



Tales of Texas Newsletter



This issue of Tales of Texas is about the connection between the Chisholm Trail and modern sports equipment.

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The Chisholm Trail And Football

Karl Marx famously said, “Religion is the opiate of the masses.”

Clearly, he had never seen American football.

It’s football season in Texas. Friday night lights. Saturday matchups of college powerhouses. Then the NFL takes center stage on Sundays.

Football is a Texas institution, so I figured I’d pay my respects to the Texas tradition. I had to go to a little museum and a sporting goods manufacturer in North Texas to find out the scoop.

Nocona, Texas, is a little town northwest of Dallas/Fort Worth. It’s named for Peta Nocona, the Comanche warrior who took Cynthia Ann Parker for his wife and fathered the last Comanche chief, Quanah Parker. It sits near Red River Station, where the Chisholm Trail crossed into Oklahoma. Of course, folks from Oklahoma say the Chisholm Trail actually starts in their state, on their side of the Red. At any rate, the story of Texas and the great opiate begins in Nocona.



Tales of Texas

There was a family who lived in Nocona, and this family saw the need for special footwear that would protect cowboys from stickers, longhorns, and snakes. Cowboy boots were made from leather. The Justin family of Nocona lived where the Texas cattle trails crossed into Oklahoma. The aim of the cattle drive was to get Texas beef to the railhead in Abilene, Kansas. From Abilene, the railroad would deliver the cattle to Chicago, the meatpacking capital of America.

The Justins knew leather. They made cowboy boots and virtually anything else from indestructible cowhide that cowboys might need on the trail.

When Mr. H. J. Justin passed away, his sons moved the cowboy boot company from Nocona to Fort Worth. Mr. Justin's slogan was, "Remember. My cowboy boots are the best made in the world." The company moved to Fort Worth to be near the stockyards and the new railhead. There was no need to drive the cattle to Kansas anymore. Justin Boot Company still thrives there today.

When H. J. "Joe" Justin's sons moved to Fort Worth, his daughter, Miss Enid, stayed in Nocona. She did not want to move. She loved her little town and its people. So she kept the company going in Nocona. She made her own individual decorative patterns by finding them on dresses, sofas, The Great Depression hit Nocona hard. The little town was also in the crosshairs of the Dust Bowl. The man who ran the business side of the company said, "We can sell a leather wallet for one dollar only if we put a dollar inside it."

After the Depression, the war came. This gets us closer to our tales of football in Texas.

Nocona received contracts to make baseball gloves for the War Department. Turns out soldiers, Marines, airmen, and sailors like to play baseball in their off time. So Nocona went into the baseball glove business.



Research Assistants
At
Red River Station
Where Chisholm Trail
Crosses into OK



Tales of Texas



Chief Sitting Bull
Buffalo Bill

You may recall the first football helmets were made of leather. Additionally, leather football shoes and the football itself came to Nocona. The original footballs did not look like they do today. They were closer to a soft oval shape, made for kicking the ball through goalposts.

Coach Ray Morrison of SMU and Coach “Dutch” Meyer of TCU went to see the leather goods facility in Nocona. They wanted Nocona to change the shape of its football. They wanted it to have pointy ends so their players could throw the ball, not just kick it or run with it. Nocona made a football with pointy ends so Texas quarterbacks could throw it.

In those days, the home team supplied the football. There was no uniform size and shape. Tom Brady would be glad to know that there was no minimum pounds-per-square-inch inflation requirement.

Nocona turned its attention to making leather sporting goods and other leather products. The baseball gloves aren’t cheap. They are made with the help of machines while human workers thread them. Gloves are made from the inside out, so at the end of the process, a very strong man would pull them right side out. Today, that particular movement is done by a machine. The man retired.

Hollywood is also a customer of Nokona. Movies like *A League of Their Own* and *Field of Dreams* had their vintage gloves made in Nocona.

Cheap offshore imitations have flooded the market, but professional baseball players have their gloves custom-made for their hand and position in Nocona. I took three of my grandsons to the baseball glove manufacturing line there. You can watch the workers make the gloves. My grandsons were salivating at the thought of a new baseball glove. But at over \$600 apiece, I had to advise them it was out of the price range of a defunded police officer.

If you go to Nocona, be sure and stop at the Nokona facility. Note that due to trademark rights, they changed the name of the leather company to Nokona with a K. One cannot simply trademark the name of a town. Besides, they think Peta may have spelled it with a K if he could spell at all.

And don’t forget to stop in at the Tales ’N’ Trails Museum, across the street and a block or two away from the sporting goods facility. It’s a great history museum that deals with the boots, gloves, Chisholm Trail, and good ole Texas values.



In my novel *Isobel's Song*, I place fictional characters inside Texas history. The protagonist is a young woman. This in and of itself is unusual because the story is not a romance, Hallmark movie formula, or “chick lit.”

Most of the characters are actual historical figures, including the females of the era.

Another thing about so many of our ancestors is that they relied on their Christian or Jewish faith to guide them through the hazards of life.

The novel is available in Kindle, paperback, hardback, and audiobook (Amazon & Audible). We are not trying to sell a book so much as we are trying to get a message out that our ancestors sacrificed much to leave Texas to us. Regardless of our race or gender, we can be proud of Texas, the First Texans, and all those who came to Texas thinking about the future.

The illustration above is from *Isobel's Song* and includes the link to the Amazon listing.

The second volume of the series is now available. It is called *Isobel's Hidden Melody*.