

Lipan Apache Band of Texas
1306 S. 9th Avenue
Edinburg, TX 78539
Phone: (956) 566-3318 or (559) 341-6363
Email: tahtiye1@hotmail.com

Lipan Apache Historical Summary

This is the summary of the Lipan Apache people. It is not a complete history but some of the key points on how we got here. I wish to honor my ancestors by telling our story.

In 1519, the Spanish landed on the shores of Mexico, only to conquer the Aztec Indians of Mexico by killing their leaders and dividing their empire while taking Mexico's riches. In 1542, the Lipan Apache first saw Spaniard conquistador Francisco Coronado De Vasquez traveling through Lipan Apache land that is now New Mexico and North West Texas. Historians state that our people migrated into Texas, but our people have lived in Texas since before First Contact. Our people believe that the Creator placed us on the land we now call our traditional homeland named Texas. Coronado's soldiers witnessed the Lipan Apache hunting buffalo's, that roamed the plains of Texas numbering millions. The Lipan Apache had no fear of the Spaniards; after all, they were few and came in peace so we greeted them cordially. The Lipan Apache were semi nomadic and traveled throughout Texas and Mexico. The Spaniards would wonder how large villages of Lipan Apaches would assemble in days, yet move literally over night without notice. At times villages up to 400 wickups and teepees would appear then move in different directions by morning.

By 1680, the Spaniards had treated the Indians of New Mexico so poorly that the Pueblo Revolt was organized and overthrew Spanish rule. Help came from the Lipan Apache who helped the revolt through use of their equestrian skills. The Lipan Apache had their culture and valued their freedom to move around their land as they saw fit. Much of our culture, such as songs and traditions are still protected today and we do not share them publicly. The Lipan Apache, however, were a different people who lived in a desert and very difficult land to maintain control of or rule over our people. Many efforts were made to befriend the Lipan Apache by giving us or trading medal products, horses, cloth, beads, etc. in an effort to keep us in one place but did not work. Instead, the Lipan Apache accepted the new ways and products as they wished but did not change their customs to fit the Spaniards. The Lipan Apache would use what the Spaniards brought them to become more effective hunters, and warriors. The horse was useful to the Lipan Apache to make traveling easier and faster. Medal arrowheads and lances helped the Lipan Apache to be more effective in hunting and in warfare. The Lipan Apache saw the Spaniards and other Europeans as tools or friends that could be useful to the Lipan Apache, after all, this had always been Lipan Apache land. Yet the Europeans continued to want all land and riches. As the years went by the Spaniards encouraged settlement of Lipan Apache land to increase their numbers against the Lipan Apache. Spaniards built missions and presidios to help them as they infiltrated Lipan Apache land.

For over two hundred years, the Spanish were unable to conquer the Lipan Apache. We had a leadership tradition that the Spaniards minds could not understand and do not yet understand today. This also made it difficult for European's to settle on Lipan Apache land because we did not fit into their "traditional" molds. By the late 1600's, the Spanish realized that the Lipan Apache would be difficult to conquer because they would not stay in one place and the Spaniards never could understand them.

Meanwhile, European immigrants formed the first colonial states of America. The American colonists declared independence from European rule after eastern Indian tribes had been assimilated. The "New Americans" were of course European immigrants that now had their own country by 1776, which were the first 13 states of the United States of America.

In the early 1800's, the Spanish had encouraged settlement into Texas in effort to motivate the settlers into fighting off the Indians of Texas. By 1830, United States President Andrew Jackson and Congress passed the *Indian Removal Act*, forcing all Indian tribes living in the Eastern states to move west of the Mississippi into Indian Territory, which Congress declared to be Oklahoma. By 1838, in spite of the Supreme Court declaring it unconstitutional, President Van Buren sent the US Army to evict 20,000 Eastern Indians. This move pushed the Comanche's whose traditional tribal lands were in Oklahoma along with other tribes into Lipan Apache land causing tribal wars. During these years, the Texas Rangers were formed to protect the settlers from unruly and warring Indians. The Lipan Apache assisted the Texas Rangers and were relied on for their knowledge of the country and people. Lipan Apache Chief Cuelgas de Castro led the Lipan Apaches who produced Lipan Apache leaders such as Flacco. John Castro, Ramon Castro to protect Texas citizens from unlawful settlers or other warring Indians that had been displaced by the United States Government. Sam Houston gave Lipan Apache Chief Cuelgas de Castro the rank of General before his death.

By the 1840's, the Lipan Apache in Texas had unlawful settlers or other warring Indians that wanted their land on all sides. Texas had been "ruled" by the Spanish, Mexico, and the Republic of Texas. During this "rule", which lasted over 200 years, the Spanish and Mexicans had been slowly trying to conquer the Lipan Apache by allowing outsiders to settle on Lipan Apache land. General Sam Houston was elected the First President of the Republic of Texas and after serving one term Maribeau Lamar was elected President of the Republic of Texas. In Lamar's opening statement to the Republic of Texas congress declared the first order of business was to RID TEXAS OF INDIANS, after all, he knew the United States government would support Texas in this effort.

In 1845, Texas was admitted as the 28th state of the USA and retained ALL her public domain as hers, which included lands inhabited by Indians but she assumed NO responsibility for the Indians. Moreover, Texas gave up to the federal government the right and duty, of defense, which meant frontier protection even from Lipan Apaches who dared to fight for their own land and freedom. State forces that hunted down the Lipan Apache were paid and maintained by the federal government. Between 1749 and 1844, the Lipan Apache signed five treaties in hope of maintaining peace on their land, but the changing governments each declared they did not legally have to honor prior government's treaties, washing their hands and paving the way for a takeover of Lipan Apache lands on paper. Yet a Treaty is an agreement between TWO sovereign governments. Moses Austin and other foreign settlers, for instance, had received land grants, of Lipan Apache land and somehow their grants and treaties were honored. Lipan Apache land was being granted to these new settlers and our freedom was being restricted or completely taken away.

In 1848, gold was discovered in California and Colorado, which was what was needed for the "New Americans" to put into place legislation and take Lipan Apache land by force. Using the excuse that western expansion could not be stopped "New Americans" declared war on the Lipan Apache who were the only thing standing between them and the gold to the west. By 1850, one third of the United States Army was stationed in western Texas. Forts were built across Texas to protect western expansionists yet no concern was to be had to protect the Lipan Apache on their traditional land. The Lipan Apache who had helped the first Texas Rangers against warring Comanches and other eastern tribes were now also hunted down because they would not move out of the path to the gold. By 1867, the "New Americans" had slaughtered most of the bison for its hide, leaving rotting bison carcasses, which littered the Texas plains by the hundreds of thousands.

In July of 1865, Confederate General Joseph O. Shelby led about 1,000 of his men out of the U.S.A. into Mexico. Taking with him a train full of guns, cannons and ammunition then, crossed into Mexico near Eagle Pass, Texas to join forces with the French who were in Saltillo, Mexico. General Shelby's "Iron Brigade" had not tasted defeat during the Civil War, however, barely 80 miles into Mexico near present day Muzquiz, Mexico.

He met the Lipan Apache who handed his "Iron Brigade" their first defeat. Furthermore, when General Shelby arrived to join Emperor Maximilian he was rebuffed and his "Iron Brigade" was ordered to disband. The Lipan Apache continued to resist these overwhelming odds maintaining their traditions and life style. In May of 1873, the US Fourth Cavalry was ordered by President Grant to engage in a mission of annihilation and complete destruction of the Lipan Apache. General Sheridan ordered Colonel McKenzie, a well-known Indian fighter, to gather four hundred US 4th Cavalry soldiers and find the Lipan Apache. Colonel McKenzie sent out scouts and a Lipan Apache village was found at El Remolino, Mexico forty miles west of Eagle Pass, Texas. At dawn on the morning of May 18, 1873, Colonel McKenzie attacked the Lipan Apache village. Colonel McKenzie knew ahead of time the Lipan Apache men were away on a hunting party so he did not expect much resistance. The Lipan Apache and Kickapoo villages were attacked and the order was given to fire the village and destroy everything. Captain Carter, a civil war veteran, was on this raid and wrote, it was the "greatest charge" he had ever seen. Twenty-nine Lipan Apaches were taken prisoners, mostly women and children and forced into reservations in New Mexico and Oklahoma. My great grandmother was 8 years old and survived the raid in spite of a soldier killing her 18-month-old brother, which she held in her arms while hiding under a bush. The US Government reported that all Lipan Apaches were killed was without fact, because many were not killed or captured also many men were not in camp which has long been overlooked. The US 4th Cavalry documented it crossed into Mexico over 20 times in pursuit of the Lipan Apache. Because of the hostile environment, many Lipan Apache assumed lives as Mexicans in order to live another day. Into the 1900's, Texas and Mexico continued their hatred of the Lipan Apache. Both Mexican and US Governments had prices on Lipan Apache scalps, men, women, or children, "dead or alive."

So, for my grandparents and great grandparents the war continued.

Stories of Lipan Apache women and children who were taken POW's by the cavalry are documented. Two of Ramon Castro's children were sent to Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania and never returned to Texas or their families. These children were given English (Christian) names making it difficult to find them and after time more difficult for them to find their families. From the 140 different Indian nations that went through the Carlisle Indian School, one-fourth of the children who perished there were Apaches. It has taken more than 125 years to find some of these long lost relations. The U.S. Government, with insistence of the Texas Government, pressed for all Indians to be removed from Texas.

Our parents were raised by our grandparents as Mexicans in a very strict way. Our parents continued to maintain anonymity and our traditions were kept subdued, thereby, securing our survival. We knew of our heritage but for the time survival was more important.

I value the strength I saw and felt from Lipan Apache parents and grandparents. We have known and seen POWs on our TV screens being held by their captures. We do not blame them for anything they spoke against our country because we know they must do whatever it takes to survive another day. Our ancestors did what they did so we could be here today.

Today, there are still brass and marble plaque's placed at former forts and missions in Texas proudly proclaiming that they were instrumental in RIDDING Texas of the Lipan Apache. In Texas only three tribes are recognized, none of which are traditionally from Texas. Our people are on the list for federal recognition and hope to achieve this soon.

This is without a doubt the best country to live in on this earth. but, must not forget our country's past because in order to know where we are going, we must never forget where we came from.

Written by: Richard A. Gonzalez, 2nd Vice Chairman
Lipan Apache Band of Texas
(559) 341-6500 lipanapache435@msn.com

For questions, please contact:

(559) 430-4003 Daniel Castro Romero, Jr., Chairman lipanchief@yahoo.com

(956) 566-3318 or (559) 341-6363 Anita Anaya Gonzalez, Enrollment Officer tahtiye1@hotmail.com

(Rudy S. Perez 1st Vice Chairman RSPLIPANAPACHETX@AOL.COM

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