authors who specialize in disclosing our nation's past. And in no other period of North American history does tainting historical records take a greater toll than in the descriptions of violent US altercations with Native Americans during the 1800s.

Myth, Memory and Massacre is an outstanding revelation of one of those horrific events that will deflate even the most patriotic military spirit. The falsely glorified Battle of Pease River, its subject, may have, in fact, been a massacre implemented without mercy.

Abducted as a child, Cynthia Ann Parker was captured twenty-five years later in a raid on a Comanche hunting camp led by US Cavalry and the Texas Rangers. This Caucasian woman was separated from her Comanche husband and two of her children in the so-called rescue. During this official "battle," Indians died, apparently while fleeing, and this controversial military venture is now under scrutiny. The authors assert that racist and political views have skewed our present comprehension of the questionable tactics used.

This heavily documented book contains detailed notes, a bibliography, and a chronology of participant and eyewitness accounts. Broken down into sections exploring background, sources, reports, and reminiscences, authors Carlson and Crum examine evidence that has been ignored or misinterpreted. More broadly, they investigate the meaning of myth and folklore in historical analysis.

With several research and writing honors, along with six university teaching awards, Paul H. Carlson is the prolific author of numerous books and articles. He is professor emeritus at Texas Tech University, as well as a fellow of the Texas State and West Texas Historical Associations. Tom Crum is a former state district judge and a past president of the West Texas Historical Association, with several articles and book chapters to his credit. He serves on the board of directors for the East and West Texas Historical Associations. Carlson and Crum have exposed fabricated testimony, forged diaries, and a missing Ranger report in their claim that historians have used invention as the basis for 150 years of study on the Pease River episode. The "rescue" of Cynthia Ann Parker is now a tragic part of our heritage.

JULIA ANN CHARPENTIER (January 10, 2011)

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