

The Bandera PROPHECY

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Today in Texas History

By Bandera Spirits of Texas

On this day in 1874, Lt. Frank Baldwin and three scouts captured the "white Indian" known as Tehan in what is now Hemphill County. Tehan was taken by the Kiowas when he was a child. They called him Tehan ("Texan"). He was subsequently adopted by the medicine man Maman-ti and grew up to become a fierce warrior. Except for his red hair, fair skin, and bull-like neck, he was pure Kiowa, and he reportedly committed several depredations on whites as an apprentice brave during the early 1870s.

Tehan was about 18 when the Red River War broke out in the summer of 1874. Baldwin left Tehan with Capt. Wylls Lyman's wagon train, which was subsequently besieged by the Kiowas. During the siege, Tehan escaped from his guards and rejoined his adopted tribe, sporting a suit of clothes the troops had given him.

Little more is known of his fate.

One story held that the Kiowa chief Big Bow killed Tehan, fearing that Tehan's "white blood" would lead him to betray Big Bow to the military authorities. Tehan's foster sister doubted this story and believed that Tehan lived for a time with a group of Mescalero Apaches, but later returned to the Indian Territory.

The mystery was compounded in 1895 when the Rev. Joseph K. Griffis, a Presbyterian minister, claimed that he was Tehan; he claimed to have drifted east after the Red River War and come under the influence of the Salvation Army, which set him on the "Narrow Path" toward the ministry.

Several Red River War veterans, however, declared that the minister did not resemble the Tehan whom they remembered. Most of the Kiowas came to believe that Tehan had, indeed, died out on the Texas plains.

Historian Wilbur S. Nye later opined, "There may have been more than one Tehan."