

**Your on the  
Street Reporter**



**Uyless Black**

**Traveling America (XX)  
The Texas Panhandle**

**The Texas Panhandle  
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## **Traveling America (XX)<sup>1</sup> The Texas Panhandle Report One: Introduction**

**October 8, 2023 (written February, 2024)**

As you can see from the dates above, I have had an entry in my before-I-kick-the-bucket list for a while. It includes visiting sites in a part of Texas, its Panhandle, where several historic battles took place in the late 1800s between Anglo settlers and soldiers against Native American tribes.<sup>2</sup>

Age and its associated augmentations to my body have been forcing me to postpone or cut short my travels and reports. Depending on my physical condition at a given time, I opt for or opt-out of a journey, say, to a funeral or a wedding. Same with the “Traveling America” and “Foreign Places” essays.

Thus, do not be offended if I do not attend your funeral or the funeral of your loved ones. I will if I can and will not if I can't. To offer some perspective, I hate funerals. If I had a choice, I would not attend my own. One of my kick-the-bucket entries is to figure out a way to be absent from my casket. However, I suspect my relatives will keep me intact long enough to make the purchase of a pine box worth the expenditure.

The plan for this traveling America series is to visit the Texas Panhandle, beginning with Amarillo, as depicted in Figure 1 (shown as “A”). There, a re-visit to a Quarter Horse museum, and take a stroll through parts of the city that is a preserved part of the fabled Route 66. Included in this report is a drive south of Amarillo to the Palo Duro Canyon (shown as “P”) to pay a call on the site of an 1874 Anglo-Indian battle. Also, a drive northeast of the city to two famous combat sites (1864, 1874) between the white settlers and the Comanche: Adobe Walls, (shown as “W”).

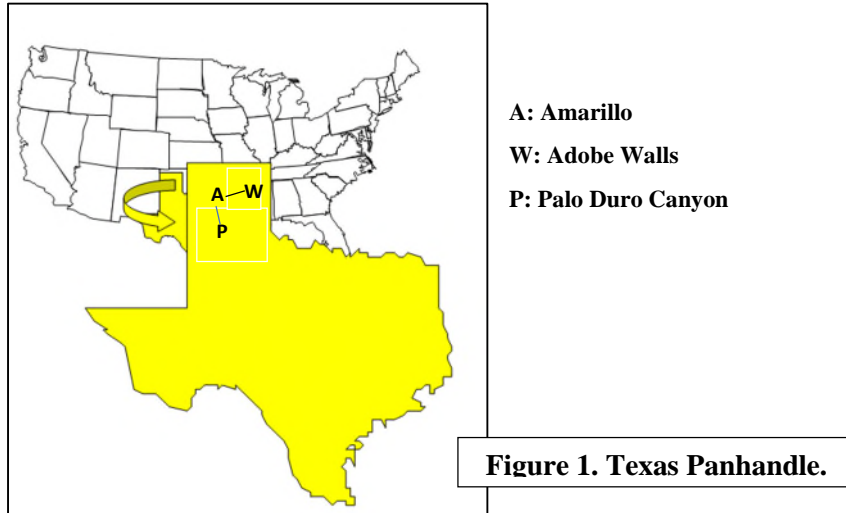
### **Post-Pandemic Ills for Travelers**

Times have changed for travelers since the pre-pandemic days, and for the worse. When on the road, I usually reserve a hotel room that I know will provide comfort and convenience. One of my favorite hotels is Embassy Suites. It has a separate sleeping area from the front room, two or three restaurants off the lobby, fine room service, free parking (usually), with bell-hop and car valet service as part of the room fee. Or it once did. But if the Amarillo hotel is representative of the chain---no longer.

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<sup>1</sup> Unless noted otherwise, all pictures, photos, and graphics are from this writer or Bing.com.

<sup>2</sup> I also use the politically incorrect word, *Indians*, in these reports. There are no native Americans now, nor have there ever been. All people in North and South America came from somewhere else, originally from Africa. I use the word, *Indian*, with respect for historical facts---that the original European settlers to these continents thought the people living there were part of India, of the Indies. These pioneers used the name with no intent of disrespect. Nor do I.



- I discovered the front desk personnel had no idea about the operations of the car valet and parking service. I was billed separately from the hotel for using the garage. I was asked by the desk clerks not to call their desk, but to call the car valets' non-hotel telephone number when I needed my car. They explained the operation was now sub-contracted to an outside company.
- Only one restaurant was in service, and its hours were limited. So was the menu. Another former restaurant was empty. No tables or chairs, just a locked door with a window view of a dark, empty space.
- Hotel announcements informed guests that the linen and towel service were limited. If I wanted any fresh items, I was to leave my dirty stuff in the hallway next to my door, and I would be given the luxury of doing my own maid service. This feature was also sub-contracted.
- The hotel personnel were kind and attentive, including the restaurant crew, but the front desk was under-staffed. I often stood at the desk---absent of any clerk---waiting for help.
- The one restaurant that was open seemed like a cavern without any cavern dwellers. In the evening, most of the tables were devoid of eaters.
- I placed trash cans outside my door if I wanted them emptied.
- I paid \$180 per night, which did not include car parking, valet, or much in the way of maid service, but it did cover my making my own bed, and changing the sheets and pillow covers.

Will the pre-Covid days of full-service hotels return? For 180 bucks, one would think so. But \$180 is about the average rate for a decent hotel room. Most everything has been downsized in quality and quantity. Many buildings and stores in downtown Amarillo are closed. Like many places in America, Amarillo has not recovered from the Covid crisis and the long shutdown.

Luckily, the hotel had not removed a refrigerator and microwave from the room. After the first night (admittedly, in a very comfortable bed and room), I found a grocery store, and thereafter provided myself with room service. I am happy to report that I tipped myself generously.

One of the reasons for making this trip was to visit a museum dedicated to Quarter Horses. It is a special place that honors a special animal.

## Traveling America (XX) Report Two: The American Quarter Horse Hall of Fame and Museum

October 9, 2023

As many of my readers know, I spent some of my childhood years on a cattle/sheep/horse ranch located on the high plains of southeastern New Mexico. Several chapters in *The Light Side of Little Texas* recount many of those times. One chapter, “Cornered by a Stud,” documents my experiences with horses, and a near-death encounter I had with one of dad’s prize horses, a Quarter Horse named Wompus McCue. Here is an entry in this chapter about this horse:

Wompus McCue was a beautiful, black-haired, powerful horse. He stood almost 15 hands high and weighed-in at about 1,300 pounds. In those days of the late 1940s, a Quarter Horse of this height and weight was considered to be about average; not huge, but not small.<sup>3</sup> The striking characteristic of Wompus’ physical makeup was his muscles. He was an equine Charles Atlas. His neck, chest, buttocks, and leg muscles were as big and well-formed as any horse my dad owned. His hindquarters were massive, laden with horsepower.

Several years ago, Holly and I were traveling across the country from Virginia to our recently acquired home in Idaho. We stopped in Amarillo to rest up a bit. I took the opportunity to pay a brief visit to the American Quarter Horse Hall of Fame and Museum. My father had boasted that Wompus came from a long line of famous Quarter Horses, and my brother Ed told me later the line went as far back as the turn of the century (the 1800s to the 1900s). Ed was an outlier horse trainer and followed horse shows and rodeos as if he were a reporter for the *Quarter Horse Journal*.

Time constraints prevented me from fully exploring the museum at that time, possibly to learn something about Wompus’ ancestry. I vowed to return someday. Today is that day.

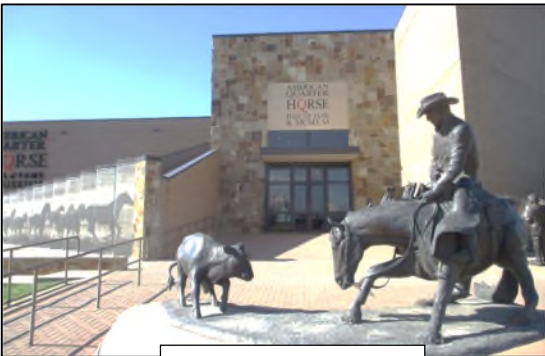


Figure 2. Entrance.

Figure 2 shows the entrance to the hall and museum. The statue shows a cowboy working a large calf, likely separating (cutting) the animal from a herd. This aspect of horsemanship is one that requires considerable skill from both rider and horse. Cutting horse contests are my favorites in a rodeo, and brother Ed was a supreme contestant.

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<sup>3</sup> Quarter Horses are not as tall and thin as Thoroughbreds, because they have been bred to be workhorses. Thus, they are usually bulkier and not as lanky. They are also known to be less skittish and more composed than Thoroughbreds. By the way, a hand is about four inches (in the past it was just over four inches, but the practice now is to round-off the number).

The interior of the museum contains a wealth of displays and information about cowboys, cowgirls, and horses. The lobby is shown in the left photo of Figure 3. A statue of the Quarter Horse is on prominent display. Just beyond the lobby is a large room (the Hall of Fame room) containing the pictures and names of members of the hall of fame, as seen in the middle photo of Figure 3. These members include men, women, and of course, Quarter Horses, and the dates they were admitted into the Hall.

I asked an attendant at the lobby desk if the museum allowed patrons to examine documentation on the members. The answer was yes, with the understanding that casual perusals were not possible; that requests to the archivist were required. Fair enough. I then asked if she, by any chance, was familiar with a line of Quarter Horses with the name of McCue. She responded, “Oh yes! Take a look at the display on the floor of the Hall room,” which I had not seen. More on that floor display shortly.

Throughout the large museum scores of pictures and smaller sculptures are on display, some shown in the right photo of Figure 3.



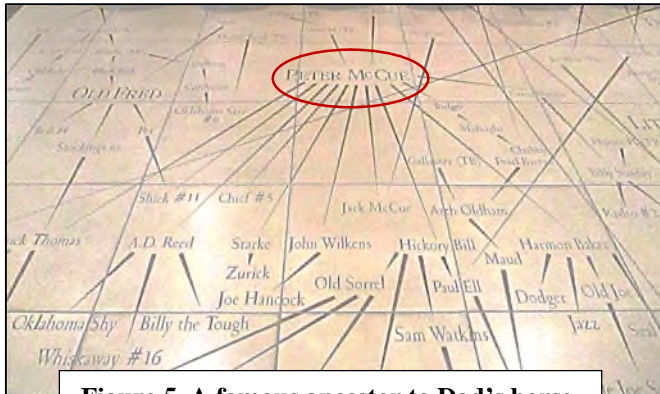
**Figure 3. Exhibits.**

The museum also has large displays and exhibits on its first and second floors, as seen in the photos of Figure 4. The exhibit on the famous horse racing track, Ruidoso Downs, brought back many fond memories. The track accommodates both Thoroughbred and Quarter Horse races, but is noted for its All American Futurity, the world’s richest for Quarter Horse racing.

My dad and step-mom made frequent trips (a three-to-four-hour drive) from our ranch to Ruidoso to watch and bet on the races. Dad also had a stake in some of the horses in the Quarter Horse contests. On occasion, I accompanied Dad and Mary on these, to a child, fanciful trips to a never-never land; a Disneyland before Disneyland existed.



**Figure 4. More Exhibits.**



**Figure 5. A famous ancestor to Dad’s horse.**

Based on the suggestion from the museum attendant, I was eager to examine the floor of the Hall of Fame room. Part of this floor is shown in Figure 5. I snapped this photo to capture the name of Peter McCue, a member of the Hall of Fame and the forebearer to Dad’s prize stud, Wompus. No wonder Dad valued Wompus so highly. His blood line resulted in substantial stud fees.



**Figure 6. Peter McCue.**

Sure enough, Peter McCue is on the wall of the Hall of Fame, admitted in 1991, as shown in Figure 6. Returning to the museum attendant in the lobby, I asked about obtaining more information on the horse; mainly, when he was born and when he died. She turned to her computer, and shortly responded, “He was born in 1895 and died in 1923. Just google his name. There’s a lot of information online, and if you wish, you can talk with our archivist.”

“Thank you. I’ll check-out Peter later,” as I continued visiting this special place. But it was time to turn to other undertakings for my traveling America roving. I left the museum/hall and snapped the photos in Figure 7 as I walked toward my car.

If you happen to be in Amarillo someday, make it a point to visit the American Quarter Horse Hall of Fame and Museum. Even if you might not care about horses, the place is a treat. And if you have been around horses, you already know they are more discerning than dogs about whom they take into their confidence. But once they do, they are as loyal as Lassie.



**Figure 7. Scenes outside the museum.**

Now, we move on to an examination of battles that took place in 1874-1875 between the US Army and warriors of several Southern Plains Indian tribes. These fights were the last major

lethal confrontations between two conflicting cultures, marking the end of the Indians' centuries-old reign over what was to become America.



## Traveling America (XX) Report Three: The Red River War

**October 10, 2023**

I have relied on two outstanding books in preparing for “Traveling America (XX),” as identified in the footnotes below.<sup>4</sup> They are works of journalism, reflecting many hours of research and writing, but they read like fictional thrillers.

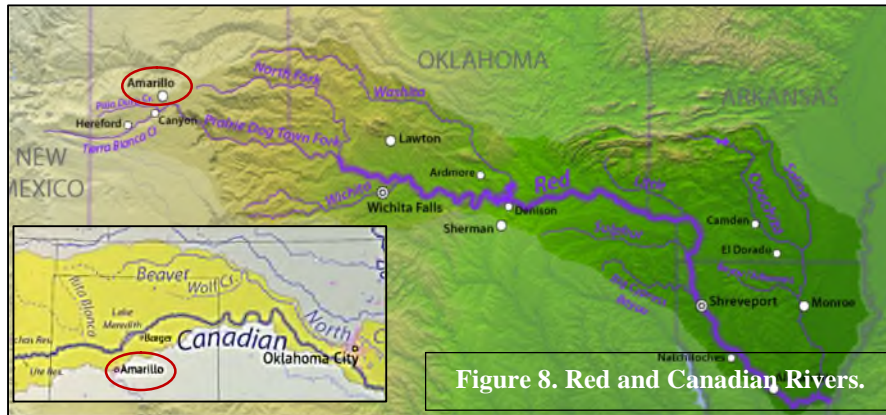


Figure 8. Red and Canadian Rivers.

The Adobe Walls and Palo Duro battles were part of the Red River War of 1874. Its name came from the Red River and the river’s tributaries that ran through the Panhandle, as shown in Figure 8. Note the insert showing the Canadian River, just north of Amarillo (within

red circles in both maps), also discussed in this story.



Figure 9. Indian domains and agencies.

This war was a continuation of battles between the United States and Native Americans that had been taking place since the colonial days. However, the Red River War was created specifically to displace the Southern Plains Indian tribes---Arapaho, Comanche, Kiowa, and Southern Cheyenne---from the Texas Panhandle and move them to reservations, called agencies. They were located mainly in Oklahoma (depicted in Figure 9).<sup>5</sup>

The Red River War amounted to the last breath of the nomadic Plains Indians. Their population had already been decimated by whites’ diseases, firepower, and overwhelming

<sup>4</sup> S.C. Gwynne, *Empire of the Summer Moon*, Scribner, New York, 2010, and Hampton Sides, *Blood and Thunder* Anchor Books, New York, 2006.

<sup>5</sup> *Red River War of 1874-1875: Clash of Cultures in the Texas Panhandle*, Texas Historical Commission, Study conducted 1998-2003, 5.

numbers. The war took-out what little air they had left in their bodies----some say, in their souls as well.

Prior to the Civil War, Anglo settlers, supported by the US military, were moving west, increasingly encroaching on the Indians' buffalo hunting grounds and their places of habitation. Encounters, often deadly, were frequent.

But during the war US settlers and soldiers moved back toward the east and the Indians were able, somewhat, to reassert themselves.

After the war, settlers---farmers and ranchers---began moving west again, relying on the military to protect their lives and newly acquired belongings. Among these belongings were the land and buffalo, formerly controlled by the natives, their very livelihood. Naturally, the Indians did not take too kindly to this threat, not only to their way of life, but to their existence.

So, battles continued. But the natives were fighting a lost cause. They could not match the US forces. Increasingly, they were losing buffalo, land, and weight. Many were on the verge of starving.

### The Medicine Lodge Treaty

The Anglos solved the problem associated with their "Go West Young Man!" fervor; fervor that was leading to the decimation of an entire cultural and ethnic populace.

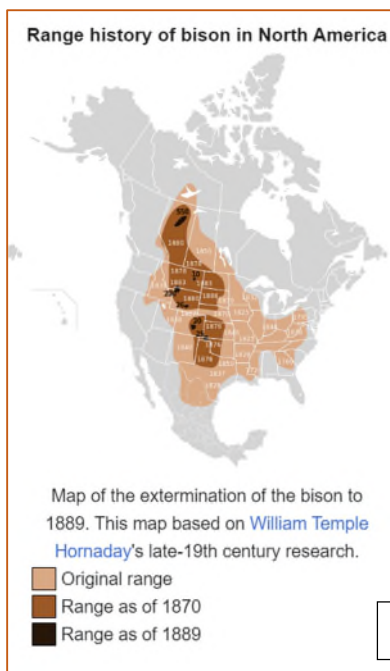


Figure 10. "Oh, give me a home, ..."

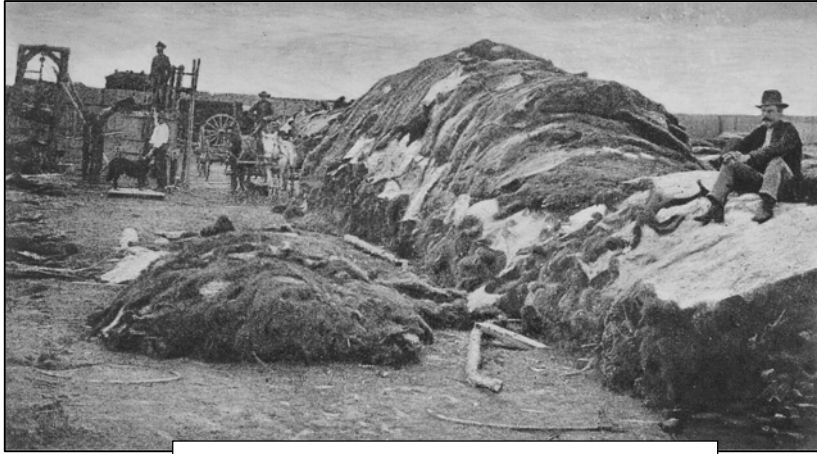
In 1867, the Anglos and Indians signed a treaty in Medicine Lodge, Kansas for land to be set aside in present day Oklahoma for the Indians to live, as shown in Figure 9. Two "reservations" were established: one for the Comanche and Kiowa and one for the Southern Cheyenne and Arapaho. By 1878, buffalo were almost extinct, as shown in Figure 10.<sup>6</sup>

What did the Indians gain from giving up their centuries-old homeland? Uncle Sam promised them housing and teaching them to farm. Farm? They had been hunters and gatherers for their entire existence. But hereafter, they were denied buffalo ponies for hunting and raiding. Instead, they were given plows and plow horses...and often Indians pulling the plows instead of horses.

For these favors from the US Government, as well as food, clothing, and other supplies, the Indians were supposed to cease raids on white farmers and ranchers.

Some Indian chiefs signed the treaty and moved to the reservations, but some did not. They resented having to plant corn when their food of choice (bison) was being slaughtered by the millions for their hides, horns, and heads.

<sup>6</sup> National Park Service, and <https://wildlife.org/new-bison-conservation-initiative-focuses-on-genetic-diversity/>, and doi:10.1093/jhered/esp024. Based on research by William Temple Hornaby in the late 1800s.



**Figure 11. ...where the buffalo don't roam."**

It is estimated 40,000,000 bison roamed the west in 1830. By 1889, that number had been reduced to just over 500.<sup>7</sup> Figure 11 is a photo taken during this time at a Dodge City, Kansas collection site: 40,000 hides awaiting the tanning process.<sup>8</sup>

In 1873, a hunter (Tom Nixon) killed 3,200 buffalo in 5 days. Big money could be made for these killings. In 1872, a single hide sold for \$3.50 (\$82.00 in 2024 money).<sup>9</sup> That stack of hides shown in Figure 11 was valued at around \$3,200,000.

Ironically, some of the Indians resorted to cattle rustling to feed themselves. But with the whites' knowing how dependent the Indian was on his pony to hunt cattle or bison, another strategy was to kill or capture his horses.

In addition to using the buffalo for leather goods and killing them for sport, decimating the Indians' main source of protein was viewed as another way to subdue them and force them to move to reservations. So, once again, humans resorted to subjugation and liquidation of their own kind to gain an advantage and further their quest for earth's turf.

The Whites' suppression strategy in the 1870's Texas Panhandle against the Indians was successful. Which leads us to the next chapter of the Texas Panhandle Indian Wars of 1874-1875.

<sup>7</sup> William T. Hornaday, *The American Natural History* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons), and Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife (January 1965), "The American Buffalo."

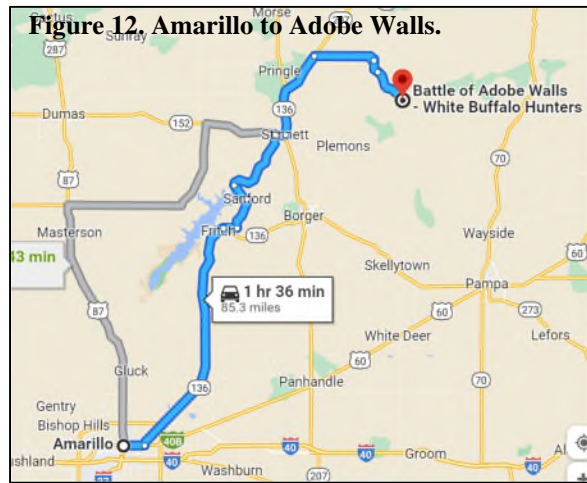
<sup>8</sup> S.C. Gwynne, *Empire*, following page 150. Note: The stack does not look like it has 40,000 hides, but the entire stack is not shown in the photo...and I have no experience in counting mounds of animal hides.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

## Traveling America (XX) Report Four: Adobe Walls Battles

**October 11, 2023**

The drive from Amarillo to Adobe Walls is shown in Figure 12. It took only a couple hours to make the short trip through a treeless but bountiful prairie. Very little traffic, with an occasional cattle truck or passenger car passing by. It was a relaxing drive through a pleasant part of America.



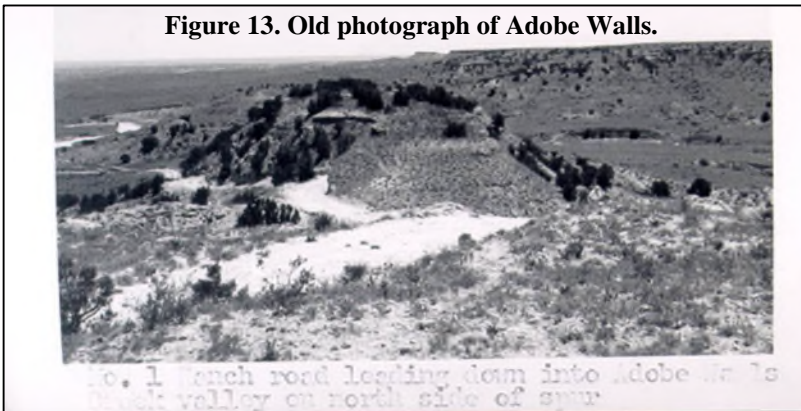
As introduced earlier, two confrontations between Indians against US soldiers and American frontiersmen took place: Adobe Walls I-November 25, 1864, and Adobe Walls II-June 27, 1874.

### First Battle

The first battle, modest in comparison to other Indian-Anglo fights, was still one of the largest that took place on the Great Plains.

The encounter occurred around the area called Adobe Walls, an abandoned trading post/saloon located in the Panhandle, as shown in Figure 13. It was the last time Indians (the

Comanche and Kiowa) forced American soldiers and cavalry to retreat, marking the beginning of the end for the way of life of the plains Indians.



For the reader who has read the book or watched the TV rendition of *Lonesome Dove*, one scene takes place in an adobe ruin at this site (probably at a studio in Hollywood). The actual Adobe Walls site has been lost to history, preserved by a few old photographs, again, one seen in Figure 13.

**Kit Carson.** The renown explorer and Indian fighter, Kit Carson (Figure 14), was chosen



**Figure 14. Kit Carson.**

to lead the force against the Indians. I had read about Carson, watched movies about him, and thought much of it was contrived by Hollywood western movie script writers. After reading the Sides book, cited earlier, I came to realize he is likely America's most authentic old-time wild-west hero, yet he is not well-known by the general public. Daniel Boone and Davy Crockett have their names in fame, yet their exploits, grit, and bravery pale in comparison to those of Kit Carson. Let's let Sides offer some thoughts about the man

before we examine the first battle at Adobe Walls. ...and before America's illiberal left lobbies to remove and/or denigrate this part of our history:

He was only thirty-six years old, but it seemed he had done everything there was to do in the Western wilds---had been everywhere, met everyone. ...He had witnessed the dawn of the American West in all its vividness and brutality. [Including his killing quite a few Indians and as legend has it, a white man.]

In his constant travels [among others: the west coast, northwest, midwest, and east coast, including Washington, DC] he had caromed off of or intersected with nearly every major tribal group of consequence. He had lived the sweep of the Western experience with a directness few other men could rival.<sup>10</sup>

Carson was in command of the 1st Regiment New Mexico Volunteer Cavalry, which was comprised of 260 cavalry, 75 infantry, two mountain howitzers, and 72 Indian scouts. Starting in New Mexico, on November 12, he traveled down the Canadian River (north of present-day Amarillo) into the Texas Panhandle. See the inserted photo in Figure 8. He was in search of the Comanche and Kiowa tribes, mainly the warriors, but also their encampments.

By November 24, he had reached Mule Springs, some 30 miles west of Adobe Walls. There, his scouts reported they had discovered a large Indian village. On the 25<sup>th</sup>, Carson's forces attacked a Kiowa encampment consisting of 176 lodges/tipis.

The Indians fled to nearby Comanche villages to alert a considerable number of other Indians. Carson established a temporary defense at Adobe Walls when he discovered there were more Indians than had been expected. Accounts of the number of Indians around this area vary, but most historians agree that well over 1,000 Comanche and Kiowa warriors attacked Carson's contingent.

Carson was outnumbered and likely saved himself and his men because of the two howitzers, which kept the Indians at bay.

Carson succeeded in repelling the attacks only through his clever use of supporting fire from the twin howitzers. The first shells from the howitzers caused the Comanche and Kiowa to retire from the battlefield, but they soon returned in even greater numbers and renewed the attack.

By afternoon [it was] estimated Carson's army faced more than 3,000 Indians. After six to eight hours of fairly continuous fighting, Carson realized he was running low on howitzer shells and ammunition in general, and he ordered his forces to retreat to the Kiowa village in his rear.<sup>11</sup>

Later that day, Carson's forces burned the lodges of the village, "confiscated many 'finely finished buffalo robes' and burned the rest...the Indian scouts killed and mutilated four Kiowas too decrepit to flee." Knowing he was outmanned, and short of ammunition, Carson and his forces retreated to New Mexico, suffering six dead and 25 wounded. It is estimated the Indians lost approximately 60 men in the battle.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Sides, *Blood*, 7.

<sup>11</sup> <https://web.archive.org/web/20080115062500/http://www.juntosociety.com/native/adobewalls.htm>.

<sup>12</sup> George H. Pettis, "Kit Carson's Fight with the Comanche and Kiowa Indians," Historical Society of New Mexico, 9-13.

For a while, the Comanche and Kiowa went unchallenged in their control of the Panhandle. But the whites were licking their wounds and preparing for another campaign to force the Indians to move to reservations.

The end of the Civil War was less than a year away (April 9, 1865). US soldiers, including the scorched-earth general, William Sherman, would be headed west to finish-off the increasingly hapless Indians.

## Second Battle

After this battle, Adobe Walls and its trading post faded into unused ruins. Later, in June 1874, two stores were built near the trading post, mainly to serve as a home-base to the buffalo hunters in the area. The hunters had pretty much whipped-out the herds toward the north and had moved south along the Canadian River to continue their slaughter.

This part of the Panhandle was hostile Indian territory, where some white men were still being killed by the Indians in retaliation for the whites violating Medicine Lodge and other treaties, but mostly fighting to preserve their disappearing cultures.

On June 27, 1874 approximately 700 hundred Indians attacked the stores, coming so close to breaching the doors that they were pounding against them. True to the times of those days, where warfare was often viewed as a glorious undertaking, one of the more poetic fighters recording this fight wrote the following:

There was never a more splendidly barbaric sight. In after years, I was glad that I had seen it. Hundreds of warriors, the flower of the fighting men of the southwestern Plains tribes, mounted upon their finest horses, armed with guns and lances, and carrying heavy shields of thick buffalo hide, were coming like the wind. Over all was splashed the rich colors of red, vermillion and ochre, on the bodies of the men, on the bodies of the running horses. Scalps dangled from bridles, gorgeous war-bonnets fluttered their plumes, bright feathers dangled from the tails and manes of the horses, and the bronzed, half naked bodies of the riders glittered with ornaments of silver and brass. Behind this headlong charging host stretched the Plains, on whose horizon the rising sun was lifting its morning fires. The warriors seemed to emerge from this glowing background.<sup>13</sup>

Fights and skirmishes kept-up for three days, with a few men on both sides being killed or wounded. During this time, additional buffalo hunters made their way into the protected buildings to reinforce the whites. By the sixth day of the battle, about 100 men were defending the make-shift fortress.

In August, the US Cavalry came to the rescue with troops coming from the north. The Indians pulled up stakes, and shortly, so did the Anglos. Sporadic fights, killings, and assorted scalplings continued to take place around this area, but Adobe Walls II represented the last major confrontation in this part of the Panhandle between the Indian and the Anglos.

But to the south, three months later, Palo Duro Canyon witnessed one more major Indian-white battle in the Texas Panhandle, told in the next chapter.

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<sup>13</sup> O. Dixon, *Life and Adventures of "Billy" Dixon*, Guthrie: Co-operative Publishing Company, 1914.

### Visiting the Adobe Walls Battle Sites

As shown in Figure 12, I had made the drive from Amarillo to the Adobe Walls battle sites. I had hoped, somewhat expected, this historic place to be set up for a tourist’s vicarious visit to a wild-west battleground. Like the impressive Battle of the Little Bighorn Monument.<sup>14</sup>

My hopes were hopeless. After driving up and down a segment of the highway several times, looking for a sign pointing to Adobe Walls I or II, I encountered a road sign shown in Figure 15. As you can somewhat read, it commemorates the first battle at Adobe Walls. Notice the absence of any aspect of a battlefield behind the sign. ...A nothingness historical site.



Granted, “nothingness” is not a politically correct word in this situation. Tree huggers (in this case, sage grass huggers) would admonish me; “Uyless, that scene behind the sign is symbolic of *America the Beautiful*: “O beautiful for spacious skies. For amber waves of grass.”

Not for this sightseer. Expecting a battlefield, I encountered an empty field. I could not venture onto it without going over or through a barbed wire fence.

Also notice the holes in the sign. They are bullet holes, likely from disgruntled tourists.

Figure 15. The battlefield.



Figure 16. Commemoration.

Figure 15 shows an admittedly fruitful field of grass but for a tourist, not a fruitful field of skeletons or rusty shell casings. I scouted around the sign for some remains or even signs about the second battle of Adobe Walls. No luck. The only information came from the books I read and the online references.

One of the online references displayed the photo in Figure 16 about the second battle.<sup>15</sup> I have enlarged this picture, in order you to be able to read it. It is still only faintly readable, so I will recite it:

<sup>14</sup> Go to Blog.UylessBlack.com. Scroll down and click on **23. Traveling America**. Then, click on **TA(VIII)**. Refer to pages 5-7, for a brief description of the Little Big Horn terrain.

<sup>15</sup> Erected in 1924 by the Panhandle-Plains Historical Society.

ADOBE WALLS BATTLE GROUND  
HERE ON JUNE 27, 1874, ABOUT 700 PICKED  
WARRIORS FROM THE COMANCHE, CHEYENE  
AND KIOWA INDIAN TRIBES WERE DEFEATED  
BY 28 BRAVE FRONTIERSMEN.

The list that follows after this citation contains names, likely of those 28 men.

The citation is a bit inaccurate, as over 100 Anglos participated in the battle. But the monument was obviously meant to honor those who were killed.

In addition, as best this writer can determine from my studying the battle, neither side won or lost the tactical fight. But the Anglos---the army, the buffalo hunters, and ultimately, emerging America---won the strategic contest.

In a few short years, the once great Indians of the Great Plains---former masters of this vast part of earth--- were spiritually and physically impoverished, with only few traces left of their former unchallenged eminence.

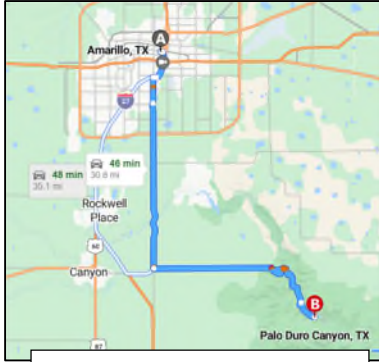
But Adobe Walls did not signal the Indians were finished, at least, not completely. The Palo Duro Canyon battle was yet to come.



## Traveling America (XX) Report Five: Palo Duro Canyon Battle

**October 12, 2023**

The short drive from Amarillo to the Palo Duro Canyon took me southeast from the city, as shown in Figure 17. The drive was similar to the one I took yesterday to visit highway road signs until I neared the site itself. I had heard and read that Palo Duro was different from most of the other areas in the Panhandle, that it was known as the “Grand Canyon of Texas.”



**Figure 17. To Palo Duro.**

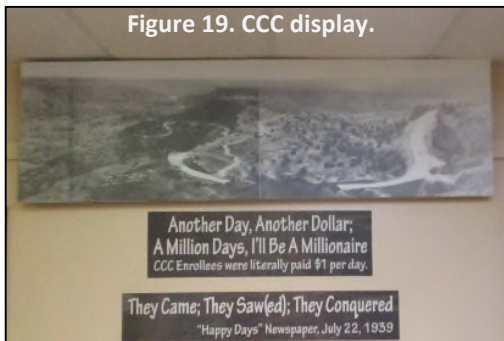
Palo Duro is one of the largest canyons in the country, ranging up to 40 miles long and up to six miles wide. As the pictures below show, it consists of striking multicolored layers of rock, steep mesa walls, and abundant foliage; quite different from the parts of the Panhandle we have visited thus far.

The few buildings in the park are constructed of stone taken from the local terrain, as shown in Figure 18(a). The canyon itself has very few dwellings and many beautiful views (Figure 18(b)), with the largest building housing a museum and curio shop (Figure 18(c)).



**Figure 18. Palo Duro Canyon.**

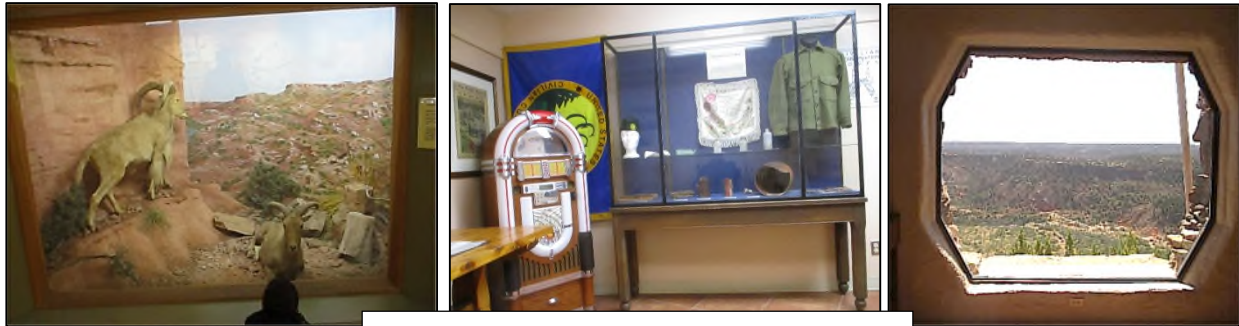
**Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC).** The buildings and roads in the park were constructed in the early 1930s by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), a New Deal program established by President Franklin Roosevelt to put unemployed citizens from the Depression to work. Fifteen thousand acres of natural, relatively unpopulated geography had recently been acquired by Texas to become a state park.



**Figure 19. CCC display.**

Say what one will about FDR’s New Deal (of which the CCC was the most well-liked), the work of the Corp resulted in thousands of hungry and ill-clothed men and women having funds to live on. And the hundreds of projects undertaken by the CCC led to many beautiful natural parks and monuments which still exist today. The museum has several displays honoring the CCC, one is shown in Figure 19.

The museum is small in comparison to big-city museums. What it lacks in size, it makes up in quality. Figure 20 shows three photos I took of scenes in and from the museum.



**Figure 20. The Palo Duro Museum.**

**Memories of a Childhood Companion.** A small sculpture in one of the display cases, one for sale, caught my eye. It was a carving of a Horny Toad, a small reptile that was my frequent playmate when I was a child. It displays a fearsome appearance, as seen in Figure 21. My brothers taught me when I was about three to four years old that despite its intimidating physical looks, it was a passive nonaggressive critter.



**Figure 21. A scary-looking reptile.**

And small, too. I could place the toad in the palm of my tiny hand. There it would stay, never moving a muscle. Even its eyes stayed fixed. A creature of past times was captured by a curious creature of the present.

I discovered the Horny Toad’s defense against my temporary capture was to scurry away for a minute or two. But its small legs could not carry it away from my pursuit. Invariably, it would suddenly stop and assume its monument-like pose. It would not move until I walked away, and I sometimes stuck around for over an hour, daring the little lizard to make a move on me. But camouflage was its best weapon. It blended in, becoming part of the gray-brown grass and ground surrounding it.

If a person is emotionally capable of growing fond of a reptile, then I did so. As I walked around our ranch on the Llano Estacado of New Mexico’s harsh high plains, exploring all a child could see, I began to look upon them as my companions.



**Figure 22. A small sculpture.**

I asked a museum employee behind the counter (who was one of the museum’s curators) if I could examine a very small sculpture of the reptile. Sure. He pulled it out and placed it on a velvet-like display cloth. Very small, indeed. Later, I took the photo in Figure 22, with the sculpture resting next to a coin.

We entered into a conversation (paraphrased, I forgot to turn on my recorder).

- Me, "This sculpture brings back many memories. When I was a kid, I played around a lot with Horny Toads."
- Curator, "So did I. By the way, they are more often called Horned Toads nowadays. 'Horny Toads' is not used much anymore."
- "I never knew of anyone who called them Horned Toads."
- " 'Horny' has more than one meaning. The word 'horny' made some people feel uneasy, so it gradually fell into less use."
- I mumbled, "The politically correct mafia strikes again."
- "Beg pardon?"
- Nothing, just a peeve of mine. ...I might like to buy the sculpture." I looked at the price. It was just over \$100. "It's not much on accuracy of showing what a Horny Toad looks like." (Reader, look at Figures 21 and 22. What do you think?)
- "The crafts in this museum are made by local Native Americans. Most of the proceeds of sales go to them. Some are very skilled---look at this one [a fine rendition of a wolf], and some are not."
- "I don't want a wolf. I'll take the Horny Toad."
- Ha! 'Horny Toad.' Old habits die hard. I often slip and call them 'horny' as well."

For all my readers, horny or otherwise, my beloved Horny Toad will be so-called by me until I die, regardless if this little horned creature is horny or not.<sup>16</sup> Now, on to more exploring of the Palo Duro Canyon and a historic battle that took place there many years ago.

**Geography.** Figure 23 shows the beautiful striations made to the geography over millions of years. One of the better-known ridges is called the Lighthouse. I took the photo on the left from my car. Even using the camera's close-up feature, I would not obtain a distinctive image, so I borrowed the picture on the right from the Bing browser. The multi-colored ridges and grooves are stunning. I wanted to stay there for a long while.



**Figure 23. The lighthouse.**

<sup>16</sup> Many years ago, TCU named its mascot the *Horned Frog*. In 1979, the Horned Frog became a nickname, and TCU took on the name *Super Frog* as its mascot. Toad is one name for a frog and frog is one name for a toad. But no one I knew on the plains of New Mexico ever confused what we commonly called a Bullfrog with what we called a Horny Toad. They were (are) as different as night and day...as water and desert. As for TCU and others, many things nowadays are "super," even frogs. Here are two possible mascot names I made up from current names: U of Oregon, Super Ducks; U of Arkansas, Super Boll Weevils.

The sides of many of the cliffs and hills contain the remains of Indian lodges, as shown in Figure 24. Various tribes inhabited the canyon for thousands of years to be near water from a Red River fork, the availability of ample game, and protection from the weather.



Figure 24. Indian lodges.

Early European explorers are known to have visited the canyon in the 1500s, and the US military created maps of parts of the canyon in 1852 while looking for the headwaters of the Red River.

Thereafter, the water, foliage, and game of the canyon was too tempting for the settlers to ignore. Besides, the Indians were supposed to be on reservations.

**One Last Deadly Contest.** The battle of Palo Duro Canyon between the Indians and the US military took place in the late summer of 1874. Accounts of the fight vary a bit. One being that the Indians were living in the lodges of the canyon. Another that they were now on reservations, but had left their confinements to seek refuge in the canyon, and had stockpiled food, supplies, and horses to get them through the winter.

Colonel Ranald S. Mackenzie led the attack with several companies (about 1,000 men, perhaps slightly more) against an unknown number of Indians (estimated at several hundred). Mackenzie's orders were to remove all the Indians from the canyon and herd them to the reservations.

After a see-saw fight, the Indians (Comanche and Kiowa) knew they were out-manned and out-gunned. They withdrew, many climbing the slopes out of the canyon. While doing so, they fired on the US troops below. But the cavalry pursued the Indians, capturing almost 2,000 horses and the Indians' winter supplies. Few men died on either side, but the fight became a rout in favor of the US forces.

By the next day (September 29), the Indians had lost their last remaining native "safe heaven." They had lost most of their horses and their winter supplies. Many returned to the reservations.

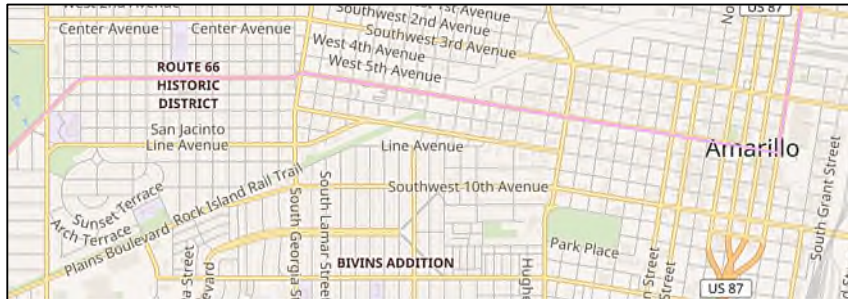
The Red River War was pretty much over. The battles between the Indians and the white settlers, going back to the early 1600s, were also pretty much over. The Indians' long and proud heritage had been torn asunder by settlers who wanted to replace the buffalo with cattle and the plow. So, they killed the buffalo---almost to extinction---and moved the Indians off the land.

**Aftermath.** Once the Indians were gone from the canyon, the whites could safely move in. The famous western rancher, Charles Goodnight, along with a rich Scot, John Adair, established the JA Ranch a couple years after the Indians had been removed. Other ranchers followed, as well as tourists. As mentioned, much of the canyon was purchased by the state of Texas in 1934 and turned into a state park.

## Traveling America (XX) Report Six: Back to Amarillo and Route 66

**October 14, 2023**

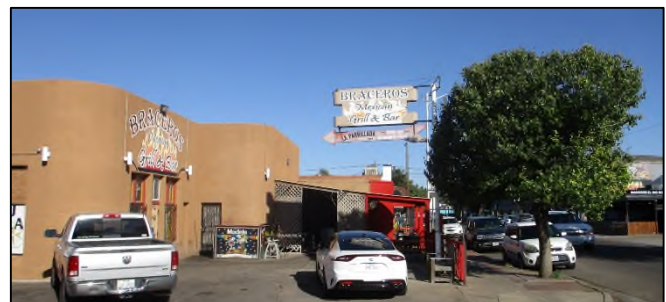
I returned to Amarillo, and prepared for the flight back home to Idaho. I had a few hours free on the day before departure, so I drove east a few miles to visit a landmark in Amarillo: The Route 66 Historic District. The famous highway, now replaced with Interstates, once spanned 2,448 miles from Chicago, Illinois to Santa Monica, California. I traveled many times over parts



of Route 66 during trips back and forth between my hometown in southeast New Mexico to Albuquerque (picking up 66 at Clines Corners). Figure 25 shows the Route 66 segment through Amarillo.

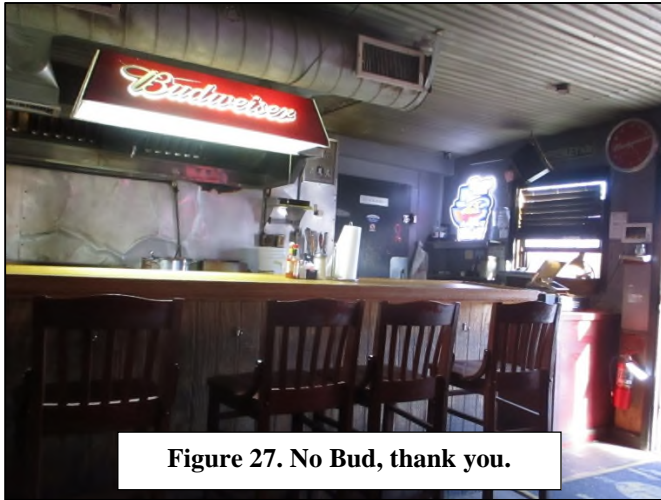
**Figure 25. Route 66 through Amarillo.**

This part of the city has been preserved, reflecting how the area looked around mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Figure 26 shows some of the buildings and streets of the area.



**Figure 26. Scenes of the Route 66 area.**

Many of the insides of the buildings have also been preserved or restored. I had lunch at a small café that had not changed much for some 70 years, as seen in Figure 27. A cheeseburger, fries, and a Coors beer. Just like old times.



Before closing-out *Traveling America (XX)*, let's go back a few days, to the trip where I found road signs about the Adobe Wells battles, but no battle sites. On my return to Amarillo, I stopped-off in Borger, Texas, and discovered the Hutchinson County Museum.

## Traveling America (XX) Report Seven: Hutchinson County Museum

### Back to October 11, 2023

Take a look at Figure 12, on page 10. It shows the location of Borger, Texas, and the location of the Hutchinson County Museum. The museum is housed in an old building of the 1920s. I pulled up to the front of the building, looking it over, and not expecting much from a small museum in a small town on the Texas Panhandle.

I should know by now to never underestimate an exhibition hall just because it does not have the frills and fame of a Smithsonian. What it lacks in size, this museum makes up in quality. And it is deceptively large, as I discovered exhibits on the second floor as well as outdoor displays.

Before showing a few of the many exhibits, here is some information on the museum: Clay Renick, Director, Hutchinson County Historical Museum, 618 North Main Street, Borger, TX 79007, 806-273-0130.



Figure 28. Hutchinson County Museum exhibits.



Traveling to the Texas Panhandle and the Quarter Horse Museum; re-visiting the Great Plains, remembering its beautiful starkness; seeing for the first time the stunning Palo Duro Canyon, and vicariously experiencing the deadly Indian-US military battles. All allowed this writer to learn many new things. And just as important, to re-learn some things I had long forgotten.

I hope you will be my companion in other *Traveling America* stories.

## Traveling America

Available at [Blog.UylessBlack.com](http://Blog.UylessBlack.com). Scroll to and click on “23. Traveling America.” Then, click on the series you find of interest.

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