



Tales of Texas

NEWSLETTER



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This issue of Tales of Texas concerns the great Comanche raid on Linnville Texas and its aftermath

The headline photo above is of Chief Buffalo Hump and his band of Comanches by Lee Herring.

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Linnville, Texas

In the summer of 1840, a violent and dramatic episode unfolded on the Texas coast and plains—a sweeping Comanche raid that decimated the coastal port of Linnville and culminated in a bloody clash near Lockhart, known as the Battle of Plum Creek. This chain of events marked one of the largest Indian raids on Anglo settlements in American history and exposed the fragile relationship between the Republic of Texas and the Comanche people.

Throughout the early years of the Republic of Texas, tensions simmered between Texians and the powerful Comanche confederation. The Comanche dominated the central plains and fiercely protected their territory and way of life. Skirmishes, retaliations, and broken promises had become routine. But in March 1840, a diplomatic meeting intended to ease hostilities took a deadly turn. Known as the Council House Fight, the event in San Antonio ended with the death of 35 Comanche leaders who had come under a white flag to negotiate peace.

The Council House Fight left a lasting scar. The Comanche were enraged by what they saw as a betrayal. In their culture, the killing of peace envoys—especially in a protected setting—was an unforgivable offense. Over the next several months, Comanche war councils gathered, and by mid-summer, they were ready to respond.

On August 7, 1840, an estimated 500 to 1,000 Comanche warriors—primarily from the Penateka band—swept down toward the Gulf Coast. Led by chiefs such as Buffalo Hump, and Yellow Wolf, the war party descended on the small port town of Linnville, near present-day Port Lavaca. At the time, Linnville was the second-largest port in Texas and a hub of coastal trade. The town was unfortified, vulnerable, and unsuspecting.



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Historical Marker
in Port Lavaca

The Comanche caught the settlers by surprise. Many townspeople, including women and children, fled into the bay, taking refuge aboard small boats and watching helplessly as their homes and businesses burned. Warehouses were looted, and the Comanche took hundreds of horses and mules, along with wagonloads of goods—silks, mirrors, powder, coffee, bolts of cloth, and anything else of value. Witnesses described warriors dressed in plundered finery, some waving parasols and riding with umbrellas, mocking the settler lifestyle even as they destroyed it.

Word of the raid spread quickly. Texian militias, including volunteers from Bastrop, Gonzales, and Seguin, mobilized under the command of leaders such as Edward Burleson, Ben McCulloch, Mathew Caldwell, and Jack Hays. Sam Houston, president of the Republic at the time, advocated restraint, but the militia leaders had other ideas.



Comanche Moon by
Martin Grelle

The Battle of Plum Creek

By the time the Comanche war party turned northward from the coast, they were slowed by the bulk of their plunder and the herds of livestock. The militia gathered in the hills near present-day Lockhart and laid an ambush at Plum Creek, a tributary of the San Marcos River.

On August 12, 1840, the Texian militia engaged the Comanche along Plum Creek. Exact numbers remain uncertain, but the Texians had the advantage of surprise and fresh mounts. The fighting was fierce but disorganized. Most of the battle was a running pursuit over several miles of prairie, with Comanche warriors attempting to protect their retreat and preserve the stolen goods and livestock.

Casualty estimates vary. Texian reports claimed up to 80 Comanche dead, while others suggest a lower figure. The Texians lost fewer than ten men, though many were wounded. Much of the stolen property was recovered, including hundreds of horses and mules. But many Comanche escaped, melting back into the plains. For all its fury, the battle did little to resolve the deeper conflict between the Comanche and the Republic of Texas.



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Aftermath



Historical Marker



Ranger Jack Hays

The 1840 raid on Linnville and the Battle of Plum Creek did not end Comanche resistance, but they did mark a turning point. The scale and audacity of the Linnville raid shocked the Republic's leadership and reinforced calls for more organized frontier defense. In the years that followed, Texas would continue its military campaigns against the Comanche, culminating in decades of brutal warfare.

For the Comanche, the raid was both a statement of sovereignty and a response to betrayal. The attack on Linnville showed their continued power but also exposed them to intensified retaliation. Over time, increasing settlement, disease, and military pressure would erode their dominance.

Today, the ruins of Linnville lie beneath the waters of Lavaca Bay, and Plum Creek flows quietly near Lockhart. But their stories remain—a stark reminder of the violent collision between two worlds, each fighting to shape the destiny of Texas.



Beautiful Downtown Lockhart, Texas