

It was a beautiful spring day in Texas. Cynthia Ann Parker and her brother John had slipped outside the stockade to pick wild flowers. On and on they wandered, unaware of the danger that lay ahead.

Suddenly the bushes stirred and a painted Comanche warrior gave a war cry. Instantly a band of Indians rose from the bushes all around.

Cynthia Ann, with her long golden hair swirling in the breeze, was swooped up by a painted arm. Then, as quickly as they had dashed in, the Indians were gone.

For several days they rode west, as fast as their horses could go. Finally Cynthia Ann arrived in her new home—a Comanche camp.

At first, life with the Comanches seemed strange and frightening. But the Indians fed her well and treated her kindly. The girls brought her dolls that the squaws had made. And the chief's son, Peta Nocona, brought her gifts of fruit, beads, and bracelets. One day he even brought her a baby antelope for a pet. And so Cynthia Ann did not stay unhappy for long.

Gradually she learned to speak the Comanche language. And as she listened to the people talking, she began to understand more about them. She learned that they did not think the white men had treated them fairly. And she began to see that this was true. The white men had taken the best of their land and driven them from their homes. The Indians lived in fear that the white men would someday come in great numbers and conquer them all.

The years went by with this worry ever present. And in those years Cynthia Ann

grew up. Her memories of her early life faded, and she began to accept the ways of the Indian. She learned to preserve buffalo meat, cook Indian foods, and cure animal hides. And she learned to fear the white man.

Finally Cynthia Ann married Peta Nocona, the chief's son. In time they had two children, first a boy named Quannah, then a girl named Prairie Flower. Life seemed full and happy.

And then came that terrible morning in 1860. While working at home, Cynthia Ann heard the distant sound of hoofbeats. At first she thought it was a herd of buffalo, and she was happy at the thought of fresh meat. But when she rushed to look, she saw that the hoofs belonged to U.S. Cavalry horses.

The Indian women leaped upon their ponies. Cynthia Ann rushed back into the tepee to get the sleeping Prairie Flower. The delay made her one of the last to mount her horse. As she swung onto her pony's back, she could hear a soldier galloping behind her.

"Whoa!" he called out, reaching for her pony's reins. Then he looked into her face. "You're no Indian!" he exclaimed. "You're a white woman!"

That's what they kept telling her for days. "You're a white woman—Cynthia Ann Parker." But for a long time she would not admit that she had anything to do with the white world.

Nevertheless, she was sent to live with her white relatives. But until her death she wanted nothing but to be reunited with her husband and her son. She was never really happy again.

Her story does not end with her death.

For in time her son, Quannah Parker, became a great chief. Quannah realized that the fight against the white man must stop. He could allow his people to suffer no longer. Their wandering Indian way of life, no matter how dear to them, must end. And so, in 1875, he led his people to the reservation in Oklahoma Territory.

“If my mother could accept and adjust to the ways of the Indians,” he said, “then I can travel the white man’s trail.”

It was a wise decision. For eventually all members of his tribe became full American citizens. Thus a white woman who lived as an Indian had a large part in bridging the gap between the two races.

CHECK YOUR READING

1. John and Cynthia Ann lived in
 - A Kentucky
 - B Texas
 - C Oklahoma
2. At the time Cynthia Ann was carried off, the children were
 - A picking flowers
 - B catching fireflies
 - C sailing boats
3. To reach the Comanche camp, the Indians rode for
 - A three hours
 - B an entire night
 - C several days
4. The chief's son gave Cynthia Ann a
 - A pet
 - B doll
 - C blanket
5. The name the Indians gave Cynthia Ann was
 - A Peta Nocona
 - B Prairie Flower
 - C not mentioned in the story
6. By the time she was married, Cynthia Ann had
 - A accepted all the Indian ways
 - B lost her fear of white men
 - C taught the Indians English
7. The man who stopped her pony was surprised to see that she
 - A could ride so well
 - B was not an Indian
 - C had a baby
8. When Cynthia Ann was sent back to her white family, she felt
 - A ashamed
 - B relieved
 - C lonely
9. Cynthia Ann's son became a famous
 - A governor
 - B soldier
 - C chief
10. Quannah Parker helped his people to
 - A become U.S. citizens
 - B regain their freedom
 - C defeat the white army