Although the name “Great Plains” suggests a vast, featureless landscape, the region is dotted with hills and other topographic features that serve as landmarks to travelers and residents alike. In the southern Great Plains of Texas, several prominent landmarks—such as Comanche Peak, the Medicine Mounds, and Paint Rock—are places of special importance to the Comanche Indians. To encourage a better understanding of this area, the University of Texas at Arlington will conduct a symposium on Friday, October 15th, titled “The Spirit of Place: Appreciating the Comanche Relationship to the Landscape of the Southern Plains.” Participants will include Comanche Indian elders, historians, and anthropologists who will share their observations about geographic features that have long been part of Comanche Indian and Texas history. The symposium is made possible by a grant from the Summerlee Foundation of Dallas.

The “Spirit of Place” symposium begins at 10 a.m. After a brief historical/geographical overview, there will be a session on “Comanche Interpretations of Places” featuring Reeves Nafzwooks and Thomas Blackstar of Lawton, Oklahoma. After lunch, the symposium continues with a session titled “Some Reflections on the Significance of Place to Comanche Identity” featuring Ronald Red Elk (representing the Comanche Language and Cultural Preservation Committee, Lawton, Oklahoma), and Carney Saposhty (of Apache, Oklahoma). Anthropologist Daniel Gelso (UT San Antonio) will next discuss “Sacred Topography and Cultural Contact: Understanding the Comanche Role in European-American Encounters with Landscapes of Texas.” Following an afternoon break, the symposium continues with a video presentation titled “The Spirit of Place” by Alan Govenar of Dallas, and a panel discussion with Curtis Tunnell (Past Director of the Texas Historical Commission) and Linda Pelon (Ethnohistorian and Honorary Ambassador to the Comanche Nation). The symposium will conclude with a reception, and keynote speech by Dan Flores, Professor of History at the University of Montana. Dr. Flores will present an illustrated lecture titled “The Spirit of Place and the Landscape of the Southern Plains.”

Jointly sponsored by UTA’s Center for Greater Southwestern Studies and the History of Cartography, and the Special Collections Division of the UTA Libraries, the symposium will be open to the public and held on the 6th floor of UTA’s Central Library. The registration fee of $30 includes lunch, refreshments, and dinner. An exhibit featuring historic maps of Texas sites associated with the Comanche Indians will be on display during the symposium. The maps are part of the UTA’s Special Collections. The map exhibit will remain on display through Saturday, October 16th for the Texas Map Society’s fall meeting, which will also be held in the Library. The symposium is the first of its kind, says Center Director Richard V. Francaviglia: “It is a unique opportunity to learn about the landscapes of Texas and the Southern Plains from several perspectives – including those of the native peoples and the settlers who arrived in the nineteenth-century.” For more information and symposium registration materials, please contact the Center for Greater Southwestern Studies and the History of Cartography, P.O. Box 19497 – Central Library, The University of Texas at Arlington, Arlington, Texas 76019-0497 (Phone 817-272-3997), email center@library.uta.edu
Beyond the Frontier: Exploring the Indian Country

Oklahoma's early nineteenth-century history is complex and dramatic. The area was part of both Spain and France in the late 18th century, and, as a portion of the Louisiana Purchase, was explored by Anglo-American expeditions in the early 1800s. As Indian Territory, the area witnessed many events that brought Native people and newcomers into conflict. The frontier's closing was heralded, in a manner of speaking, by the Great Land Rush of 1889. Based on a wide variety of primary source materials, including letters and diaries, this book provides a lively account of the cultural encounters—some violent—that set the scene for the state's culturally diverse population.

In telling the story, Stan Hoig begins with a discussion of the land itself, which varies from dense Cross Timbers forest, oak-studded savannas, and expansive prairies. After the early Spanish and French expeditions are covered, Hoig then describes and interprets in considerable detail the many U.S. expeditions into the area. Of special interest to readers are the book's numerous maps, photographs, and line drawings. Many of latter are from historical sources, and include both Native American and European-American figures of historic importance. The maps help the reader locate the routes of significant expeditions and forts.

This book is highly recommended for those interested in military, political, and cultural history. Its author, Stan Hoig, is Professor Emeritus of Journalism at the University of Central Oklahoma in Edmond, and has written widely on the West. Frontier notes with much pleasure that the Oklahoma Historical Society presented Stan Hoig with the Outstanding Book on Oklahoma History Award (1998) for this important work. Beyond the Frontier is available from the University of Oklahoma Press, P.O. Box 787, Norman, Oklahoma 73070; phone (800) 627-7377.

Rock Art of the Chihuahuan Desert Borderlands

Of all the traces left by early Native American peoples of the Southwest, few are as enigmatic as rock art. Usually in the form of petroglyphs (designs carved or pecked into rocks) or pictographs (designs drawn or painted onto rocks), the art left by early peoples is difficult to interpret. Although the rock art of the Big Bend area of Texas has been seriously studied for more than fifty years, there is still little agreement regarding its meaning, or even who created it.

This publication consists of eight essays that focus on the Big Bend region of West Texas and the remote area of adjacent Chihuahua, Mexico. The material covered was originally presented as part of a symposium conducted at Sul Ross State University in 1995. Each paper sheds new light on the subject of who created the rock art and what it meant. Edited by Sheron Smith-Savage and Robert J. Mallouf, Rock Art of the Chihuahuan Desert Borderlands covers a wide range of topics, from a detailed investigation of the accretions that cover or veneer pictographs in the lower Pecos, to essays that attempt to determine the "authorship," culturally speaking, of particular rock art features. Several essays further establish a link between cultures of Meso-America and the Chihuahua borderlands, as evidenced by the use of motifs such as the plumed serpent. Others speculate on the significance of the art itself—and the possibility that the use of zig-zag motifs may indicate events associated with tension or stress. Collectively, the essays in this book underscore the prehistoric peoples' dependence on water and their close relationship to the environment. All of the essays are illustrated with line drawings and photographs that further help describe the sites.

Rock Art of the Chihuahuan Desert Borderlands is a joint publication of the Center for Big Bend Studies and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. To order a copy, contact LaNetta Barnes at the Center for Big Bend Studies, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas 79832; phone (915) 837-8179 or email lbarnes@sulross.edu.
Rediscovering the Texas Comanchería

by Linda Pelon

Texas is a religion. Our land is sacred to all races who live and have lived upon it. As we once fought for its possession, let us now pray together for our integration with it and our harmonious unity as we reflect upon a stormy past.

Bill Neeley
Comanche Tribal Historian
December 1993

As a bonfire blazes on a chilly December evening, Comanche Tribal Chairman Wallace Coffey includes the words of Bill Neeley in his “talk” to the group assembled at Paint Rock in Concho County, Texas. The occasion marks the first return of the Comanche Nation to this sacred and historic place. Comanches (Numunu) and Texans are once again gathered around what looks like the council fires described in the documentation of treaty talks from the mid-nineteenth-century. Glancing around the circle, I see a traditional Comanche “Medicine Man” standing with a group of elders, three generations of the Sims Campell family (the “Landkeepers” of Paint Rock), a variety of leaders from Texas communities who have established contemporary friendships with Comanches, and the director of the Texas Historical Commission. “The ancestors walk with us” a Comanche medicine man/spiritual leader, observed earlier in the day as we walked looking up at the pictographs on the cliffs. Recalling his words, I get chills down my spine from more than just the cold evening air; perhaps the spirits are with us now. This place resonates with history and tradition.

West Central Texas was once the homeland of the Penatuhkah Comanches. Texas Rangers field tested Colt revolvers here as part of the violent confrontations that occurred. But here, too, the German settlers of Fredericksburg made a treaty of friendship with these Indians in a stunning but rare example of a true “White Path” in frontier history. Now called the “Texas Midwest” by the regional chamber of commerce, in a more poetic frame of mind the area becomes the Texas Outback – a semi-arid, aboriginal place not unlike the legendary Australian Outback. It is both a harsh and mystical place. Grasslands are juxtaposed with mesas once used for vision quests or smoke signaling. Areas around springs, creeks and river terraces are archaeological and natural archives documenting lost lifeways, medicine places, burial grounds, and ceremonial sites. Many of these places, unappreciated and unprotected, are fading into dreamtime.

Scattered across Texas are places named that recall the Comanche presence here. Nocona, Sanco, Ketemcy, Quanah, and Santa Anna carry the names of Comanche chiefs. Medicine Mounds, Comanche Peak, Double Mountain and Enchanted Rock are a few of the landmarks associated with Texas Comanche cultural heritage. Each of these places have Comanche stories to tell. Geographical, archaeological, and botanical information can be retrieved to enhance historical and oral historical information to create a more complete reconstruction of the past. I would like to next discuss one place in particular, as an example of this process. It was named for San-ta-na (Santa Anna), who figures prominently in Texas history:

When Texas was annexed into the United States, the Comanches, by far the most powerful Texan tribe of Indians, were governed by San-ta-na, a chief distinguished above all others by his eloquence and wisdom in council, and his daring, skill, and success in the field. His word was law, and such his popularity with his tribe, that sub-chiefs and warriors vie'd with each other in anticipating his wishes. When the United States troops were sent to occupy and defend Texas, it was found that scarcely a place in all the length and breadth of this new state was safe from the incursions of this tribe of daring warriors . . .

Colonel Richard Irving Dodge (1882)

“There are spirits here,” a Comanche medicine man informed the eighty year old West Texas rancher. “Yes, I know,” the rancher replied in his slow and deliberate manner. This
interaction occurred as a group of Comanches and leaders from Santa Anna in Coleman County, Texas were walking toward the remains of a large campsite and ceremonial place. A ritual to "release the ancestors," re-bless the area, and honor its "landkeeper" (the rancher/property owner) was about to be held inside a rock feature recognized as a ceremonial site by Ozzie Red Elk (director of education for the Comanche Nation) on a visit the preceding autumn. Cedar was burning and the smoke blew westward and mingled with the rays of sunlight as the ceremony was completed. "Stunning," commented Montie Guthrie, president of the Santa Anna Historical Development Organization when later describing the event for the Abilene Reporter News, "I half expected to see a warrior jump out of that smoke."

From the ridge adjacent to this ceremonial place, Santa Anna's Peak dominates the landscape. Oral histories collected from the last surviving Texas chiefs inform us that these peaks were a warriors' training center. "It was on this High Point that the firerock [a sacred meteorite] fell and it was here that the eternal fires were kept burning. Here also was the center of fire and smoke communications." Annual council meetings that brought together leaders from all the bands were held in the secret council chamber on the steep east end of this peak. Rock shelters at the top were used as classrooms for warriors in training. How much information has survived the quarrying operations on sections of this landmark? The peak has never been surveyed for rock art, signaling hearths, or other remains from its Comanche occupation. This was Santa Anna's home. Oral histories tell us he was born here and that he was the son of the Adiva, the woman chief who ran the warrior training camp. A military map from 1851 also identifies this place as Santa Anna's Peak. If a warrior had "jumped out of that smoke," it would probably have been Santa Anna.

Although much has been destroyed at Santa Anna's Peak, much also remains to be rediscovered. An archeological survey may locate that secret chamber which was used for council meetings. A few years ago, a boulder with the pecked image of an Indian chief was relocated. It had once been part of the caprock on the peak but had been removed and then taken to a mountain in Arkansas. The name Santana, the old German spelling of Santa Anna's name, is carved below the head. Research continues to determine the source of this image. The boulder can now be seen in downtown Santa Anna.

Several mesas, mountains, and peaks in the area are linked with either historical reference to smoke signaling or archeological evidence of signaling. There appears to be a correlation between archeological remains of large campsites and the visibility of a signaling point from the camp; probably a civil defense system. There are historical references to signals that warn of the approach of strangers. A small rock shelter on a river terrace has been found to contain a pictograph with features associated with an elite group of Comanche warriors. Many Comanche medicine plants also grow on this river terrace. This is an exciting time for Texas Comanche history.

Exiled form Texas in 1859, Comanches experienced many barriers that prevented them from accessing places of importance in their former homeland. Although memories of Texas have been passed down through the generations, the bond with the land is broken — but not completely. The Texas communities and the Comanche elders and leaders who are working together to interpret places of importance to Comanche cultural heritage are helping to write a new and brighter chapter in Texas-Comanche relations. Friendships are developing and the bond with the land, along with the memories and stories, is being shared. In the Comanche tradition of completing the circle, it is appropriate — and hopeful — to end with more of Bill Neeley's reflections from that extraordinary December evening at Paint Rock:

According to Sioux intellectual Vine Deloria, Jr., "Religion . . . is a force in itself and it calls for the integration of lands and people in harmonious unity. The land awaits those who can discern their rhythms." . . . And now, after the passage of over a century since the last bow was strung and the last rifle shot, it is time for reflections and healing between Numunu (The People), many of whom are now citizens of Texas, and the leaders of the Lone Star."

[Editor's note: Linda Pelon is a cultural anthropologist who focuses on Texas Comanche ethnography and the preservation of environmental information relevant to cultural heritage sites. Proclaimed Honorary Ambassador for the Comanche Nation in 1997, she is currently a student in UTA's Transatlantic History Program and serves as Graduate Research Assistant for the Center for Greater Southwestern Studies and the History of Cartography.]
“Cartographic Connections” will bring maps to schools

Maps are among the most effective – and underused – tools in teaching history and social studies. As part of a multi-year project funded by The Houston Endowment, Inc., twenty-two Texas schoolteachers and six UTA staff members began working together this summer to incorporate historic maps into the classroom curriculum. According to Gerald Saxon, Director of UTA’s Special Collections, “the teachers are serving as professional consultants to help identify which of the more than 7,500 historic maps in UTA’s Special Collections should be made available to students.” As part of the project, titled “Cartographic Connections: Improving Teaching through the use of Historic Maps,” the teachers and staff will also determine how the maps can be made available. Although paper copies of important historic maps may be reproduced for use in classrooms, electronic map images will also become available over the Internet. The teachers will return in the summer of 2000 to help recommend the most effective ways of achieving the project’s goals. For more information, contact Gerald Saxon, Associate Director of Libraries, Special Collections Division, R.O. Box 19497 – Central Library, The University of Texas at Arlington, Arlington, Texas 76019-0497 (Phone 817-272-3393) email saxon@library.uta.edu

Fall Meeting of the Texas Map Society

The fall meeting of the Texas Map Society will be held at the University of Texas at Arlington on Saturday, October 16, 1999, following the Center’s “Spirit of Place” symposium. The one-day meeting will include presentations by Ron Grim, Librarian of Congress, “Mapping the Germans in Texas;” David Farmer, Southern Methodist University, “Maps and Ephemera;” Richard Francaviglia, the University of Texas at Arlington, “Mapping the Cross Timbers of Texas, Oklahoma, and Kansas;” Dan Hampton, Texas Association of Surveyors, “The Land and the Map;” and José Delgado, The University of North Texas, “The Mapping of the Malvinas/Falkland Islands.” The meeting will conclude with a popular feature, the members’ map forum, hosted by Kit Goodwin of the University of Texas at Arlington. The meeting will be held in the Parlor, on the sixth floor of UTA’s Central Library. The $25 registration fee includes lunch and refreshments.

The Texas Map Society was created in 1996 and has since grown to more than 150 members. Although most members live in Texas, several are from adjoining states. They all share an interest in maps of all types, from historical to modern.

For more information about the Texas Map Society and the October meeting, please contact Kit Goodwin, Special Collections, UTA Libraries, Box 19497, Arlington, Texas 76019-0497; phone: (817) 272-3393, fax: (817) 272-3360, or email: goodwin@library.uta.edu

New Graduate Research Assistant Hired

The Center recently hired Linda Pelon to serve as the Sandra Myres Graduate Research Assistant in Southwestern Studies and the History of Cartography. In this role, Ms. Pelon will conduct research in UTA’s Special Collections for faculty members needing assistance with projects. Ms. Pelon – a history doctoral candidate in UTA’s new transatlantic history program – has extensive research experience. She holds an MA degree in Anthropology from UTA, and her research specialty – Native American ethnohistory – has permitted her to work closely with the Comanche Nation. In recognition of her activities, Ms. Pelon was recently named Honorary Ambassador to the Comanche Nation.
Meet the Center Faculty

Dr. Christopher Conway is a professor of Latin American literature and culture at UTA's Department of Foreign Languages. One of his primary areas of research is the Latin American Cult of Simón Bolívar (the "Liberator" of Venezuela, Columbia, Ecuador, Perú and Bolivia). In this area, he has published articles in Venezuela and the United States on corporeality, monumentalism, and intellectual history. He is currently completing a manuscript of Simón Bolívar and Latin American identity as well as collaborating on a collection of essays to appear in the year 2000 on the subject of conduct manuals in XIXth Century Latin America. Dr. Conway is eager to pursue his interests in travel narratives and U.S.-Latin American relations in the Nineteenth Century, specifically depictions of the "Wild West." Most recently, Hispanic Journal published his article on José Martí (Cuba, 1853-1895) and Buffalo Bill's Wild West show.

"Cross Timbers" Exhibit Opens in Center

The Cross Timbers is one of North America's distinctive ecological regions—a forested belt of scrub oak trees that rises like an island from the prairie in a large area stretching from Kansas to Texas. Originally called the "monte grande" (large forest) by the Spaniards, the Cross Timbers became a geographic landmark by the mid-nineteenth century. An exhibit titled "The Cast Iron Forest: Images of the Cross Timbers" features the region in historic maps, drawings, photographs, and paintings. The exhibit is currently on display in the office of UTA's Center for Greater Southwestern Studies and the History of Cartography (650 Central Library). Normal office hours are 8:00 a.m. – Noon and 1:00 – 5:00 p.m., but it is suggested that visitors call ahead (817-272-3997) or email (center@library.uta.edu) to confirm hours for particular days they plan to visit.

Center for Greater Southwestern Studies and the History of Cartography

The University of Texas at Arlington
Box 19497
Arlington, Texas 76019-0497

Center Fellows: Stacy Altima, Assistant Professor of English; Chris Conway, Assistant Professor of Foreign Languages-Spanish; Bob Fairbanks, Professor of History; George Green, Professor of History; Sam Hayne, Associate Professor of History; David Narrett, Associate Professor of History; Elizabeth Ordóñez, Professor of Foreign Languages; Dennis Reinhardt, Professor of History; Doug Richmond, Professor of History; and Ken Roemer, Professor of English.

Associate Center Fellows: David Buitser, Endowed Chair for Southwestern Studies; Manuel García y Griego, Director, Center for Mexican American Studies; Jeff Hanson, Associate Professor of Anthropology; and Jay Henry, Professor of Architecture.