

Comanche County

Welcome to Comanche County's Penatuhkah Comanche's Trails for historic Native American locations and natural landmarks. This is a work in progress and will be updated from time to time as new information becomes available to the team.

Numerous Indian tribes called this area home until the arrival of the Lipan Apaches several hundred years ago when they drove out and eliminated some of the early inhabitants who lived here. Next came the Penatuhkah Comanches (also known as the Western Honey Eaters) who were determined to drive out the Lipan Apaches about the time the Spanish were beginning to explore what is Northern Texas today.

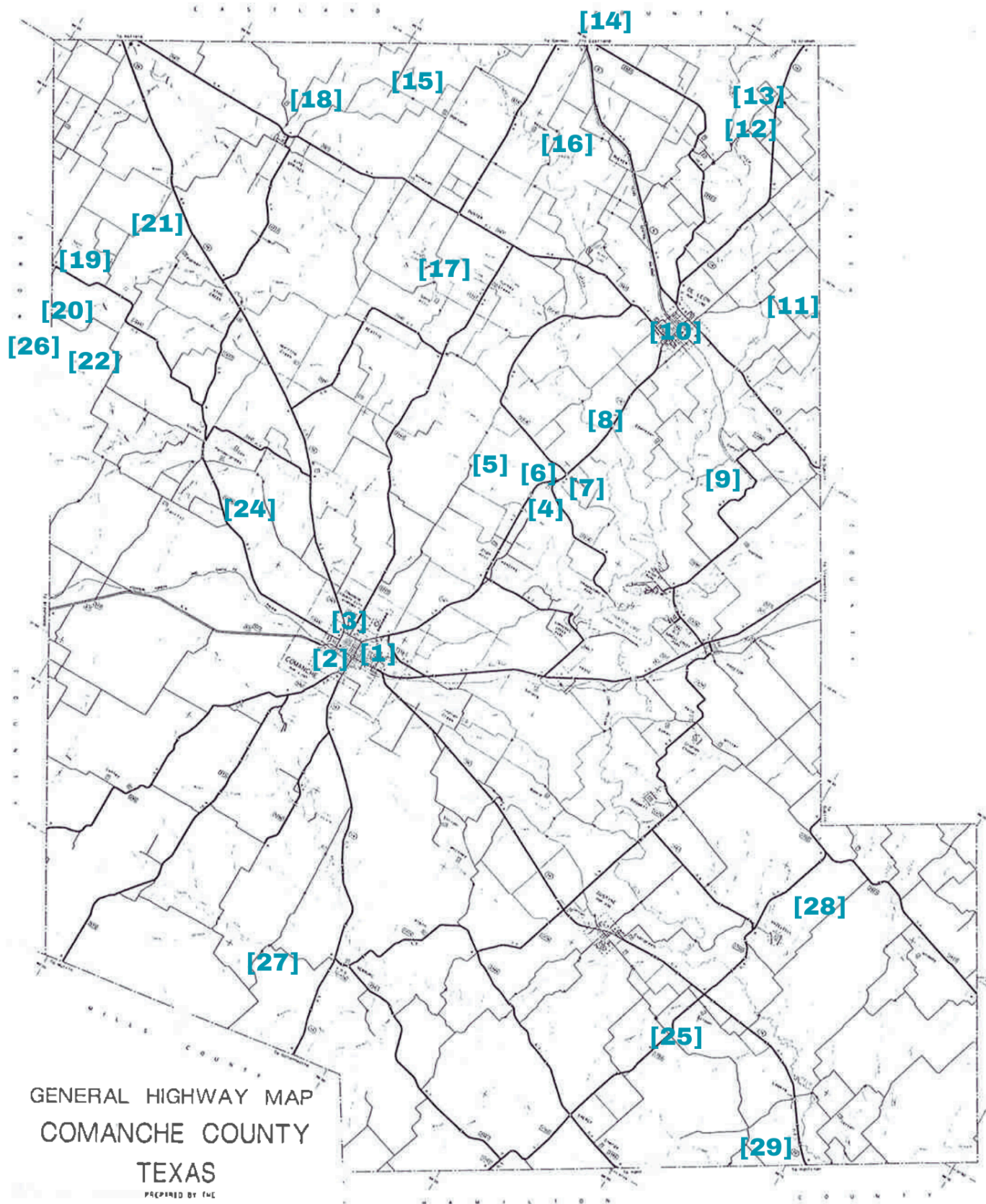
Present day Comanche County has numerous small hills with low passage areas between them. Each of these passages were sites of numerous battles and attacks. Comanche County was named after the Comanche Indians by action of the Texas Legislature. The state senator who introduced the resolution had traded with the Comanches and held them in high regard. The 6th Texas Legislature passed legislation and created sixteen new counties in what was then the frontier The Act which created Comanche County passed January 26, 1856 and was signed into law by Governor Elisha M pease.

The map of Comanche County historic sites and geographical locations is set up on the circular system. A visitor can choose areas of interest and can always return to the point of beginning.

Many of the sites are on private land and are not accessible to visitors. The best way to view some of the landmarks is by helicopter.

In 1936, the State of Texas placed a Highway Centennial Marker along Highway US 377 which reads as follows:

COMANCHE COUNTY CREATED JANUARY 25, 1856. ORGANIZED MAY 17, 1856.
NAMED FOR THE COMANCHE INDIANS OF THE PLAINS, SUCCESSFUL HUNTERS, SUPERB
HORSEMEN, AND COURAGEOUS WARRIORS, THE TERROR OF THE FRONTIER SETTLERS
WHO DISPOSSESSED THEM OF THEIR HUNTING GROUNDS.



GENERAL HIGHWAY MAP
 COMANCHE COUNTY
 TEXAS

PREPARED BY THE
 TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
 DIVISION OF TRANSPORTATION PLANNING
 IN COOPERATION WITH THE
 U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
 FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION

SITES

[1] Buffalo Hump's campground has been identified by a member of the Comanches tribe as being in the 1200 East Central block in Comanche, Texas. Originally a large area of flat land with a spring fed creek flowing from north to south toward Indian Creek further south is where Buffalo Hump chose as his camp site. Today, most of the campground is under commercial businesses in Comanche.

Buffalo Hump and his tribe often traveled from the hills of present day Palo Pinto County and Parker county located north of the Brazos River southward to present day Comanche County. Exiting southern Comanche County probably via Brushy Gap into Mills County to a site near the present Regency Bridge where Chief Sanaco maintained a camp site along the Colorado River. Chief Yellow Wolf of another Comanche tribe often visited the area.

- Per Fain McDaniel Comanche County Historical Museum and Curtis Montgomery

[2] Comanche County Historical Museum 402 Moorman Road, Comanche, TX. 325-356-5115. Open Wed - Saturday 10 AM to 4 PM. Secondary gate for tour buses is located along the access road of US 377-67

A large county historical museum with free admission featuring a wide ranging collection of Native American artifacts, a Native American village, and a vast arrowhead display on loan. The Museum features an oversized Comanche County Map showing Chief Buffalo Hump's trails, campsite, Old Owl's campsite originally located northeast of De Leon near the Leon River, known battle sites between the Comanches and settlers and/or the US Army's cavalry in the western and southwestern areas of Comanche County.



This specialized map was used as a reference in the preparation of this data sheet for Comanche County sites. It is highly recommended that visitors to Comanche County check out this specialized map at the museum before going out into the county on tours.

[3] Water Tower Hill located near the intersection of West Wright and TX Highway 36, Comanche, TX. The limestone hill was used for observation, recon and weather watching for centuries by the various Native American tribes in the area and early settlers. On a clear day, it is possible to see the city of Gorman north of Comanche County in Eastland County.



[4] The Robert Lesley killing on November 23, 1874 in the present day Van Dyke community between De Leon and Comanche north of FM 2861 on private property. Location 9.5 miles south of De Leon and 1 mile east of Hwy 16 on FM 2861 plus 60 to 70 yards north of FM 2861.

Robert Lesley was a veteran of the Mexican War and the US Civil War and while rounding up horses to sell in Comanche he was attacked and killed. Some believe it was the Comanches but the family stated they believed it was a group of outlaws who were active in the area at that time. If it was in fact the Comanche Nation, Robert would have been the last white man killed by Native Americans in the county.

Per Jerry Leonard, Director of Developing De Leon

[5] This is a possible Spanish mine located north of CR 413 and west of Hwy 16 and north of Rush Creek located on the Hendrix Property. Early settlers found pits which indicated earlier mining operations had occurred on a gravel hill. During the late 1960's, Mr. Hendrix sold gravel to the country for rural road improvements and all evidence of the earlier pits are gone. Today, native grasses and mesquite trees have reclaimed the terrain.

Stories claim that the Spanish had dug extensively underground shafts in the area. In the late 1990's, a site was selected along Hwy 16 for the new county hospital. The foundation constructor began to drill holes for the foundation and the drill bit pierced an underground ancient mine shaft. The shaft was then sealed off.

Per John Scott, Dulan Hendrix, and Fain McDaniel CCHC

[6] Epic battle site between the Spanish Army and the Comanches. Hwy 16 north of Rush Creek Bridge. Cerro de los Muertos Hill or the Hill of the Dead.

The Comanches destroyed the Mission San Saba near present day Menard in the year 1759. The Spanish Governor in San Antonio Bejar, Northern New Spain ordered Colonel Diego Parilla to take an army north and find the Comanches to punish them. After months of marching north, Colonel Parilla found the Comanches near the Red River in what is present day Montague County. The Comanches had allied with the French in a fort named Spanish Fort. The Spanish Army was defeated and Colonel Parilla ordered a retreat back to San Antonio.

The Comanches harassed the rag tag survivors as they struggled south. After crossing the Sabanna River in what is now Comanche County, they were approaching a hill overlooking Rush Creek. The Comanches were waiting as the soldiers climbed the small hill and ambushed them. The Spanish Army was virtually wiped out and there were so many dead soldiers. The hill was named Cerro de los Muertos or the Hill of the Dead. Spain was finished in Northern New Spain.

The Comanches knew they were now capable of defeating an European army and were now The Lords of the Plains.

In the early 1960's, the US Army Corps of Engineers built a dam across the Leon River and in turn created a new lake named Lake Proctor. It was necessary to relocate Highway 16 out of the proposed flood plain. The new route required the Texas Highway Department to level the Hill of the Dead for the new highway right away.

per Fain McDaniel CCHC and Alfred Evans. CCHC

[7] Downing Cemetery Hwy. 16 and FM 2318. Midway between De Leon and Comanche

Old timers for generations have claimed that there were Indians buried in the Downing Cemetery. The locations are not known but the Downing Cemetery is near the ancient battlefield of the 1760's where the Spanish Army of Colonel Diego Parilla was wiped out by the Comanches.

per Mrs. Arlie Queon via a telephone call with Alfred Evans November 2022.

[8] The John Hanson attack by Comanches 1864. One mile south of present day Sabanna River Bridge. [area about mid way between De Leon and Comanche]

Two men, John Hanson and a Mr. Lewis, were walking south of the Sabanna River toward Rush Creek community when a group of twelve to fifteen Indians attacked them. Hanson was hit in the eye by an arrow and Mr. Lewis was hit in the neck with an arrow. Mr. Lewis cried out "We are not trying to hurt you. go on and leave us alone." The Indians broke off the attack and went on their way.

per Jerry Leonard PCTC Partnership director

[9] The Leon River Low Water Crossing CR 446 & CR 434 in eastern Comanches County known as the Lower Emigrant Trail Crossing or Jones Crossing.

For centuries, this low water crossing on the Leon River has been used by animals, Indians, Spanish explorers, California gold seekers and settlers when the Leon River was not flooding. The discovery of gold in California led to the development of a route of travel across the southern US The trail became known as the Lower Emigrant Trail. The travelers crossed the Leon River at this particular crossing and continued westward. The Lower Emigrant Trail crossed the present day counties of Erath, Comanche, Brown, Coleman, Runnels and Tom Green. In Tom Green county, it combined with another westward road to continue on to El Paso.

In present day county of Tom Green were some springs which provided a fresh way to the tired travelers who had survived the numerous Comanches attacks. In 1936, the State of Texas Centennial Committee placed a granite Texas Centennial Marker at the base of the mountain.

The remains of the Lower Emigrant Trail is located on numerous private properties and is not currently open for hiking. The best way to retrace and view the Lower Emigrant Trail is by helicopter.

per Ms Ruth Cade by Alfred Evans about 2008-2010 interviews. Ruth spent some ten years researching and locating the 1936 Texas Centennial Markers. Her photographs and field notes are archived at the South West Collections at Texas Tech University Library.

[10] The De Leon Historical Area Museum located at 173 North Texas, De Leon, Texas.

Best described as a very impressive small town museum A must see museum when in the area. The museum features a display of Elvis Presley's visit to the De Leon on July 4, 1955 when he replaced Hank Williams on the program to sing. Elvis sang gospel music. Some state on this date was the only day Elvis gospel music exclusively.

per Alfred Evans CCHC and PCTC Partnership

[11] Old Owl's Camp located along Armstrong Creek about three miles east of De Leon in northeastern Comanche County near the Erath County boundary line.

R.I.P. Ford while in the area indicated Old Owl' camp was located on the headwaters of the Leon River which he identified as a creek. Old Owl and other tribes spent time in the hills and mountains further north in what is Palo Pinto County and Parker County. His camp site would have been about equal distance between the Brazos River and the Colorado River.

After seventeen decades of the passage of time and floods,the location of the camp along Armstrong Creek is indefinite.

per Jerry Leonard PCTC Partnership director and Fain McDaniel CCHC & PCTC Partnership

[12] Fort Shirley located one mile east of Texas 16 and CR 494 far northeastern Comanche County and south of the Flat Creek Bridge and north of De Leon.

Fort Shirley was built by the early settlers for the purpose of a defense against the Comanches. The early settlers did not realize their settlements was on the Comanches route from the Brazos River basin to the Colorado River basin. During the US Civil War, Fort Shirley was occupied by a company of Texas Rangers.

per Jerry Leonard PCTC Partnership director

[13] Fort Blair was located eleven miles north of De Leon on FM 8 and west of Hwy. 16.

Fort Blair was a settler fort established by C. C. Blair and his wife Meeky prior to the US Civil War for protection against Indian attacks. During the US Civil War period and the shortage of men for home defense, the Blairs abandoned their homestead and sought shelter in Stephenville. 16 in far northern Comanche County.

per Jerry Leonard PCTC Partnership director

[14] The Battle of Ellison Springs located some three miles west of Desdemona in Eastland County on Texas Highway 8..

The Comanches and a company of Confederate Rangers fought at this location assisted by a number of men from Comanche County on August 9, 1864. Two Texas Confederate Rangers named Lt. Singleton Gilbert and Leroy V. Keith lost their lives in this battle.

per Mrs. Francis Lockwood & Jerry Leonard PCTC Partnership director

[15] Indian Mountain: A large hill in north western Comanche County north of CR 195 located on private property.

Indian Mountain was a sacred site used by Native Americans for centuries for the purposes of ceremonial dances and religious ceremonies. Also due to its strategic location, both the Lipan Apaches and Comanches fought numerous battles for the control of the mountain. It is believed that a Native American cemetery is located on the north side of the mountain.

In 1854, a caravan of wagons and settlers were attacked by the Comanches in the vicinity of Indian Mountain.

Due to the poor county roads in the area, access is somewhat limited to 4 wheel drive vehicles until such time the county decides to upgrade the county roads.

per Mrs. Frances Lockwood and Fain McDaniel CCHC.& PCTC

[16] The Sabanna River Battle-northwestern Comanche County. West of De Leon and south west of Gorman. FM 676 area-probably near CR 180 or CR 401.

The battle was fought between the Comanches and the 2nd US Cavalry, US Army during 1860. Due to decades of floods and sand erosion, the location is indefinite and would be on private property. per Colonel Harold B. Simpson, historian Hill College.

[17] The Narrows; A large geographical region along Copperas Creek. West of FM 2247 and north of CR 456.

The Narrows is a seven mile geographical region along the Copperas Creek in northern Comanche County. It consists of canyons, caves, and overhangs where Native Americans sought shelter from the elements over the centuries. The area is on private land and is overpopulated with numerous poisonous snakes.

Per Alfred Evans CCHC and PCTC Partnership member.

[18] Marker Tree: Northwestern Comanche County near CR 192 in the Sipe Springs community
The Native Americans often bent a tree sapling over and placed a rock to hold it in place until it had assumed the desired position. Marker trees were used to mark trails and provide directions.

per Tommy Alford CCHC & PCTC member

[19] Battle between the US 2nd Cavalry and the Comanches during 1853 in the area along today's FM 1689.

During the year 1853, the US 2nd Cavalry and the Comanches clashed in the hilly area of western Comanche County or the Gap community. This battle was one of the many battles fought in western Comanche County and eastern Brown County during this period of time.

[20] The Battle of Little Hog Creek North of FM 1689. Far western Comanche County and southwest of the present town of May in Brown County.

The Battle of Little Hog Creek was fought by the Comanches and the 2nd US Cavalry during the year 1872. The creek is now known as Ford's Creek.

per

Fain McDaniel CCHC & PCTC Partnership.

[21] The Fort Phantom Hill Road encounter along South Copperas Creek located in western Comanche County. North of FM 1689 near CR 183 or CR 179.

During the year 1853, a company of US Cavalry soldiers were surprised and surrounded by a group of one hundred Indians who demanded their horses and wagons or face extermination. The soldiers agreed to meet the demands of the Indians. The soldiers had to walk back to Fort Cogburn near present day Burnet. The march took nearly a month.

per E. L. Denton Indian Fight On The Texas Frontier. CCHM Collection

[22] The Battle of Brushy Peak Far western Comanche County along the Fort Phantom Hill Road between Comanches and former California gold prospectors.

Three men were returning home from the California gold fields during the year 1852 when they were attacked by Comanches in the area of Brushy Peak. They hid their gold but two were killed during the battle. One escaped and he returned many years later to claim the gold. He was unsuccessful in finding the hidden gold.

per Fain McDaniel CCHC & PCTC Partnership

[23] US 2nd Cavalry battle with the Comanches: North of present day Sidney and FM 589 area.

The 2nd Cavalry clashed with the Comanches who were apparently intent on stealing horses in the area again during 1862. One of the US army soldiers named Ainsworth was impressed with the area. After he was released from active duty, he returned to the Sidney area and purchased some land. Next, he returned to England where he married his sweetheart and both emigrated to Texas. He established a mule farm and sold mules to the area farmers and ranchers for decades.

per Fain McDaniel CCHC & PCTC Partnership

[24] Round Mountain and Long Mountain Two mountain peaks in western Comanche County with FM 1689 built between them. Used by Native American tribes for centuries for recon purposes, observations and religious ceremonies. On the south side of Round Mountain, there is a massive cache of rattlesnakes. Both mountains are on private property. One of the owners of Round Mountain refuses any and all requests to climb Round Mountain. Beware!

Richard Pinkard and Alfred Evans CCHC & PCTC Partnership

[25] Mustang Water hole [Mountain Creek] Southern Comanche County west of present day Highway 16 bridge.

The town of Comanche in 1870 did not have a grist mill so a group of teamsters loaded their wagon with grain and left Comanche traveling along the Old San Saba Road. The teamsters were Frank Brown, George Wallace and a Mr. B. Grissom. They stopped at the Mustang Water Hole located on Mountain Creek to water their mules. While waiting, Captain John Roch rode and began talking.

Suddenly arrows began falling on them and they returned fire. The men unhitched their mules and escaped. Captain Roch was hit by an arrow while escaping the barrage. He managed to reach the nearby David Cunningham farm to get medical help and alert the David Cunningham family.

[26] The Battle of Hog Creek western Brown County which was fought between men from Comanche County and the Penatuhkah Comanches 1870. South of FM 1889.

After Captain Roach reached the David Cunningham farm, David left the next morning to activate a civilian militia army to track and try to eliminate the Penatuhkah Comanches which had attacked the teamsters the day before at the Mustang Water Hole. The Comanche militiamen were divided into two groups. Captain David Cunningham took a team south to the battle site and began tracking the Indians westward into Brown County. The second Comanche Militia was commanded by Captain M. R. Green left Comanche and headed west to the area where the present day town of May is located.

The two teams met in Brown County and combined forces. Tracking dogs were released and soon the lead dog was struck by an arrow from a ravine created by Hog Creek. The battle began between the whites and the Indians. Asher D. Clark was killed during the battle. After a few hours, the Indians broke off the battle and abandoned the battlefield on foot into the brush of northern Brown County.

per Fain McDaniel CCHC & PCTC Partnership

[27] Buffalo Hump's War Trails Extreme southwestern Comanche County basically between FM 2561 and US 377/67.

This region is basically small mountains, hills, and gaps used by the various Indians tribes for ambushes, control, and attacks. Cox Gap and Brushy Gap were the widest gaps while Cedar Gap, Mercers Gap, and Logan Gap were to be avoided at all cost due being so narrow. For more complete explanations, see the oversized map of Comanche County on display in the Comanche County Historical Museum, Comanche, Texas. Buffalo Hump usually traveled on the eastern side of Comanche County and would transit via Brushy Gap going to and from the Colorado River.

per Fain McDaniel & Alfred Evans: CCHC members and PCTC

[28] Big Foot Wallace: Captive Lower Leon River bottom lands probably between the present day communities of Gustine and Lamkin.

Big Foot Wallace was exploring Central Texas when he was captured by a tribe living in the Lower Leon River bottom lands. He was held captive for a long time by the tribe until he escaped back to civilization.

[29] Potato Hill is located in the southern Comanche County and Mills County line or south of CR 213.

Potato Hill is a large hill on private property which was used by Native Americans for observations and recon. Site of numerous battles between the Lipan Apaches and the Comanches.

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The Comanche County Map of the Penatuhkah Comanches sites was prepared by the following volunteers: Mr. Virginia Fleming, Comanche Chamber of Commerce - and PCTC director; Mr. Jerry Leonard PCTC Partnership director, Alfred Evans Comanche County Historical Commission and PCTC Partnership, Mrs. Becca Jackson, Comanche Chamber of Commerce, PCTC Partnership and web master, and Fain McDaniel Comanche County Historical Commission chair and PCTC Partnership.