

# The Texas Centennial

## Historic Marker & Fort Colorado

Historical markers like “Site of Fort Colorado” were placed around Texas in 1936 to celebrate 100 years of Independence from Mexico. The markers mostly focused on battles fought by Anglo Texans against Mexicans for Texas Independence, a war partially fueled by the desire of White slave holders to keep enslaved people. While that story went unacknowledged, stories on these markers promoted an image of Texas as a Western state, joining in a battle of Anglo “civilization” against “savage” Native Americans.

Focused on Anglo Texan views on the struggles for independence, these markers typically overlooked the diverse experiences of Native Americans, African Americans, and Mexican Americans in Texas. Stories of Anglo Texan dominance became synonymous with Texas. The theft of Native American land and the attempt to forcibly remove Tribes from Texas in the late 19th Century was generally accepted as an inevitable outcome of Anglo Texan “civilization.” Policies relating to Native Americans varied throughout the brief existence of the Republic of Texas (1836-1846). Eventually, the Republic adopted explicit policies of removal and even genocide aimed at eliminating Native Americans from the territory.

Anglo Texans justified the killing and removal of Native Americans as a necessary outcome of civilization, progress, and Manifest Destiny. These beliefs assumed that Native Americans had no legitimate claim to the land and that their resistance to the theft of their land was unjustified. Eventually these ideas, reflecting the prejudices of the Anglo men who continued to dominate cultural and political life well into the 1930s, became inscribed in granite across the state of Texas.

Fort Colorado was built to secure and expand the Republic of Texas’ control over Native American territory, but Native Americans resisted. While there were attacks and skirmishes, not all resistance resulted in violence. The

Penateka Comanches sought peace through diplomacy in 1837, although their treaty was never ratified. This is the only known peace treaty ever initiated in Travis County, and the endeavor marks a significant historical moment when peace and diplomacy were considered in the state’s policy towards Native Americans.

Though the Comanche and Caddo tend to dominate historical narratives about this region of Texas, there were many other Tribes living in the vicinity. Tonkawa, Lipan Apache, and Delaware were also present in the area. Earlier records from 18th century Spanish colonial missions also note the presence of Sana, Coco, and other Coahuiltecan-speaking bands, residing along the Colorado River.

Fort Colorado played an important role in contests between Anglo settlers and Native Americans, as they vied for control of this territory now known as Texas. Despite the conflicts, failed diplomacy, and forcible removal from their homelands, these tribes still endure today. The Comanche, Caddo, Tonkawa, Waco, and Delaware all reside in present-day Oklahoma as federally recognized Tribes, and still consider Texas as their homelands. Other Tribes with ties to Fort Colorado, such as the Coahuiltecan and Lipan Apache, do not currently have federal recognition, yet continue to reside in and around Austin, maintaining an active Indigenous presence in the state.

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