God Dogs and Education: Traditional Cultural Innovation and a Twentieth Century Comanche Warrior of Education

by

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“God Dogs and Education: Traditional Cultural Innovation and a Twentieth Century Comanche Warrior of Education” addresses two interconnected themes: it provides a biography of two generations of Comanche men, Tippeconnic, and John Tippeconnic, and it offers an examination of the Comanche cultural principles, or ethos, that guided both of them through three different historical eras in the years, 1852-1942. This paper begins with an examination of the transition that Comanche people made from their origins as Shoshone people to a distinct group that controlled the majority of the southern plains. In addition, this work details the involuntary changes that Comanche people experienced through the lives of these two Comanche men. I argue that the Comanche ethos enabled our people to become the dominant plains horse culture. Moreover, it was this cultural ethos that provided the Comanche with the ability to deal with the involuntary changes impressed upon them as their way of life on the plains ended and the reservation period began following the Red River War. I contend that the Comanche ethos was ingrained in most aspects of rearing children. Further, this paper inspects the methods Comanche people utilized to instill this ethos in their children. The transmission of cultural values survived another involuntary transition in the early twentieth century as the Comanche reservation was broken up into allotments. Additionally, this paper explores the methods in which pre reservation Comanche men achieved social status and contends that the horse was the primary vehicle for both the transference of the Comanche ethos and the method to attain
status. The areas of critical examination include the aforementioned historical periods but also the adoption of western based education. My primary argument is that, it is largely due to the Comanche ethos engrained in John Tippeconnic since birth, that he was able to both successfully obtain a western based education in the twentieth century and shift the method whereby Comanche men previously achieved social recognition and prestige.

From the first quarter of the eighteenth century to the last quarter of the nineteenth century the Numunu (human beings or people) were a dominant force in the southern plains. Some scholars have suggested they were the most dominant force. The Comanche were originally Shoshone people who had resided in the Rocky Mountain region before they separated and migrated to the Southern plains during the seventeenth century. The most significant aspect of the Comanche culture that enabled their dominance was the horse. Comanche horsemen had few peers on the battlefield, largely due to their mastery of the horse. Their skill can be attributed partially to the extremely young age that a Comanche youth was taught to ride. Shortly after a boy could walk, he was introduced to riding the God Dog (horse) and while girls started at a slightly more advanced age, they were also trained to become skilled riders.

The horse permeated most aspects of Comanche society, transformed their culture and enabled the Numunu to expand the boundaries of their territory, Comancheria. In addition to martial use, territorial expansion, and population replacement, the horse was utilized as currency in Comanche society. It also proved to be the vehicle through which young men gained prestige and status. Furthermore, the God Dog allowed the Comanche to expand their hunting range in order to secure the vital game that enabled their sustenance. Simply stated, the

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1 Numunu is the Comanche word utilized by Comanches to describe themselves, and it simply means “human” or “human beings”. The word “Comanche” is an Anglicization of the Ute phrase “Kho-Mats”, which means, “one who fights me all the time”. When Spaniards pronounced the word it became Komantcia and subsequently, when the English-speaking Euro-Americans anglicized the word, it became Comanche.
The horse, initially reintroduced to the Western Hemisphere by the Spaniards, was more than just another item in the Columbian exchange; it exemplified what it was to be Comanche. While the horse did not create the Comanche ethos, it certainly was one of most significant tools utilized to express it. In pre-reservation years the horse was also a valuable part of the educational process. This educational process differed significantly from the western brand of education that Comanche people experienced during the early reservation years as well as during the boarding school era.

The horse herds in New Mexico appealed to the Comanche, and these future pastoralists capitalized on this new technology. The first Comanche documented appearance in the western record occurred in 1706, when Sergeant Major Juan de Ulibarri of the Santa Fe presidio reported to Governor Cuervo y Valdez that Taos was preparing for an attack by the Utes and Comanches. “After we had been welcomed by the Reverend Father Fray Francisco Ximenez, its minister and the rest of the Indians, the inhabitants who came to see me, the Governor (Taos Pueblo Chief) Don Juan Pacheco, and the rest of the chiefs then informed me that they were certain that the infidel enemies of the Ute and Comanche tribe were about to come and make an attack upon this pueblo, which information they wished to send to the governor and captain-general.” ² While this is generally accepted by scholars as the first time the Comanche made an appearance in New Mexico, the only thing that is certain is that it is the first time the Comanche made an appearance in the western record. Certainly, Numunu traveled to this region prior to their detection by the Spanish radar in 1706. It is unlikely that the Comanche were noticed by Spanish officials upon their initial forays into New Mexico, even though the latter often relied upon intelligence gathered from their Pueblo neighbors.

The Spaniards first re-introduced horses to New Mexico beginning in July of 1540, when Francisco Vasquez de Coronado led an expedition of conquest with “. . . close to three hundred

² Gerald Betty, *Comanche Society: Before the Reservation* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2002), 49.
European soldiers and more than eight hundred Mexican Indian auxiliaries pushing herds of a thousand horses and five hundred head of livestock. . .”  

3 Most assuredly some of those horses did not make the trek back to Mexico City less than two years later when Coronado abandoned his fortune hunting foray.

Undoubtedly the horse proved to be a major draw for Comanche incursions into New Mexico. However, one scholar provides a plausible and convincing explanation for why the Comanche were perhaps already in position to capitalize on this new technology. In *Comanche Society: Before the Reservation*, Gerald Betty claims that this explanation is not sufficient to explain the southern Comanche migration. “In the seventeenth century, Utes occupied the territory just to the north of New Mexico. Pre-contact the Comanche generally lived to the north of Ute lands. Consequently, as individuals of each tribe intermarried they would, theoretically, have been free to live with either of their families. This type of behavior set the foundation for the Comanches’ movement toward New Mexico and beyond.”

4 Intermarriage certainly took place between the Comanche and Ute and it is also a certainty that each group engaged in raids upon the other in order to secure female captives to sustain their populations. Over the centuries, Comanche relationships with the Ute undulated from peaceful coexistence to open warfare. However, from the early eighteenth century through mid-century, the Comanche and the Ute cemented a military and political alliance. This alliance was further strengthened through kinship ties and marriage. Once these ties had been solidified, the Comanche provided martial aid to the Ute against encroaching Apaches to their west and in campaigns against the Pueblos of the Rio Grande valley to the south. The Comanche benefitted immensely from Ute kinship alliances. Initially, the Ute alliance provided them access to the Spanish horse market, which they quickly exploited to become successful horse breeders. Finally,

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4 Betty, *Comanche Society: Before the Reservation*, 56.
they capitalized on their initial success and monopolized the market. Historian Pekka Hämäläinen notes that this special relationship appears in the Ute name for their Comanche neighbors and relatives, and he provides what can be viewed as evidence for Betty’s argument.

. . . *Kumantsi*, the Ute name for the newcomers. By conventional reading, the word means ‘enemy,’ or ‘anyone who wants to fight me all the time,’ suggesting that the first contact was a violent one. However, a more recent interpretation holds that *Kumantsi* refers to a people who were considered related yet different, and it suggests an encounter of another kind: rather than a clash between two alien peoples with sharp reflexes for violence, it was a reunion of two Numic-speaking peoples, who probably originated from the same Sierra Nevada core area, had taken different routes during the sprawling Numic expansion, and now, despite centuries of physical separation, found a unifying bond in their persisting linguistic and cultural commonalities.5

Comanches pushed further south and east and ultimately dislodged various Apache groups in securing control of the southern plains. Comanche control of the southern plains was facilitated by their social and political structure. The Comanche divided into small groups known as bands. These bands can also be classified as political organizations, as Thomas W. Kavanagh explains in *The Comanches: A History 1706-1875*, “Divisions were political organizations composed of local residential bands linked by kinship and sodality ties and recognizing a commonality of interest in group affairs, war, peace, and trade.”6 Although the number of Comanche bands fluctuated, the Peneteka (Honey eaters), Nokoni (Wanderers), Kotsoteka (Buffalo eaters), Yamparika (Yap Eaters), Tanima (Liver eaters), and the Quahada (Antelope) held the greatest prominence. Comancheria was vast,

totaling some 240,000 square miles and encompassing much of present-day central and west Texas, Southwestern Kansas, Southeastern Colorado, eastern New Mexico, and all of western Oklahoma. Although they were separated by vast areas of open plains Comanche bands controlled this entire area from the first quarter of the eighteenth century well into the second half of the nineteenth century. The acquisition of horses and the subsequent monopolization of equine trade facilitated control of Comancheria.

Comanches acquired horses through trade, by capturing wild horses, and by raiding or stealing and eventually breeding. Rollings notes, “A particularly popular way of acquiring horses was to steal them from others. The Comanche were talented horse thieves . . . The Comanche raided and stole from their Spanish and Pueblo Indian neighbors in New Mexico and the Spanish settlements in Texas and northern New Mexico.”7 In some cases, Comanche men or young men seeking status among the people attacked entire settlements and relieved them of all the horses. In other cases, they snuck into an enemy’s camp in the dead of night and silently captured all their horses. The Comanche became quite adept at stealing horses. In Comanches: The Destruction of a People, T.H. Fehrenbach notes, “The fact that the Nermernuh or Comanches possessed more horses and greater horse knowledge than any other people is well attested. Dodge stated that they were the finest, and in fact only successful, horse breeders on the entire Great Plains. They were the most skilled horse stealers.”8 Even for skilled horse stealers, acquiring new mounts could be a dangerous business that required great patience. “Sometimes when a raiding party had gone too far from the encampment of the tribe, their horses would get lame and they would turn them loose and continue on foot until they would secure some fresh horses. It was not a very easy task to secure horses and sometimes they would walk for days. Although their feet would get very sore, they would continue until they would

secure horses from a hostile tribe.”

Another Comanche recalls “... that to get horses from a hostile tribe they would usually be on the lookout for an opportunity to take the horses for days. This was considered an act of real bravery and sometimes included the risk of getting killed.”

By the end of the eighteenth century, when the Comanche had amassed their massive horse herds, it had become common for an average Comanche man to own two hundred and fifty horses. By comparison, a Dakota chief might own fifty horses. It had become typical for a rich Comanche man to own anywhere from five hundred to fifteen hundred head. Wallace and Hoebel note, “In horses they were the richest of all tribes; in fact they introduced the horse into the plains and they were the medium through which most other Indians received their mounts (at the expense of the Texans and Mexicans).” Access to a significant number of horses had not always been a reality for the Comanche.

Like most plains tribes who were nomadic peoples prior to the acquisition and widespread proliferation of the horse, the Comanche had once utilized dogs to haul their possessions and transport their goods. By attaching two poles tied together and harnessing them to a dog, the Comanche had traveled from one hunting ground to the next. They utilized this technology on a larger scale, once the horse became available. Due to the fact that a Comanche word for horse did not exist before the arrival of the Spaniards, their horses became known as the God Dog, connoting its cultural impact on the people. Although the following description includes vernacular from an earlier period in western historiography, the point Walter Prescott Webb made in, The Great Plains, is well taken, “Steam and electricity have not wrought a greater revolution in the ways of civilized life than the

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10 Ibid., 31.
horse did in the savage life of the plains.” 12 Indeed, following the arrival of the horse, the Comanche were no longer compelled to track and stalk buffalo, on foot.

A Comanche named Ta qua ker, who was likely born in 1860 during the pre-reservation era, reveals the importance of the horse to the Comanche: “The horse was our best friend, for our way of living depended so much on him. If it were not for this useful animal it would have been very hard for us to live happy and contented in our various activities.” 13 The horse enabled the Comanche to be a more proficient hunter and provider for his family, by allowing him greater access to buffalo, antelope and other vital game that provided ample food, clothing and shelter. In addition, the Comanche utilized horses to mount swift raids of Apache and Pueblo agricultural crops and food stores.

Comanches possessed horses specifically trained for various activities including horses to use in buffalo hunts and on raids. Comanche warriors also developed a characteristic battle tactic that exemplified their skill. John Tippeconnic, Sr. noted that Ta qua ker stated in a personal interview: “The Comanche hunters could shoot a buffalo while the horse was running very fast; or use him for a shield by dropping at the side and lying in a horizontal position, and so be protected from his enemies by the horse’s body. The heel of the rider would be hanging over the horse’s back, from this position the rider could regain his usual riding position or change to the other side, and use his bow and arrow from under the horse’s neck. This method of riding is very difficult, but very young braves had to learn how to ride in this manner for his own protection and to win battles.” 14

Horses provided the Comanche with a way to measure wealth and status as well as serving as a form of currency. Wallace and Hoebel note, “Horses constituted the most important type of property and staple form of wealth . . . Horses served also as an informal medium of exchange. They could be presented as

13 Tippeconnic, “Comanche Indian Customs With Educational Implications”, 39.
14 Ibid., 38.
gifts in reciprocity for services rendered and as fees to medicine men.”  

Horses were also used to pay for a bride. A father of a Comanche girl would not likely give his daughter to any man who could not prove, through the offering of many horses, the he could properly provide for her. John Tippeconnic’s interview of Taqua Ker echoes this point, “Because I was an expert horseman, I had no trouble in securing a good wife and family and living in happiness.” If a man had many quality horses to give away, he was obviously a capable warrior who, on the one hand had to have proven himself in war in order to acquire the horses and on the other hand would be able to hunt for the game that would sustain the prospective father-in-law’s daughter. Ronald Burgess notes, “If the horses were not satisfactory or there were not enough offered for his daughter, a Comanche would refuse to deliver the daughter to her suitor.”

It would be very difficult to venture a guess as to the overall numbers of horses that he possessed at their zenith. However, it can be safely assumed that probably no Indians were more richly supplied. The Comanche were certainly rich when it came to horses. At one point in the mid nineteenth century the Quahada, or antelope band, had a population of slightly fewer than two thousand people. However, their horses collectively numbered fifteen thousand.

The horse was the vehicle that transformed the Comanche from humble mountain people to the richest of the plains cultures. Fehrenbach wrote that the Comanche were once poor Shoshone people of the mountains, and with the horse blazed a trail across the mid-continent. Poor might be too strong a description for an entire people but certainly if one is basing wealth on the quantity of horses a tribe possessed, then it would apply. In Los Comanches: The Horse People, 1751-1845 Stanley Noyes echoes similar sentiments, “Yet these upstarts from the Basin and the backwoods had made themselves powerful and rich

15 Ibid., 36.
16 Tippeconnic, “Comanche Indian Customs With Educational Implications”, 38.
18 Fehrenbach, Comanches: The Destruction of a People, 95.
by the middle of the eighteenth century. Their peers among Plains tribes — Dakotas, Blackfoot, Crows, Cheyennes, Arapahos, and so on respected and sometimes envied them. Most smaller tribes feared them.”¹⁹ Since the Comanche were in possession of more horses than any other Indigenous peoples, it is logical to surmise that they were quite adept as horsemen.

The Comanche and the horse moved fluidly and were in sync to the point that they appeared to outside observers to maneuver as one being. Indeed from the early years of the eighteenth century forward, the horse and the Comanche became synonymous with each other. Fehrenbach notes, “Contemporary authorities agreed that the people made the finest horsemen of them all. The artist, (George) Catlin, who had sketched both Dakotas and Comanches, admired the Sioux but wrote that the Dakotas were no match for the squat Comanches on horseback.”²⁰ Europeans, including the Spaniards, Euro-Americans and other Indigenous peoples who witnessed various feats of Comanche horsemanship, generally formed the consensus that Comanches were the most skilled horsemen of all the Indian nations. Some witnesses go so far as to say the Comanche were among the best horseman the world has produced.²¹

Comanche women were also skilled riders. They spent much of their lives on horseback. Compared to their counterparts among northern plains tribes, few Comanche women had to walk when they moved the location of their camp. Historian Stanley Noyes notes “Daring young women- and sometimes older ones, too- frequently accompanied war parties, where they not only guarded the extra ponies and plunder during battles, but formed a line of defense, backing the men with bows and arrows. The Texas Rangers found them as dangerous as the warriors and killed them without compunction during combat.”²²

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²⁰ Fehrenbach, Comanches: The Destruction of a People, 94.
²¹ Wallace and Hoebel, The Comanches: Lords of the South Plains, 47.
²² Noyes, Los Comanches: The Horse People, 97.
While Comanche females’ proficiency made them formidable combatants, their most important role on the back of horses occurred when the Comanche moved camp. “The girls that were riding horses usually led the pack horses. They stayed back of their mothers and fathers. They kept their eyes on the packs, to avoid having them come loose and falling to the ground to thus delay the journey.”

23 Most women and children even had their own riding mounts to transport them from one camp to the next, although for young children, the horse selected was usually an older more reliable mount. Ta qua ker describes the process and age of introducing Comanche children to horses, “Our fathers made us get acquainted with the horses in a mild way when we were three years old. They would put us on one, lead us about the encampment and out into the fields. In this manner we would learn to be unafraid of horses. After we got a little older, about five or six years old, we could ride one and guide him around by ourselves.”

24 Indeed, from their early years in life, through their prime, and until their death, Comanche people spent their entire lives on horses.

In Comanche society, as in many Indigenous societies in the Americas, the practice of procuring captives was commonplace. Collecting individuals from other cultures served several purposes. These included: replenishing population bases, enhancing labor bases, achieving prestige, procuring wealth, and securing women for marriage. The Comanche sought captives to fill all of the aforementioned roles, and the horse enabled them to do so with proficiency. For a young Comanche man, adulthood and warrior status were synonymous.

In order to become an adult, a Comanche youth had to demonstrate his ability to be free of his family’s care. He could attain this independence by procuring his own horses, usually through warfare or raids. A male Comanche’s ability to achieve success in war, on raids, and in hunting depended on the individual’s proficiency with a horse. However this was only part of the equation. Vital to the male quest for manhood were female

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23 Tippeconnic, “Comanche Indian Customs With Educational Implications”, 20.
24 Ibid., 36.
gender roles that included organizing the labor in his household. In *Captives and Cousins: Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands*, James Brooks explains this social structure, “Since marriage, by supplying man the labor to assume his independence, proclaimed his adulthood, a man’s capacity to claim women stood at the very center of Comanche power relations. This system promoted the individual pursuit of wealth by young men, . . . Thus, prestige, acquired through feats of arms and hunting excellence, as well as the capture of horses and human beings represented the ‘cultural capital’ for which all Comanche men strove.”

Among the Comanche the horse was the most significant acquisition leading to a voluntary lifestyle change. The horse transformed the Comanche people from a mountain people to a people who controlled a vast expanse of territory called Comancheria, a name acknowledged from the middle of the eighteenth century to the middle decades of the nineteenth century. The horse, or God Dog, permeated almost all aspects of Comanche society, including the expansion of their domain, hunting, warfare, captive procurement, trade, wealth, prestige and the education of their youth. The ability of the Comanche to capitalize on the acquisition of large numbers of horses was embedded within their Numunu ethos. Without the horse, the Comanche would not have influenced the region they made their own.

After Mexican Independence in 1821, and again in 1836, following Texas independence from Mexico, the one constant on the southern plains, amidst all the change, was that the Comanche would gravitate to the horse herds that accompanied the various groups in or near Comancheria. Noyes explains this reality, “The two Comanche war trails to the haciendas south of the Rio Grande ran through Texas. Traditionally, war parties en route raided through the region, often picking up horses as they came or went. So the Anglo-Texans, once good relations with the

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People had broken down, inherited thirty years and more, off and on, of bad precedents that had finally hardened into a tradition and a habit nearly impossible to break. The Tejanos fell heir to the same troubles that had plagued Spanish and Mexican Texans before them.\textsuperscript{26} It was during this era that the traceable lineage to my family emerges on the Texas plains.

In 1854, a Comanche woman named, Ho-Vah- wert-te-ah (aka Wah-hah-wer-ta-quah) the wife of Wau-ny-e-o-how-pith (Yellow Fox) gave birth to a son.\textsuperscript{27} Little is known of Ho-Vah-wert-te-ah except that the Kiowa Agency Census lists her as being eighty-eight years old. If this is accurate, it means that she was born in 1807. Subsequently, her son was born somewhere on the Southern plains in what is now the state of Texas.\textsuperscript{28} This male Comanche, born free prior to the reservation era, is my paternal great grandfather Tippeconnic, aka To-Wick-Ah.\textsuperscript{29} He was only thirteen years old when Ten Bears and a handful of other Comanche headman signed the Medicine Lodge Creek Treaty in 1867. By the time To-Wick-Ah was thirteen, he would have already been introduced and immersed in the Comanche ethos. By ethos, I am referring to, “the fundamental character or spirit of a culture; the underlying sentiment that informs the beliefs, customs or practices of a group or society’s dominant assumptions of a people or period.”\textsuperscript{30}

By Comanche ethos, I am specifically referring to what my grandfather John Tippeconnic advanced as the “old Comanche plan of educating children by advice and precept inculcated certain desirable attributes in the children which stayed with

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\item[26] Ibid., 167.
\item[27] Indian Archive Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society Archives Manuscripts Division, Census of Kiowa, Comanche, Apache, Caddo and Wichita Affiliated Bands: Roll KA 2, 1895-1899 Kiowa Agency Census, p. 50, line 1189, 1897.
\item[29] Barbara Goodin, “Deyo Mission Cemetery” (Distributed by Deyo Baptist Church, 1994), 5.
\end{footnotes}
them through life.” 31 The desirable attributes are cooperation, consideration for others, self-denial, courtesy, reverence, self-reliance, conservation, alertness, prestige, courage, respect, loyalty, perseverance, responsibility, neatness, reliability, honesty, trustworthiness, utilization of the environment, kindness, and love for one another. Furthermore, I am asserting that this knowledge transference or Comanche ethos remained intact even after the involuntary transition from living free on the plains to the confinement of reservation life in the late nineteenth century. I am also asserting the idea that the Comanche ethos persevered through the allotment era and into the twentieth century. The most important ingredient in the instruction of the fundamental character or spirit of Comanche people was the adult. However, prior to 1875, one of the most important tools that Comanche people utilized to convey knowledge was the horse. To-wick-ah would have certainly been introduced to riding a horse by the age of three, per Comanche tradition. It is also likely that he would have taken part in most, if not all, of the practices typical Comanche children were involved in during pre-reservation years, such as foot races.

In the evenings, we had foot races. The small boys and large boys ran matched races arranged by the leader, usually some big boy who was the fast runner. The races for the small boys were for a distance of about seventy-five yards. The large boys ran races from a distance of about a hundred yards. The boys like to display their ability to run fast and the endurance they had built up by practice. All the races were just for fun, and for the purpose of learning how to play together. It gave us a chance to yell, laugh and holler encouragement to our friends and little brothers when they were running in some of the races. 32

Another important aspect of a child’s education occurred when Comanche boys were introduced to the bow and arrow. All male Comanche needed to know how to use a bow on a horse in

31 Tippeconnic, “Comanche Indian Customs With Educational Implications”, 57.
32 Tippeconnic, “Comanche Indian Customs With Educational Implications”, 8.
order to become a warrior and hunter. It was compulsory for Comanche warriors to discharge their arrows while racing at high speeds on their mounts during combat or while hunting. Although the training initially began with the bow and arrow, the horse was the conduit that allowed the transference of traditional education and knowledge after an individual had mastered the bow and arrow. However, children had to begin their education on the ground. Young children between the ages of six and ten years old made bows and arrows out of grass stems and practiced by shooting at grasshoppers. Andrew Per du so pah said, “They would spend hours in the open hunting the grasshoppers. They had to learn how to get close to the grasshopper without making any notice in order to get a good shot. This required much practice, patience, and steadiness. When the boys developed a little skill, they would shoot at them from a distance of about fifteen feet.”

By training with safer materials, accidents were minimized, while the younger children also developed patience and skill. Once they were a little older, Numunu children graduated to using bows made from Mulberry and arrows carved from Dogwood. Tahah notes “The older boys found this sport a very interesting pastime. This gave them an opportunity to develop their skill with the bows and arrows to a higher stage of marksmanship.”

Not only did the older Numunu boys graduate to more sophisticated tools, they also pursued slightly larger game, such as rabbits and squirrels. It is likely that To-wick-ah learned to use the bow and arrow in the same manner and to search out game by going into the woods. It took keen observation skills to find a rabbit that was lying down and great stealth to get close enough to let loose a shot without startling the prey. Tahah stressed that “In order to become good shots, they had to study the habits of the rabbits. Squirrels were harder to hunt than rabbits, for one’s arrows usually got stuck on the limbs of the trees. It was more fun to shoot at the squirrels for they were harder to hit, and one had to take careful aim to kill one. The boys from eleven to fifteen indulged in this sport. The bow and arrows used to hunt these

33 Ibid., 9-10.
34 Ibid., 10.
animals were the same size as those the men used for hunting wild game.”\textsuperscript{35}

Comanche boys gradually became adept at using the same implements used by men. Traditional Comanche knowledge was conveyed, without being expressly stated, while young boys learned to hunt and how to use the bow and arrow correctly. This was only one step in an educational process that eventually led to utilizing the bow on a horse. Comanche boys were instructed to watch their arrows very carefully after they were shot so that they could find them without much trouble. With this in mind the boys were told to try and shoot at their targets from positions that enabled the easy retrieval of their arrows and never to shoot from a position in which they might lose the arrows in water. “Every boy took pride in taking care of his equipment, and the most important of all his equipment was usually his bow and arrows. When a boy came home with most of his arrows missing, the father would say, ‘you must not be too careless with yourself’”.\textsuperscript{36}

While corporal punishment was not commonly practiced, young people experienced a degree of pressure throughout their education.

Swimming was another enjoyable pastime practiced by all ages. However, not everyone swam in the same location. Women, young children and the older girls all swam together near the encampment. The older boys and the men understood clearly that they were to stay away from this location out of respect. Mothers and sisters often swam or walked along the creek with children on their backs. “Mrs. Tahah and Mrs. Andrew Per du so pah, said that swimming was really enjoyed especially after a day of hard traveling. They also mentioned that the girls and the younger women played tag games in the water, but not as strenuously as did the boys.”\textsuperscript{37}

Comanche men and older boys typically ventured a mile or so away from the encampment to swim in order to avoid being seen by the girls and women and out of respect for the females. The boys engaged in water games that would build

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 10-11.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 8.
stamina, strength, courage and resolution, and encourage a fighting spirit that could be useful in later real life situations. “The boys played tag games in the water, and the last one to get tagged was usually considered the best swimmer. Diving from tree branches and swinging on grapevines into the water was one of the favorite sports enjoyed by the boys. The boys also liked to display their ability to swim under water to see who could go the greatest distance. All these games played in the water gave the boys endurance and the one’s that showed the most ability to do these things were respected by the others”. 38

Comanche boys also engaged frequently in wrestling games. “Post Oak Jim stated that wrestling was his favorite sport for he was a husky lad and was capable of holding his own with most of the boys that were much older and threw him down. ‘This activity gave us a lot of fun, and the opportunity to help us make our bodies strong, and have confidence in ourselves. We would respect the boys that were good wrestlers for the strength they had developed’. 39 Physical activity as an aspect of Comanche education persevered through the reservation era and continued into the boarding school experiences of many Comanche children.

From riding horses at an extremely young age to engaging in swimming, running, wrestling or kicking games, each activity was preparing young people for the future response that might save their lives, while instilling the Comanche ethos. “‘Playing with mud was another favorite pastime of the children. They would make figures of people, animals, teepees, and portray the camp life in all its activities. When someone yelled, a raid by the enemy tribe, they would scatter their playthings, and run into the woods to seek safety. The boys would come running to meet the imaginary enemy, and drive them away. This game was played by the boys and girls up to eleven years of age.’” 40 These games and similar working practices paid off during raids by enemy tribes; while the Comanche themselves raided a great deal, Comanche women and children had to be prepared when the tables were

38 Ibid., 7-8.
39 Ibid., 34.
40 Ibid., 8.
turned. “In time of raids by enemy tribes, a hole was dug big enough for them to hide in by covering themselves with buffalo robes. These holes were usually dug in the middle of the tepees by the women, children, and the old people. In this manner they would keep from getting shot or getting hurt.”

Previous studies have discussed the fact the Comanche were fierce warriors. This can be called the Comanche “warrior ethos,” and while I agree that this is true, it is only a single part of the whole, which is the Comanche ethos. By this I am advancing the idea that soon after children were old enough to walk and talk they were immersed in the Comanche ethos but becoming a warrior was only one part. Even before they could walk or talk, Comanche babies were brought along, regardless of the activity that involved their mothers. Comanche babies were transported and remained in cradleboards where they could watch the events and activities of the day. “The mothers often would stand the cradles with their babies in them against the trees, and gather wood. The babies were no trouble for they would watch the trees and leaves moving back and forth. Sometimes the mothers would carry them on their backs in cradles and carry on their work.”

Propped up and bundled tightly in a cradleboard allowed the baby to feel secure and content while visually stimulated. “The cradle board was either a sort of basket made of rawhide fastened to a flat, angular board or a soft buckskin sheath that laced up the front and was anchored to a back board.” This tradition continues for many Comanche people and both of my own children spent many days in a cradleboard as infants.

Once Comanche babies became toddlers they were occupied, like children from all cultures, with toys made by family members. “The children played with dolls, cradles and teepees made from scraps of buckskins. The older sisters, mothers, and grandmothers would make these playthings for them.”

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41 Ibid., 22.
42 Ibid., 32-33.
43 Wallace and Hoebel, *The Comanches: Lords of the South Plains*, 120.
44 Tippeconnic, “Comanche Indian Customs With Educational Implications”, 8.
raised with the Comanche ethos. As a young girl in the early nineteenth century she would have learned how to sew with sinew, tan hides and make moccasins and clothing out of buckskin. In addition she would have been taken out into the woods and into the fields in order to become cognizant of the various herbs, roots, and berries utilized both as food and medicine. Comanche girls were also taught that “To be industrious in your family was to the girls advantage, for the people would say, ‘that girl is a good worker’ and to have this sort of reputation was an honor of much significance to the mothers and the girls.” 45 Young boys and girls were also encouraged to create items to entertain themselves out of scraps of material. While the girls busied themselves with crafting clothing items as well as cradles and miniature tepees and hairbrushes, boys fashioned bows and arrows, drums, shields, quivers, rope and miniature bridles. 46 Older children were expected to be companions to their younger siblings as well as helping to look after them. Children were also praised for playing well with their playmates. Historians and ethnographers like Wallace and Hoebel, Kavanagh, and Fehrenbach as well as others who have produced work on the Comanche have focused on the ferocity of the people in battle and of their prowess in warfare, and while aspects of this are certainly true, those studies have been written from the outside looking in. Looking from the inside out through a Comanche perspective, the focus shifts to the Comanche ethos, and warfare was only one part of this ethos.

The Comanche certainly had a code of ethics that guided their behavior. While this code was not spelled out or codified, it assuredly was ingrained as part of the Comanche ethos from a very early age and continued through the advanced stages of life. “Whatever the people disapproved was refrained from by the whole tribe. This created a strong public sentiment against stealing, fighting, killing within the tribe, lying, cheating, and any acts of ill nature.” 47 Comanche people stressed the importance of telling the truth and of being trustworthy as well. “We were

46 Ibid., 17.
47 Ibid., 45.
trained by our grandparents, mothers, and fathers to always tell the truth for to fool somebody by telling a lie was hard to overcome. You were given the reputation of being unreliable and were looked upon as a person not capable of doing anything in honesty. Your parents and relatives would question your remarks and would say ‘he is not telling the truth, he can not tell the truth.’”

Most earlier histories written about Comanche focus on the warrior ethos and the fierceness, and at times, cold cruelty of the people. While this most assuredly is the position held by Comanche enemies, one must consider the context in which these assessments were made. Conversely, within Comanche society the Comanche ethos required the people to be kind, generous and compassionate to their own.

Once Comanche children reached the age of six, they understood the necessity of being honest regarding their actions. In addition, they understood the importance of being reliable. In the Comanche world of the early to mid-nineteenth century a favorable reputation was vital in order to procure and then sustain the prestige sought by individuals like To-wick-ah.

Disapproval from your peers was something each Comanche tried to avoid at all costs. In a community where most of life was essentially transparent, one’s reputation was paramount for the proper recognition and prestige required to advance in this society. This idea was ingrained in children and it was through the Comanche ethos that youngsters were taught to avoid disapproval.

If one did not do it one’s reputation was lowered in the minds of the people. It was anti-social for a boy or a girl, or anybody, to cheat or steal for the people. Look upon these acts with great disapproval. Anyone that was guilty of such acts was considered very untrustworthy by the tribe. The parents would tell their children to do exactly what was told, to be accustomed to doing it, and

48 Ibid., 34.
to build up a habit of being trustworthy. To be on your honor and to be true to your friends and parents would make one strong in mind and brave in heart.\footnote{Tippeconnic, “Comanche Indian Customs With Educational Implications”, 34-35.}

Comanche children learned through observation the appropriate conduct when greeting others. When children saw adults meeting an acquaintance they would notice that they would say “Ha hi chee” (hello my friend) followed by “ho na su yay” (what do you want), or they might hear someone enquire “ha ca pu mia” (where are you going). If an individual were walking past another, out of respect it was customary to say “passing in front of you.” When an individual called on another inside of his lodge, it was customary before entering to say “I am coming to see you.” If there was no response, the individual continued along his way. If there was an invitation to come in, the visitor was seated, provided water and a pipe to smoke. Conversation ensued until the visitor stated, “I am ready to leave.”\footnote{Tippeconnic, “Comanche Indian Customs With Educational Implications”, 11.}

Comanche children like To-wick-ha were encouraged to explore their environment and express themselves freely. Parents provided the instruction necessary at home but during down time kept out of the children’s way. The people trusted their children because they were taught to take care of themselves at an early age. Children knew how to avoid dangerous situations and places where snakes or insects were typically found. “One very seldom heard of any one drowning or getting hurt very seriously in play.”\footnote{Ibid., 21-22.}

It was also ingrained in Comanche children from an early age to revere the head of the family. When a Comanche father spoke, it was understood that all should remain silent until he was through. This lesson was cemented at a young age and manifested itself in Comanche adults in their respect and reverence for band leaders later in life. Once advice was doled out, children responded appropriately by saying “I will do it that way” or “I will remember
what you have said to me.” A father’s influence was secure by the
time children reached the age of twelve and remained strong well
into adulthood. Like most cultures, the Comanche recognized that
training in the tribe’s ways was vital at this stage in a child’s
development. To-wick-ah, like all Comanche born free in the
pre-reservation era, would have been trained in this manner. In
addition to lessons in respect and behavior, one activity that most
children looked forward to was story telling.

Story telling typically took place before bedtime. Scholars
Earnest Wallace and E. Adamson Hoebel have advanced the
notion that story telling only occurred during the winter months.
Among the Comanche story telling most assuredly occurred year
round. During story telling sessions children learned quickly that if
they showed any signs of not paying attention the story would
cease until their attention was again secured. “All the children
would soon learn how to be attentive and quiet; for they always
wanted to hear as many as they could, before they would get
really sleepy. The stories usually embodied some sort of moral
lesson, for us to think about and want to do in life. Some stories
were funny, and they were used to make us laugh and be happy.
The majority of the stories were about animals, and the heroic
deeds of brave warriors, who were noted for their fighting or
hunting.”

The stories relayed to the children in the form of
entertainment were crucial to inculcating Comanche children with
inspiration for their own future achievements. In addition, stories
reinforced elements of the Comanche ethos, while motivating the
young to continue the tradition. One story that tried to relay the
Comanche ethos and the importance of being honest features a
young girl who visited a neighboring camp. While she was playing
with another young girl, she decided that she liked a doll that
belonged to her host. She liked it so much that when it was time
for them to go she took it without the knowledge of the owner.
Knowing full well that she would not be able to play with it once

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52 Ibid., 17.
53 Wallace and Hoebel, The Comanches: Lords of the South Plains, 129.
54 Tippeconnic, “Comanche Indian Customs With Educational Implications”, 9.
the young girl committed an offense against another Comanche by stealing. Moreover, since her dishonesty would be discovered if she took the doll home, she hid it in the hollow of a tree and by doing so denied herself the pleasure of playing with the doll. The lesson here is that her theft not only hurt another Comanche’s feelings, she unknowingly denied two people the pleasure of playing with the doll ever again. Many stories included brave deeds in which the horse was a crucial element. For Comanche people the horse was a conduit in which to pass along the Comanche ethos. Another story relays an occasion after a Comanche war party stole horses from Mexico and came upon a hacienda as they were driving the herd north. The war party decided to go in. Once inside they captured a women and departed after tying her up and placing her on a horse. This story, was not meant as a way to relay a moral lesson. Instead, it was meant to provide information for young men to use when the time came for them to participate in raids and war. To-Wick-ah spent his early years growing up amongst his band on the southern plains and was introduced to the horse by age three. By the time of the Medicine Lodge Creek Treaty To-wick-ah would have been getting close to the age in which young men were brought along on raids. On October 21, 1867, seventy miles south of Fort Larned, at the council camp on Medicine Lodge Creek, in the state of Kansas representatives from the Kiowa and Comanche tribes entered into an agreement with U.S. commissioners that would alter their lives forever.

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56 Ibid., 158.
Tippeconnic was born in 1854, while the Comanche still lived free on the plains. 58 He was only thirteen years old when Ten Bears and a handful of other Comanche headmen signed the Medicine Lodge Treaty in Kansas. Tippeconnic learned to ride a horse as all Comanche youth did at an extremely young age. “By around the age of five, the boy was riding his own pony and practicing with his toy bow and arrows”. 59 The horse was a tool in which traditional Comanche education was transmitted. Succinctly put, from the late seventeenth century to the reservation era, the horse was the most vital element that enabled the Comanche to reach their zenith as a people. The horse was both an educational tool and a conduit for knowledge transference that allowed the Comanche to survive, thrive, dominate and expand. The horse provided my great grandfather with an opportunity for social advancement.

Although the reservation era began with the ratification of the Treaty of Medicine Lodge Creek, Numunu warriors continued to slip beyond the boundaries of the reservation seeking to advance their social status by stealing horses from the enemy. Tippeconnic was still a young warrior and was most likely exercising his right to establish himself not only as a viable adult but to elevate his standing within the tribe. For the Comanche male a horse was a multipurpose vehicle. With it one could achieve prestige and gain the independence needed to become a productive adult. To achieve this, an individual needed to prove his ability to be free of his family’s care. The horse provided the Comanche male with all of these things. However this was only part of the equation. Securing a wife, who would only agree to the union if she deemed her partner worthy, was essential in the quest for prestige. Furthermore, a woman was free to leave her husband at any time if she felt he was not living up to his responsibilities.

By 1875, the Quahada band of Comanche had made their way to the Ft. Sill reservation. Eight years after the Treaty of

59 Ibid., 36.
Medicine Lodge Creek was negotiated, the final band had peacefully surrendered to the United States. Prior to the Quahada surrender it was not uncommon for Comanche warriors from other bands to slip off and join their Quahada kin and or engage in raids and return to the reservation. However the arrival of the Quahada, signaled the end of an era. The Comanche and Tippeconnic, now at the ripe age of twenty-one, along with the rest of his tribe, had to adjust to lives confined to a reservation. For the Comanche this amounted to a geographical prison.

At first glance the surrender in 1875 appears to be an acknowledgement of defeat. However, by defying the terms of Medicine Lodge for eight years, the Antelopes managed to surrender on their own terms. Ultimately, through legislation such as the Dawes Act (1887) and, subsequently, through education, the Comanche would assimilate, but they would do so on their own terms and they would never abandon their culture. An example of this can be seen in the Comanche’s approach to the allotment process. Allotment was more devastating to the Comanche than the previous transition from a life in Comancheria to a life on the reservation because the purpose of the act was to dissolve tribalism. Before allotment, while the Comanche had to adjust to reservation life, groups still resided in close proximity to each other. It is clear that the horse would no longer have the place in Comanche life that it had held before the reservation era. Comanche children began attending school and would continue to do so as the allotment period kicked in for the Comanche, beginning in 1901. The transference of the Comanche ethos required a new method.

I contend that the conduit for this conveyance was facilitated through education. Just as the Comanche had utilized a European animal, the horse, to voluntarily change their culture, I assert that through the involuntary changes incurred by the Comanche during the reservation and allotment eras, the people would once again adapt and adopt new methods for cultural transmission that continue to this day.

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Massachusetts Senator Henry Dawes was part of an Indian reform movement that went back to 1867. Albert K. Smiley, a member of the Board of Indian Commissioners and part owner of the Lake Mohonk Lodge in upstate New York, initiated the idea of holding an annual meeting where wealthy philanthropists met to discuss American Indian Policies and to make recommendations to the government. This idea came to fruition in 1883. Lake Mohonk hosted annual gatherings at a resort within a satellite range of the Catskill Mountains about a hundred miles up the Hudson River from New York City. Each autumn representatives for the Indian Rights Association, the Boston Indian Citizenship Committee, the Board of Indian Commissioners, the Women’s National Indian Association, the Ladies’ National Indian League, various members of Congress and other federal officials, and Protestant leaders met to discuss the Indian problem. This gathering of reformers dubbed themselves the Lake Mohonk Conference of the Friends of the Indian. The gatherings also attracted a former U.S. President and military brass as well as the U.S. Commissioner of Indian Affairs. “Lake Mohonk brought together people who had the agenda for the Indian’s future as well as the political power to impose it.”

Indian reformers in the late nineteenth century were concerned that Indigenous people would cease to exist as a people unless their current situation on reservations was remedied. The Friends of the Indian met to formalize an agenda in order to push for legislation like the Dawes Act. In order for this to happen, reservations were to be broken up and Indigenous people forced to own land in severalty. This policy became law with the passage of the Dawes General Allotment Act on February 8th, 1887.

For Indigenous Americans in general, the Dawes Act remains the most devastating piece of legislation enacted by the U.S. Congress. The Comanche were not subject to the Dawes Act until 1901, however, “In a move to accelerate the breakup of

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those bands, rations were henceforth to be issued to heads of families."

The Dawes Act provided for the allotment of Indian lands in severalty and intended to extend to allottees the protection of the laws of the United States and the Territories over the Indians. Initially, each head of family received one quarter section, which equaled one hundred sixty acres. On reservations that contained land exceeding the total acreage of allotments, the remaining land could then be sold to non-Indians for development. A common intentional practice was to separate Indian allotments from those of other Indian people in order to discourage tribalism. This practice was accomplished by selling property adjacent to Indian allotments to non-Indians, making it difficult for continued relations with other tribal members. The reality for Indigenous peoples was the loss of a considerable land base. In 1887 the Indian land base was 138,000,000 acres; by 1934 it had been reduced to a paltry 47,000,000.

In the early 1890s white squatters illegally occupied the strip in the bend of the Washita River. In addition, railroads put increased pressure upon Washington to break up the reservation. The Comanche were successfully able to hold off allotment until 1900, following the ratification of the Jerome Commission Agreement by Congress. Comanches argued that the land that they would receive in the form of allotments was not suited for farming. Therefore, the allotments needed to exceed the standard one hundred sixty acres because the Comanche would have to raise cattle to survive. In addition, three quarters of the male members of the tribe, according to the Medicine Lodge Creek Treaty, needed to approve the breakup of the reservation. While the breakup of the reservation appeared to be inevitable, the

Comanche did their best to delay the process. For the Numunu this process proceeded in July 1900, and was completed within one year. 65 White squatters and railroad interests eventually secured Indian land through legislation.

In 1889, the non-Indigenous population on lands bordering the Comanche climbed to more than 5,000 inhabitants, who soon called for the allotment of the reservation where the Comanche resided. In March of 1889, the U.S. Congress created a three-man commission to negotiate with the Cherokee tribe as well as other tribes holding land west of the ninety-sixth degree longitude in the Indian Territory. The Chairman of this committee was David H. Jerome. The Comanche were not in favor of allotment, however, the official Comanche position was, “They did not oppose allotment; they merely wanted to delay any sale of their land until they were in a better position to strike out as independent homesteaders.” 66 The Comanche were one of the last tribes to be confronted by the commission.

By 1892, the details of the Jerome Agreement had been worked out; however, it would take another eight years before Congress passed the legislation. 67 “In the spring of 1900, Congress ratified the Jerome Agreement under the terms that provided each individual Indian with 160 acres of land. Another 480,000 acres was to be owned in common by all Comanches, Kiowas and Kowa-Apaches.” 68 Tippeconnic’s allotment was deposited in the General Land Office of the United States on June 4, 1901. It was issued by the commissioner of Indian affairs and approved by the secretary of the interior the very next day. In Tippeconnic’s allotment, which was issued to him under the name To-Wick-Ah, he is described simply as “a Comanche.” 69 One of Tippeconnic’s

65 Hagan, United States-Comanche Relations: The Reservation Years, 264.
66 Ibid., 204.
67 Ibid., 215.
68 Noyes, Comanches in the New West (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999), 25.
wives, Wimnerchy, gave birth to my paternal grandfather John Tippeconnic on August 6, 1901, just nineteen days before President William Mckinley made Tippeconnic’s aka To-Wick-Ah allotment official. McKinley signed the document on August 25, 1901.\textsuperscript{70} John was born exactly one month before President McKinley was assassinated on September 6, 1901 by anarchist Leon Czolgosz. President McKinley was gunned down while the United States was in the midst of its own Imperial expansion in which it gobbled up the land of many peoples, including Cuba, the Philippines, and Hawaii. It can be argued that the allotment process was just an extension of the imperialistic expansion of the United States since the end result was that more land left Indigenous hands and wound up in Uncle Sam’s pockets. Haunani-Kay Trask notes, “The overthrow of the Hawaiian government with American military support in 1893, the subsequent diplomatic and military support given by America to the haole Provisional Government (1893-1894) and to the Republic of Hawai‘i (1894-1898), and the eventual appropriation of Hawai‘i by the United States through forced annexation in 1898 were the result of America’s imperial desire to control lands and peoples not her own.”\textsuperscript{71}

The land held in common by the Comanche, Kiowa and Kiowa Apache was soon coveted by Euro-Americans. Unsatisfied with the 13,000 homesteads that the boomers gained through the opening of the reservation to whites, they set their sight on the common lands. “In late winter 1906 a bill to open the 480,000 acre tract reached the presidents desk. But Roosevelt sent it back to Congress threatening a veto unless it included more favorable terms for the three tribes. The amended bill. . . stipulated an allotment for each Indian child born after 1900...in June of 1906 President Roosevelt signed the rewritten bill into law.”\textsuperscript{72} On the seventh day of December 1908, in the one hundred thirty third year of U.S. Independence, President Theodore Roosevelt signed

\textsuperscript{70} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{71} Haunani-Kay Trask, \textit{From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawaii} (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999), 27.
\textsuperscript{72} Noyes, \textit{Comanches in the New West}, 25.
John Tippeconnic’s 160 acre allotment.\textsuperscript{73} Seven years earlier on August 25th, Ni-ni, or Abbie Tippeconnic received 160 acres as did Ni-ve or Irene Towickah. The paperwork for each of their allotments was signed by President William McKinley.\textsuperscript{74} Further, Moetad, one of Tippeconnic’s wives received her allotment on the same day.\textsuperscript{75}

The Comanche generally selected homesteads south of the Wichita Mountains.\textsuperscript{76} Tippeconnic selected one of the allotments south of the present-day town of Cache, Oklahoma. He chose a tract of land that Cache Creek runs directly through. On the west end of his allotment rises a conical shaped hill about forty feet high. Tippeconnic had become a medicine man by this time, an event that had most likely occurred during the pre-allotment reservation years between 1875 and 1900. Rising steeply out of the Oklahoma plains, this landmark is known as Medicine Hill, and it is the location where Tippeconnic performed many ceremonies. It is logical to surmise that Tippeconnic selected his allotment site with this unique geographical feature in mind. In 1900, Tippeconnic was forty-six years old and well known in Comanche circles as a medicine man. From 1900 until his death in 1934, his Comanche brethren traveled by horse, wagon, and later by motor vehicle to procure his medicinal services. One man who visited Tippeconnic was the principal Comanche Chief, Quanah Parker.

During his lifetime forty to fifty head of horses had free reign on Tippeconnic’s land, providing evidence of his status as a Comanche man and a testament to his wealth. In addition, the

\textsuperscript{76} Hagan, \textit{United States-Comanche Relations: The Reservation Years}, 265.
horses provided Tippeconnic with a connection to the era in which his people had roamed the southern plains. Moreover, some of these horses undoubtedly were procured as payment for his medicinal services. Tippeconnic, like all Comanche, ultimately succumbed to the reservation and then to allotment; however, he did so on his own terms.

Throughout these turbulent years of change Tippeconnic remained adamantly opposed to certain markers of white civilization. While he constructed a house on his land for his legal wife and children, he almost certainly lived in a tepee made of canvas fabricated from material that, prior to 1900, was routinely part of the rations Comanche received from the Indian agent. Furthermore, he refused to learn English, or adopt western clothing. Tippeconnic continued throughout his life to wear traditional leggings and peyote button moccasins. He also wore until his death the traditional wrap around his mid-section, and most telling of all, he rejected western fashion, and persisted in wearing long braids until his death (fig. 1). Moreover, Tippeconnic refused to give up his Comanche spirituality, evidenced by the fact that he continued to practice his medicine until his death. It is also known that Tippeconnic practiced polygamy, which was strictly forbidden during the reservation era but remained a Comanche tradition. He had four children with Wimnerchy and two additional girls and one boy from his wife Moetad. Tosie Tippeconnic was baptized at Deyo Mission on May 10, 1903.77 Irene Tippeconnic lived to the age of twelve and died on June 27, 1907, and Abbie Tippeconnic lived to be twenty-two and died on December 4, 1908.78

Figure 1: Tippeconnic and John Tippeconnic, Courtesy of The Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma.
Evidence of Tippeconnic’s refusal to abandon his culture is apparent in a family photograph. The image shows Tippeconnic as an elderly man seated next to his son John Tippeconnic. This is a revealing photograph that reflects the changing historical eras. Tippeconnic is dressed in his traditional attire. He also wears the traditional wrap around his mid-section, the scarf and long braids. John Tippeconnic, his youngest son, possesses a first and last name, reflecting the changing times and assimilation, as does his hairstyle and clothes. John is wearing a suit and necktie and has very short hair. Since John was born in 1901, and in the photograph appears to be in his mid-twenties, this would place the date of the photograph somewhere around 1926 (fig. 2).

John Tippeconnic was born when Tippeconnic was forty-six years old. While Tippeconnic adamantly refused to learn English, it is apparent that by 1901, he realized that in order to successfully survive in the twentieth century his children would have to shift gears and adopt certain Euro-American cultural traits, such as English and a formal education. Tippeconnic was raised in the vastly different environment of the pre-reservation era and was instilled with the Comanche ethos in an era when the horse was a key ingredient of that code. As the reservation period ended and allotment arrived, shortly after the turn of the twentieth century, it was clear that the horse would no longer be the primary conduit to relay the Comanche ethos. Although John Tippeconnic was not the first Comanche to begin a western based education, he would be the first tribal member to earn a college degree and a master’s degree as well. John Tippeconnic set the standard and paved the educational road that many of his people would follow. His accomplishments during this era are as significant, in terms of influencing and guiding his people, as the earlier achievements of Cuerno Verde, Ten Bears, and Quanah Parker. This study does not advance the notion that a young John Tippeconnic consciously set out with the goal of shifting the primary method for conveying Comanche knowledge from the horse to education. However, this work contends that this is exactly what he did.

The dramatic and rapid cultural change Tippeconnic and the Comanche lived through during the last quarter of the
nineteenth century cannot be understated. He was born on the plains in the mid nineteenth century as a member of an autonomous Indigenous people; then, as a young adult, he experienced warfare with the United States that ultimately led to the forced relocation of all Comanche bands onto a reservation.

The reservation amounted to a geographical prison, as the Comanche could not venture beyond the parameters without permission from the Indian Agent. This mandate severely altered traditional Comanche mobility. Tippeconnic and all Comanche were restricted specifically from crossing the border into Texas. However, Comanche families on the reservation still lived in close proximity to each other, and this allowed them to retain some semblance of tribal unity and identity. Beginning in 1901, Tippeconnic and his Comanche people experienced the attempted break up of tribal relations with the implementation of the allotment process, which ended the reservation period, and ushered in the twentieth century.

All of this occurred within a span of roughly twenty five years, which historically speaking, is a blink of an eye. John Tippeconnic was born on just as the Comanche first participated in the allotment process. Little is known about his birth but he does appear on the historical record in 1908, when he received a one hundred sixty acre allotment just one year after Oklahoma Territory and Indian Territory transitioned into the state of Oklahoma. President Theodore Roosevelt signed John’s allotment document on December 7, 1908.79 The document granted to John

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Tippeconnic individual title to a parcel of land, but it is ironic that the most devastating legislation in the history of the United States, cites above Calvin Coolidge’s name, the one hundred thirty third year of Independence for the United States of America.\footnote{Ibid.} The juxtaposition of U.S. Independence and this Indian allotment
document serves as a reminder that the expansion of one nation, the United States, depended on the subjugation and removal of numerous sovereign Indigenous nations.

While the Comanches, like all Indigenous nations residing in territory held in trust by the United States, temporarily lost their independence as sovereign peoples. John Tippeconnic utilized the western institution of education as a way to retain Comanche culture. Scholar Noenoe K. Silva, research suggests that subjugated peoples who are apparently assimilated into the dominant culture, simultaneously resist domination and retain and reproduce their traditions. Furthermore, studies assert that new forms of cultural expression while appearing to function as a mechanism for deep acculturation to the larger society reveal important degrees of cultural revitalization as well. Of course this is not a goal John Tippeconnic consciously set out to accomplish. The crystallization of his educational experiences was only revealed in adulthood. John Tippeconnic was raised with the Comanche ethos. I assert that the Comanche ethos itself fostered the development of the attributes that John Tippeconnic would need in order to succeed during his initial years of exposure to western education, including a stint of six years at a federal boarding school.

Just as the educational instruction of Algonquian people aligned with Christianity in seventeenth century New England, a similar set of common interests dictated the education of the Native youth in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Comanche country. Anthropologist Sally McBeth points out that, “There were no clear distinctions between the separation of church and state with respect to Indian education...The Southern Plains area was predominantly Baptist and Methodist, although

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Catholics and other denominations were present.”82 Federal funding for sectarian schools dried up beginning in 1897, however, “Many missionary schools survived through private and denominational contributions. . . ”83 In Comanche country the Methvin Methodist (1890-1910) and Saint Patrick’s Catholic mission (1891-1915) educated Comanche students.84 At the Kiowa, Comanche, and Wichita Agency, between 1885-1893, two schools, the Wichita school and the Kiowa school provided education for Indigenous agency children. Prior to the opening of Fort Sill Indian school most Comanche children that attended school were at the Kiowa school.85 Just as religion and education partnered in colonial New England to promote the Indian cause for economic incentives, financial benefits would soon see several denominational schools open in Comanche country. “During this period six religious groups were granted the use of 160 acres of Indian land each for the purpose of establishing missions and schools. In 1890 Reverend J.J. Methvin began the operation of his Methodist boarding school under contract with the government, and in the spring term of 1891 he had enrolled sixteen Kiowas and five Comanches.”86 Additional schools such as Bacone College opened outside of Comanche country but through denominational channels the institution recruited and educated Comanches like John Tippeconnic.

The 1921 “Bacone Chief” notes that, “A Christian school, planted in the midst of people, becomes one of the most powerful agencies in the work of civilization.”87 The 1922 “Bacone Chief” recorded the words of its president B.D. Weeks, “Baptist

83 Ibid.
84 Ibid., 85.
85 Hagan, United States-Comanche Relations: The Reservation Years, 195.
86 Ibid., 199.
87 Bacone College, Bacone Chief 1921, (Muskogee, OK: Graduating Class of 1921, 1921), Oklahoma Historical Society Archives, Archives Reading Room.
progress then means the advancement of the kingdom. Therefore education is the first postulate of a Baptist.”

As English colonial society merged into American society after the American Revolution, the conceptual image nineteenth century Americans held of their Indigenous hosts differed very little from the stance of their colonial predecessors. English monarchial hegemony in the American colonies died in 1783, however God survived the revolution. Succinctly stated, Euro-Americans felt that they embodied civilization, while Indigenous groups occupied a lower rung on the evolutionary ladder. Historian David Wallace Adams notes, “Basic to all perceptions was the conclusion that because Indian cultural patterns were vastly different from those of whites, Indians must be inferior. Whether discussing the Indians’ worship of pagan gods, their simple tribal organization, or their dependency on wild game for subsistence, white observers found Indian society wanting. Indian life, it was argued, constituted a lower order of human society. In a word, Indians were savages because they lacked the very thing whites possessed-civilization.” To those that subscribed to these beliefs, it is quite possible they believed that there were few more savage than the Comanche.

In order for Natives to endure they would have to assimilate into American society. The first step was to break up communally held Indian lands through allotment. The second step was to protect the Indigenous population under the U.S. legal system. Finally, the third thrust for reform was education. Indigenous adults could not be the focus of reform. Adults might be able to adapt to allotment successfully, but they were too set in their ways to fully assimilate and they lacked a key catalyst for change, western education. Therefore, in order for Indian reformers to fully implement long term cultural change they would need to target Indian children. Certainly Comanche children were included in the cultural dragnet. “Another

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88 Bacone College, Bacone Chief 1922, 15.
argument used by school advocates was that education would quicken the process of cultural evolution. Whereas white civilization had taken centuries to emerge to its present level, if Indian children could gain entrance to the common school, they would enter the struggle of life with roughly the same advantages as the children of their more civilized white neighbors." In other words, reformers believed, that education in the common school would enable Indigenous youth to jump directly from savagism to civilization and skip the intervening stages of social evolution.

While reformers viewed the education of Indigenous youth fundamental for cultural transformation, this study contends that western education provided an avenue that John Tippeconnic used for a type of Comanche cultural metamorphosis and renewal. Furthermore, this study advances the idea that his career demonstrated the traditional Comanche gift to transform, adapt, and thrive in the midst of both voluntary and involuntary cultural changes. It was because he had been ingrained with the Comanche Ethos during his early years that he was able to accomplish this and in doing so he ensured the continuation of that same ethos. The voluntary adoption of the horse as a tool helped facilitate education and the Comanche Ethos for centuries. The subsequent involuntary adoption of the western educational institution became a conduit for John to transmit the Comanche Ethos to his descendants. John Tippeconnic successfully navigated the world of western education in a way previously unmatched by any other Comanche. He concluded in his master’s thesis that the values Comanche people utilized to rear their children were more beneficial to those children than western methods. However, he was free to proclaim this only after he had successfully navigated boarding school and college. This study does not advance the notion that he consciously set out to change a method to convey Comanche cultural knowledge. However, this study does advance the position that he certainly changed one method. John’s educational career exemplify the core fundamental values of Comanche people and thus the Comanche Ethos. One of the core attributes of traditional Comanche education is perseverance.

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90 Ibid., 19.
91 Ibid.
“From early childhood the children were trained to persevere, until what they were doing was finished.”

John certainly persevered by becoming the first Comanche to receive a bachelors and master’s degree. “Prestige was attained by outstanding achievement.” Yet another core value was responsibility or knowing the meaning of mutual dependence and that no one person could stand alone and be a successful member of the tribe. LaDonna Harris notes this very concept in what she calls an “ongoing community.” “Traditionally... one became a strong person in order to give back to the community. The community nurtured you while you were becoming strong, and once this was achieved, you looked for opportunities to give back to the community. The community provides a structure that is greater than an individual, and within this unit are people who share your history, who understand you, know you, know your grandparents, have seen you grow up, love you.” John was taught in western educational institutions that the antithesis was true; that individuality and selfishness were the keys to civilization. He persevered, and learned to play the game and succeeded because of the Comanche Ethos ingrained since childhood. He emerged with a graduate degree, a feat most Americans had not achieved. With that degree in hand, he now had the prestige amongst his own people and the credentials valued by the colonizer that allowed him a build his platform across cultures. For To-wick-ah’s (Tippeconnic) generation, the horse was a tool to transmit the Comanche Ethos. John’s horse was western education. Before this study examines John’s ride it is necessary to return to the ideology behind western efforts to educate Indigenous peoples.

Once reformers had targeted education as one of the key components of civilization, they addressed their concerns toward the curriculum. They saw clearly that educators must strive to present to students the advantages of a civilized life as well as to

92 Tippeconnic, “Comanche Indian Customs With Educational Implications”, 58.
93 Ibid.
94 Ibid.
95 LaDonna Harris, LaDonna Harris: A Comanche Life, ed. H. Henrietta Stockel (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 19.
instill in their minds distasteful feelings towards their native heritage.\textsuperscript{96} The abandonment of Indigenous culture for a “civilized” existence appeared to be the only approach reformers could endorse. In \textit{Scottish Highlanders and Native Americans: Indigenous Education in the Eighteenth Century Atlantic World}, Connell-Szasz notes, “Education forms the heart of any culture. For every society, the children represent the future: only the children can carry on the traditions; only the youth have the potential to become the repositories of the society’s world views. By teaching the old ways to children, the society ensures the persistence of its culture. When a society surrenders control of the education of its youth, the people relinquish much of their capacity to survive as a unique culture.”\textsuperscript{97} Therefore, what Indian youth were taught was of the upmost importance if the desired results were going to be achieved.

First, it was imperative that students be provided with language instruction from which they could then branch off and learn history, math, science and the arts. Reformers did not believe that all Indigenous children could master these areas, however, these first steps were needed in order for the children to move away from their Indigenous cultural base and begin to form a western cultural foundation. In \textit{Boarding School Seasons}, scholar Brenda J. Child describes federal Indian schooling, “The Institution was designed to separate children from all that was familiar to them—their families, tribes, languages, traditions, their very identities.”\textsuperscript{98} Yet another antithetical direction Indian youth would need if they were going to achieve assimilation, was the adoption of an individualized outlook. Traditional tribal education had taught them that what was best for the community was paramount. From the reformer’s perspective, Indigenous youth could learn individualism by cultivating a work ethic. If they absorbed industriousness by learning a trade, they would become

producers as opposed to consumers. Moreover, through work natives would become self-sufficient. “But teaching Indians how to work was not enough. In the end, they must be inculcated with the values and beliefs of possessive individualism. They must come to respect the importance of private property, they must internalize the ideal of self-reliance, and they must come to realize that the accumulation of personal wealth is a moral obligation.”

Lastly, reformers asserted that religion must play a significant role in all Indian education.

Adams notes, “The third aim of Indian Education was Christianization. Because the philanthropic movement drew its moral energy from the reformers’ quest to create a Protestant America and because their ethnocentrism caused them to look upon native religious practices as primitive and barbaric remnants of a precivilized existence, it is not surprising that the Indians’ religious conversion should surface as a major educational objective.”

Indian reformers firmly held that Indigenous people must abandon their own spiritual beliefs and adopt Christianity, and by doing so, they would fully embrace the virtuous code that asserted the individual was not only responsible for his economic self but his spiritual self as well. Finally, in order to fully assimilate into American society the reformers expected Indians to be trained in U.S. citizenship.

In order for Indian students to transition into self-sufficient, Christian Americans cognizance of the duties and privileges of American citizenship was essential. To accomplish this, the student must fully embrace the fundamental principles of democratic government and American political structure. Although this could be achieved by digesting American history, it could be problematic for objective instructors, “Teaching U.S. history to Indians, speaking of savages, civilization, and manifest destiny, convincing pupils that the subjugation of their race was in

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100 Ibid., 23.
their own best interest, posed problems for the conscientious teacher.”101

Closer to home for John Tippeconnic, other types of regional schools also opened their doors for Indigenous youth. The Methodist-Episcopal mission close to Anadarko worked with a few students in the Fort Sill area and as Hagan notes, “The Reformed Presbyterian Church also established a mission among the Kiowa-Apaches that attracted an occasional Comanche.”102 While Carlisle Indian School and other federal school were opening across Indian Country, these Indian Territory missions and the schools attached to them recruited a few Comanche students between 1885-1893. Although the mission schools were separate from federal schools like Carlisle, “Neither in the Mission schools nor in the regular Indian service establishments did the emphasis on substituting white culture for Indian culture waver. Instruction was to be conducted exclusively in English, although religious services could be performed in the native languages.”103 Perhaps this was one reason that the majority of Comanche Headmen did not support the initial efforts to provide Western schooling for Comanche children. Ignoring widespread opposition in Indian Country, the majority of American reformers embraced civilization efforts to educate Indian youth by sending Indigenous children to off reservation manual labor boarding schools.104 Article Seven of The Treaty of Medicine Lodge Creek states,

In order to insure the civilization of the tribes, entering into this treaty, the necessity of education is admitted, especially by such of them as are or may be settled on said agricultural reservations: and they therefore pledge themselves to compel their children, male and female, between the ages of six and sixteen years, to attend school; and it is hereby made the duty of the agent for said Indians to see that this stipulation is strictly complied with; and the United States agrees that for every

101 Ibid., 147.
102 Hagan, 194.
103 Ibid.
104 Ibid., 133.
thirty children between said ages, who can be induced or compelled to attend school, a house shall be provided, and a teacher competent to teach the elementary branches of an English education, shall be furnished, who will reside among said Indians, and faithfully discharge his or her duties as a teacher. 

The school that would eventually be known as the Fort Sill Indian School opened as a Quaker boarding school during the Grant Peace Policy in 1871.

Following the Civil War and tragic events like the Sand Creek Massacre, U.S. Senator James R. Doolittle of Wisconsin became aware to the inhumanity of the treatment of Indigenous peoples in the American West. Scholar William S. McFeely in *Grant* notes, “He brought about a congressional investigation and the establishment in 1867 of a peace commission that investigated the broad question of the settlement of the West and the future of the Indians who would be displaced.”

Nathanial G. Taylor, commissioner of Indian affairs, chaired the panel that included William Tecumseh Sherman. Both Taylor and Doolittle spearheaded the foundation of what would become in 1869 the Grant Peace Policy. McFeely notes that Quaker involvement in one proposal,

One proposal, called derisively at first, and later appreciatively, the Quaker Policy, was designed to replace entrepreneurs with missionaries as Indian agents. The men of God would not only look after the welfare of their flocks but bring them into the Christian fold. ‘Quaker Policy’ was to a large degree a misnomer; the plan was indeed urged on Grant by members of the Society of Friends, but it was also sponsored with jealous zeal by the mainstream Protestant evangelical sects. Each

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105 “Treaty with the Kiowa and Comanche, 1867” (Medicine Lodge Treaty), article 7, 979.
108 Ibid., 308.
tribe was assigned, for protection and proselytizing, to missionaries of a given denomination. One reservation-and hence one complete group of native Americans-was designated Episcopalian, the next Dutch Reformed, and so on; Grant although not a church man, agreed.  

In 1869 the majority of Indian agents employed by the United States government were army officers. William T. Hagan notes, “As general of the army Grant favored the replacement of civilian agents by army officers and this continued to be his preference. Large numbers of officers were used in this capacity, in 1869 forty-nine of a possible seventy being military men, but in July 1870 Congress banned the practice. If civilians were to be appointed, Grant seems to have believed that religious bodies should be able to come up with better ones than were available through the patronage process.”

On July 1, 1869, the Quaker Lawrie Tatum was placed in charge of the Agency of the Comanche, Kiowa, and Kiowa-Apache tribes and early in the Peace Policy one of the first assignments he carried out was the construction of a school. Initially the school operated as a reservation elementary school for these Indian children. When it opened, the school consisted of one building containing two classrooms, a kitchen, dining room and dormitories. On the first day of school seven students attended. By the end of the first year, the school had enrolled thirty-three students. Some Comanche students attended this school as early as 1872 but it would be three years before any other Comanche joined them. The school got off to an auspicious start and by 1878 its operation had been transferred to Anadarko. This move was part of the government’s relocation of the Kiowa and Comanche Agency from Fort Sill to Anadarko, a shift that consolidated the Kiowa and Comanche Agency with the Wichita.

109 Ibid.  
110 Hagan, United States-Comanche Relations: The Reservation Years, 57.  
By 1875, schools on the reservation were falling short in delivering the government’s commitment. “As late as 1879 only about 65 of a reservation population of 500 school age children were enrolled. For the first few years the school was operated directly by the agent.”

From 1885-1893 only two federal schools, outside of the efforts of religious denominations, served students from the Kiowa, Wichita and Comanche Agency. One school was located north of the Washita River and the other one was on the south bank. Comanche students were expected to attend the Kiowa school on the south bank. Leadership at the school was less than stellar and the turnover of superintendents was extremely high. Superintendents committed various abuses, ranging from mismanagement, misconduct and intimidation to violence and their actions eventually prompted Comanche parents to threaten the withdrawal of their children. Partially due to this mismanagement as well as the distance between Comanche homes and the school, the Comanche requested their own school but they had to wait for a few years of additional delays. “Finally in 1890 construction on a two-story frame building, with outbuildings, got under way about four miles south of Fort Sill. The site chosen by Agent Adams overlooked the valley of Cache Creek, which was about a mile from the school. Not until October 1892 did the school open, and even then all the buildings had not been completed, forcing a limitation of the first class to 33 Comanche girls aged six to ten. By the spring of 1893 the plant was finished and filled to capacity with the 100 or so students about equally divided between boys and girls (the addition of the boys raising the average age by two or three years).” In 1891 the Fort Sill Indian School fell directly under the auspices of the federal government.

My paternal grandfather, John Tippeconnic, who was born on his father’s allotment, just outside of Cache, Oklahoma, Indian

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112 Hagan, United States-Comanche Relations: The Reservation Years, 134.
113 Ibid., 195.
114 Ibid., 196-198.
115 Ibid., 200.
Territory, would begin his formal education in a one-room public school house a few miles from the home place (allotment). The school no longer exists and the name of the one room facility is not known. What is known is that he attended this school for three years and three months.116 The quarterly reports provide evidence that John received some schooling prior to attending the Fort Sill Boarding School. Pursuant to U.S. Government regulations, all boarding, day, government, and contract schools were required to file quarterly reports with the Indian Office immediately following the close of each quarter. 117 On these quarterly reports there is a category that indicates how many months each student had attended school before enrollment (Fort Sill). According to this report John had attended school for thirty-nine months prior to entering first grade at Fort Sill Boarding School. 118 John would rise early each day and walk the several miles to school, after crossing Cache Creek, and leaving Tippeconnic’s property. Each morning he was armed with the Comanche ethos and a sweet potato in each of his back pockets.119 John began school here at the age of six.120 John enjoyed learning even at this early age and perhaps this is why he continued his education even when his peers stopped attending.

John’s educational journey had begun long before he put sweet potatoes into the pockets of his overalls and crossed Cache Creek to seek formal instruction. The Journey began when his Mother Wimnerchy first uttered Comanche words into his ear shortly after birth, and when his father Tippeconnic, once a fierce warrior of the plains, taught him to ride a horse. John would take with him on that first day of school the Comanche ethos instilled in him since birth. For the next three and a half years John Tippeconnic ventured off to the one-room public school house to obtain a rudimentary western education but he would come

117 Ibid.
118 Ibid.
119 Norman Tippeconnic Sr., Interview by author. April 5, 2005.
120 Ibid.
home each afternoon, and there the transference of Comanche knowledge continued. John’s teacher(s) provided him with the basic linguistic tools that he would need to continue grammar school; however it was the Comanche educational foundation that provided him with the attributes of cooperation, consideration for others, self-denial, courtesy, reverence, self-reliance, conservation, alertness, prestige, courage, respect, loyalty, perseverance, responsibility, neatness, reliability, honesty, trustworthiness, and love. John Tippeconnic would need many of these Comanche attributes in order to succeed in school. His father, Tippeconnic was raised with the Comanche ethos during the pre-reservation era when the Comanche were autonomous. For Tippeconnic, the horse was the vehicle that enabled him to receive the Comanche ethos. His son John Tippeconnic was born during a time that required modern adjustments. Just such an adjustment took place at this time as education replaced the horse as the vehicle to convey knowledge.

Tippeconnic had quite a few horses and he most certainly taught his children to ride in the old fashion. However, once John ventured off to school on that first day, he began a new Comanche journey. Horses, once a primary conduit for Comanche educational transference, would now, at least for John, be replaced by western education. A western education would (in fact) become for John a metaphorical horse. Education would become the conduit he would use to pass along the Comanche ethos to his own children; it would serve as the tool he would ride to establish himself as a man and a Comanche warrior worthy of acknowledgement from those whom he valued the most, his own people. The assertion here is that western education, John’s metaphorical horse, enabled him to become the first Comanche tribal member to achieve an undergraduate college degree and, eventually, a master’s degree. During the reservation period traditional methods of achieving social status and prestige were denied to young Comanche men. As a result some became preachers or military scouts in order to achieve social recognition. For John, a formal western education would become the vehicle he would utilize to become a modern warrior. John Tippeconnic set the standard and, in fact, he paved the educational road that
many would follow, and it all began in a one-room public school house.

My grandfather John had a brother, also named John, who was four years his elder. My grandfather’s older brother also began school in this one room schoolhouse and on his first day his mother Wimnerchy took him to enroll at the school. According to the family narrative, he was required to enter a surname upon registration and as a result his surname became Wimnerchy. The day my grandfather John arrived for his first day of school his surname was recorded as Tippeconnic. In 1910, the time arrived for John Tippeconnic to make the transition from the country school to the Fort Sill Boarding School. By that year, the school had already been relocated from its original site to a location thirty-five miles south of Anadarko and two and one-half miles south of the military post of Fort Sill. By the time John Tippeconnic arrived at the school, it had expanded and consisted of twelve buildings. John successfully made the transition to boarding school, while many other Indigenous children across the country did not. The problems that Indigenous youth faced in Indian boarding schools is well documented; many children died at these infamous institutions, while others ran away.

Since Ft. Sill was only a few miles away from home, the proximity of the school to the farm certainly assisted John in his perseverance. According to the Fort Sill Boarding School November 30, 1913 quarterly report, Tippeconnic’s land was only three and a half miles away from the school.121 It is logical to surmise that John’s family visited him on a regular basis and even in the event that these visits were infrequent he must have been comforted by the fact that his family resided only a few miles to the South. John excelled in these academic environments, however, he still retained his Comanche identity. Foremost of the Comanche cultural traits that he kept was his Native language. Fluent in Comanche throughout his lifetime, he was not always

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free to utilize it openly due to the fact that speaking Comanche was highly discouraged in school. “Boarding schools followed a strict policy that forbade Indian students from speaking tribal languages.” Students who did not refrain from using their Native tongue were often beaten, swatted with rulers, had their mouths washed out with soap, or were placed in solitary confinement. Boarding schools were the primary method of assimilation for John’s generation of Indigenous Americans and tragically these institutions bear a significant responsibility in the decline of Native languages. Experiences at Fort Sill varied, “Students who attended Fort Sill came away from the boarding school with impressions that ranged from downright hatred of the school to enduring fondness for it. For some the strict discipline and harsh punishment meted out at the institution made it feel more like a prison than a place of learning. Being away from family and tribal communities made the experience even more alienating.” Some students indicated that corporal punishment was often administered harshly for infraction of rules. Brenda J. Child notes, “To remain true to the military style the schools sought to imitate, students were subjected to harsh forms of discipline. Recalcitrant students were flogged, and most boarding schools had some form of “jail” on the premises.” Strict discipline reinforced the military atmosphere and corporal punishment was certainly held as a threat over every student’s head as a way to ensure compliance.

Many Indigenous students attending boarding schools in the U.S. sought to erase the experience from their memories, but John’s sentiments were similar to the feelings of one of his contemporaries who lived several hundred miles to the West. Hopi student, Helen Sekaquaptewa notes, “I enjoyed school and

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123 Ibid.
was eager to learn.”  

It is easy to surmise that John enjoyed his educational experience. While it is unlikely that he never experienced a negative situation at Fort Sill, the family narrative attests that he thoroughly enjoyed grades one through six. Therefore, while the boarding school experience was painful for many, it was uplifting for John. “Others, however, enjoyed their time there, making lifelong friends, participating in extracurricular activities, and remaining Indian despite attempts by the government’s educational machinery to grind it out of them.”

Fort Sill Boarding School was typical of many federal Indian boarding schools in that it incorporated a strict military like regimen. “In the early years of the school, strict militaristic-type discipline was a part of the Fort Sill program. It was not uncommon to observe students participating in precision marching as they were moved from one part of the campus to the other.” David Wallace Adams advances the idea that off reservation boarding schools utilized strict military discipline for logistical reasons as well as a way to promote good health, neatness, politeness and patriotism among others. “. . . the boarding school environment was patently militaristic. This was especially the case at off-reservation schools, where students organized into army units and drilled in elaborate marching routines. On special celebrations, when marching students shouldered rifles, brass bugles gleamed in the sunlight, drums pounded out marching rhythms, and school banners flapped in the breeze, the military atmosphere was only enhanced.” Indigenous children from Carlisle, Haskell, and Fort Sill, as well as numerous additional institutions, were initiated into a highly regimented military atmosphere.

131 Ibid., 117.
In order to reinforce the military atmosphere and general discipline all students wore uniforms. For John Tippeconnic and other students at Fort Sill, this meant wearing long sleeve wool uniforms buttoned high and tight up to their necks as well as wool caps. As spring inched closer to summer in Oklahoma during John’s years at Fort Sill, the heat must have been oppressive. A photograph taken in 1912 on the front steps of the entrance to Fort Sill Boarding School features an eleven-year-old John Tippeconnic in his first year at the school (fig. 3). Pictured with Tippeconnic are twenty four other Comanche boys, ranging in ages from seven to seventeen.\(^{132}\) Each of the boys is standing at attention, which indicates that the photograph was snapped after the Numunu boys had been in school for a few months and therefore had become accustomed to the regimen. Also in the photo with my grandfather is his older brother John Winnerchy.\(^{133}\) John Winnerchy ventured to Fort Sill to begin the first grade either at age nine or ten in the fall of 1908, a full four years prior to my grandfather’s arrival in 1912.\(^{134}\) However, neither brother would be the first nor the last sibling of the family to attend Fort Sill Indian Boarding School.

On March 31, 1895, Frank Baldwin, U.S. Indian agent of the Kiowa, Comanche & Wichita Agency, signed a quarterly report for Fort Sill Boarding School, which lists Abbie Tippiconny, an older half sibling of my grandfather. At the time of this report Abbie was seven years old, and her original name is Ni-Ni.\(^{135}\) In addition,


\(^{135}\) Indian Census Rolls, 1885-1940; (National Archives Microfilm Publication M595, 692 rolls); Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Record Group 75;
Tosie Tippiconnie, a female sibling age six was also mentioned in the same report.\(^{136}\)

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Between 1895 and 1916, at least six of my grandfather’s siblings attended the Fort Sill Boarding School. Abbie Tippicony and Tosie Tippiconnie appeared in 1895, Eunice Tip-e-con-ic in 1901, Irene Tippeconic in 1903, John Winnerchy in 1909, and Louis Tippeconnic in 1916. In 1914, Doris Tippeconnic, daughter of Abbie, began school at Fort Sill. John would eventually matriculate to high school, college and graduate school; however, as the records indicate, he was not the first in his family to begin the journey down that road.

During John Tippeconnic’s years at the Fort Sill Boarding School industrial and vocational training remained the central focus. Boys encountered training in farming and in skilled crafts like carpentry, painting, and harness making, among others. Girls were expected to become proficient home makers and learned sewing, cooking, and house cleaning. My grandfather John Tippeconnic is featured in a photo taken by Carmelita RedElk Thomas, with fellow Comanche Joe Weryavah and Dewey Permansu. In this photograph the three Numunu boys are standing in a farm field at Fort Sill, each holding a hoe to reflect the industrial aspects of the vocational training provided by the institution (fig 4).

For students at Fort Sill a typical schedule included a half day of classroom instruction in various subjects including English, arithmetic and history, while the second half was devoted to work in vocational training. Fort Sill Boarding School boys also worked


139 Tippeconnic is spelled phonetically from the Comanche words Tupi-Kuni meaning Rock House. Therefore, there are multiple phonetic spellings of Tippeconnic

on the farm as well as in the saw-mill and at the carpenter and blacksmith shops. Conversely, girls also were employed in the dining room, kitchen and in housecleaning activities. This schedule was similar to the one employed at Carlisle. At Carlisle, children began their day at 6 A.M. for chores and military exercises that included marching and inspection. Breakfast followed and scholar Mary Jenkins in The Real All Americans notes, “Mornings were devoted to academics-mostly English at first-and afternoons were for trade and shop classes in wagon building, cobbling, blacksmithing, tin-and coppersmithing, carpentry, painting, tailoring, and harness making. The girls were taught sewing, cooking, canning, ironing, child care, cleaning, and later stenography, bookkeeping and typing.” At Fort Sill, many of these activities persisted until mid-way through the twentieth century. “Until the 1950s the curriculum for males consisted of vocational and agricultural training, and females received instruction in homemaking. Thereafter, Fort Sill emphasized more of an academic curriculum, although vocational trades remained important.”

In a 1937 interview, Ophelia D. Vestal notes that two Comanches, Allen Mihecaby and his wife Rachael, who were both born in Comanche County and who attended Fort Sill, indicated that, “In these schools they were taught how to work, which they are very proud of, and they are teaching their three boys to work and make their own money.”

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141 Ibid.
142 Sally Jenkins, The Real All Americans: The Team that Changed a Game, A People, A Nation (New York: Doubleday, 2007), 79.
On the seventh-day each week boys working on the farm and in the blacksmith’s shop as well as in other vocational activities earned fifty cents per day. In addition, at the end of each term, before some of the boys went home, they were provided with a nice small set of tools at government expense. Fort Sill required students to shift job responsibilities each quarter per the line items appearing in the schools quarterly report that list the following duties, farm, kitchen, dairy, cleaning, laundry, house, and bakery.

The boarding school experience for Indian children in general could be a difficult transition, especially for the youngest

children. Students missed their home communities, families and fellow tribal members. Child notes, “Homesickness, endemic at boarding schools, was hardest on the very young students.”

Some of them found it difficult to learn English while not being allowed to speak their Indigenous language. David Wallace Adams notes, “The forced separation of parents and children was traumatic for the children, and following that they were thrown into a completely alien environment where strangers (white ones at that) stripped away all exterior indicators of tribal identity, even to the point of changing names.”

The strictly regimented militaristic approach and the threat of corporal punishment made the experience unbearable for many Indigenous children who were away from home for the first time. Some students resorted to running away in order to return to their families and familiar surroundings. It was certainly enough of a concern for Fort Sill because it warranted a line item on the quarterly school reports. One line item reads “Pupils ran away during quarter” while another reads “Run-away pupils returned during quarter.” The first item indicates that this was the reality administrators faced and the second clearly denotes that it was important for the school, for funding reasons, to make sure the children returned. An alarming line on the Fort Sill quarterly reports, “Pupils died during quarter,” revealed another harsh reality that young Indigenous students faced. Many Indian boarding schools maintained a cemetery on their school site. John was able to successfully acclimate to the demands of the Fort Sill Boarding School and completed the sixth grade in 1916.

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After successfully finishing the 6th grade curriculum at Fort Sill, John attended the Cameron State School of Agriculture in Lawton, Oklahoma. Just one year after Oklahoma became a state, the Oklahoma State Legislature created six agricultural high schools in each judicial district. John’s school, which was named after Reverend E. D. Cameron, a Baptist minister who served as Oklahoma’s first State Superintendent of Schools, opened on Statehood Day, November 16, 1909. Once it became a junior college in 1927, the institution changed its name to Cameron State Agricultural College; however it would continue to offer high school courses until 1941. In 1971, the institution became Cameron College and then in 1974, Cameron University. John Tippeconnic attended the Cameron State School of Agriculture for two years, 1916, and 1917. By the time he was sixteen, John had attended three western educational institutions and achieved enough success to warrant matriculation to a school that was much farther away than three and a half miles from home. In 1918 John’s education took him approximately two hundred and thirty miles to the northeast to attend called Bacone College in Muskogee, Oklahoma. From the earliest days of his consciousness, John Tippeconnic had been inculcated with the Comanche ethos that provided him with the ability to develop the attributes that he needed in order to succeed in boarding school, while other students failed. John Tippeconnic would depend upon these skills during the next stage of his life at Bacone.

In the fall of 1918 John left the familiar surroundings of Southwestern Oklahoma to enroll in high school at Bacone, just outside Muskogee, Oklahoma. By this time John had gained valuable educational experience from the one room public school in Cache, Fort Sill Boarding School and at Cameron during the First World War. Surely, the close proximity of these first three

153 Ibid.
154 “Indian Receives Master’s Degree: John W. Tippeconnie Is Graduated In Arizona.” Lawton Constitution, August 27, 1942, 7. (John attended school at
institutions provided John with a level of comfort and perhaps made his adjustment to living away from home a little easier. John was eager to continue school, however, pursuing a high school education would present him with the challenge of leaving southwestern Oklahoma for an extended period of time. During John Tippeconnic’s four-year stint at Bacone he would transition from a boy to man.

At Bacone John received an education and was influenced by strong institutional leadership. The moral attributes Bacone sought to instill in Indigenous youth were, in John Tippeconnic’s case, already firmly ingrained through his foundation in the Comanche Ethos. Furthermore, the positive attributes of Christianity easily translated to Indigenous youth like John Tippeconnic because both the Comanche Ethos and his Christian faith emphasized similar characteristics. In other words, for many Comanches like John, full acceptance of Christianity was a fluid transition because many of the moral guidelines were closely related. John was already baptized by the time he arrived at Bacone; however, as he matured, his understanding of both Christianity and of himself developed during his transition to manhood. This study does not imply that by fully accepting Christianity he gave up what it meant to be Comanche. The antithesis holds true; it reinforced what it was to be Comanche.

When John Tippeconnic arrived at Bacone apparently he was not overly impressed with the appearance of the school grounds. At the age of seventeen he was forming firm opinions, and he was so disappointed in the appearance of the school he was not sure if he should stay for the entire year. However, this early skepticism would eventually be overruled by the friendships he forged and the education he gained, and he would remain at Bacone for the duration of his high school years. Perhaps if John had not been provided with the opportunity of attending school so close to home, where he could return each afternoon to learn the core of the Comanche ethos, he might have left Bacone.

Cameron in Lawton, Oklahoma after completing grades one through six at Fort Sill.)

155 Bacone College, Bacone Chief 1922, 43.
Walking to and from school for the first three years of his education, John benefited immensely from his family where he absorbed daily the attributes of the Comanche ethos, such as perseverance, courage, self-denial, respect and loyalty. There is no doubt that John persevered at Bacone because of the presence of adult Comanches during the early years of his education.

According to the Oklahoma Historical Society, the state’s first college was called Indian University. The school’s purpose was to provide a Christian education for American Indians. From day one Bacone fell under the umbrella of the Indian Reform Movement. Indian University and later Bacone College, as well as Indian boarding schools in general, remained an intricate component of the movement. The movement was meant to protect those under it from the tribal and cultural influences of Indian country. Theoretically, when the time was right and the temporary shelter of the umbrella was no longer needed, it could be folded up to reveal properly civilized student graduates. Indian reformers across the United States promoted education and religion as the key ingredients needed to transform young Indigenous students into well prepared civilized citizens. This was certainly true at Bacone.

During John Tippeconnic’s years at Bacone, the school proudly saw itself as a beacon to develop young Indigenous minds through religious doctrine. Bacone undoubtedly provided many Indigenous students with tools that assisted them to lead productive lives. It certainly fostered intertribal relationships that would endure long after students graduated. Without question many students, including my grandfather John Tippeconnic, looked back at their Bacone experience with predominantly fond memories. Without doubt, students grew to admire their instructors and administrators as well. However, it cannot be overlooked that the students of Bacon were inculcated with the idea that Indigenous children should be led out of cultural darkness in order to live worthwhile lives. This is evident in a

157 Ibid.
description of Dr. Bacone’s mission, “After working among the Indians faithfully, he saw the possibilities of the Indian youth. He had realized the fact that noble, helpful, and worthy lives can be built under Christian influence. He was spurred on with this realization to start a Christian School for the Indians.” The implication here is that without Christianity, a worthy life would prove elusive for Indigenous youth. This is what reformers were selling and while it might have seemed to them that this is exactly what the Indian students in western Christian institutions were buying, I contend that it is not that simple.

Individuals like my grandfather had absorbed a moral framework long before they travelled east to attend Bacone. A description of the school’s Religious Department states, “Besides the class studies, which are required in all schools, Bacone requires the study of the Bible, believing that it uplifts the student to a higher and better standard of life on which to depend in the future, because it make[s] him or her the best and most trustful Christian.” The implication is that Indigenous youth could not achieve a “higher and better standard of life” without Christianity. The Comanche Ethos instilled in John by Tippeconnic and Winnerchy emphasized honesty, responsibility, consideration of others, self-denial, respect, loyalty and love. Therefore, I contend that the moral attributes Bacone was attempting to instill in Indigenous youth were, at least in John Tippeconnic’s case, already ingrained as a foundation of the Comanche Ethos. Furthermore, I contend that the positive attributes of Christianity easily translated to Indigenous youth like my grandfather because both stressed similar traditional characteristics. Many Comanches accepted Christianity because many of the moral guidelines were in alignment.

I am not suggesting that all Christian and Comanche beliefs were in alignment. They most certainly, were not. There were fundamental differences. To cite just one example, Comanche youth were not discouraged from sexual exploration prior to marriage. Yet each tradition possessed some attributes that made

158 Ibid., 20.
159 Ibid.
the transition from one to the other less difficult. Moreover, in Comanche culture it was not considered acceptable for one Comanche to tell others what their medicine or guiding belief should be. This certainly contradicts the practices of the fundamental Christian doctrine of proselytizing. Each Comanche was free to determine what his/her own medicine would be. Comanche activist LaDonna Harris notes the explanation her father provided concerning her grandmother’s acceptance of Christianity, “Papa said Christianity was what she chose for her medicine, and it was good for her, and you had to respect other people. So they never had a real controversy over it. Papa thought if you don’t respect other people’s religion, you’ll hurt them, but more importantly, you’ll hurt yourself because it comes back to you. So you should never mess with that. It’s the Comanche way.”

By medicine I am referring to the forces, beliefs, and guiding principles, both tangible and intangible that provide one with the strength, protection and guidance needed to endure the challenges presented in life. It is the contention here that John Tippeconnic saw the common features in the two traditions and accepted Christianity as his medicine. This does not imply that he gave up being Comanche. In fact it reinforces what it is to be Comanche, as all Comanches had the right to determine for themselves what their medicine would be. This is what John did, and he did so while maintaining the attributes of the Comanche Ethos. A cultural fusion allowed John to accept one system without discarding another. Many Comanches accepted Christianity. LaDonna Harris notes that her grandmother’s Comanche values were what made her a good Christian, “She was an ideal Christian but I think it was because she was more Comanche than Christian. Her Comanche values made her a good person, and she just happened to take up with Christianity.”

It did not take him long to become firmly entrenched in almost every aspect of life at Bacone. Not only did he persist, John thrived. He played three sports at Bacone; football, track,

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161 Ibid.
and baseball. He adjusted so well that he was selected as the football team captain in 1918 during his freshman year. In addition, he was the class yell leader from 1919-1922. Although he played football from 1918-1921, he was also the assistant manager (coach) from 1918-1921. During one of the seasons the Bacone football team outscored their opponents 361-61 (fig. 5.) Moreover, he was the Secretary of the literary society and President of an organization called the Uplifters. He served as the Sports editor for the yearbook his junior year and as the business manager his senior year. During his junior year he was a member of the Y.M.C.A Cabinet, and a member of the choir. It is evident that John, had become very comfortable with his surroundings. In addition, he was held in high regard by his peers, as this passage from the 1921 Bacone Chief notes, “Our Tipp, with his smile and sparkling eye, Now where’s one better than he?”

During John’s tenure at the school great emphasis was placed on athletics “We at Bacone, believe in every attribute of athletics. We believe in the effectiveness of the sound mind, supported by a strong and healthy body. We also believe that athletics have a part in the formation of character. We believe that athletics contribute largely to the moral welfare of a school. Because we believe in these qualities of athletics, all sports have been maintained these many years.”

For school officials sports offered a way to balance various aspects of education but sports also promoted their assimilation goals. “Mainstream sports, like football, were first introduced at boarding schools as part of a larger effort to erase Native American culture and history from memory. Ironically, however, they ended up being a source of pride for students and their children, a resource for pleasure, and an instrument through which they creatively constituted and reformulated their identities.”

162 Ibid., 54.
163 Ibid., 25
164 Bacone College, Bacone Chief 1921, Juniors section.
165 Ibid., 58.
Henry Pratt, student participation in sports was seen as an unwitting tool of exploitation and promotion. Surely Pratt developed endearing relationships with some of his students but he actively exploited them to promote his product.

**Figure 5. Bacone Football Team 1921. Upper Right hand corner (10) John Tippeconnic**

However, John Bloom notes, "Unlike physical education or recreation, these athletic programs were created to provide schools with a valuable source of public relations providing 'proof' that Native American children could be assimilated and taught to compete with grace and sportsmanship."\(^{167}\) Regardless of the motivation behind the exploitation of Indigenous youth under federal assimilation policies, sports proved an avenue for many students to assert their ethnic pride. Legendary Carlisle football coach Pop Warner recognized that for some of his players football contests finally offered an opportunity to engage in combat (albeit on the gridiron) with Anglo-Americans on equal terms.\(^{168}\)

\(^{167}\) Ibid., 13.

\(^{168}\) Ibid., 19.
Athletics at Bacone played an immense role in the expansion of John’s confidence as a young man. Certainly it was one of the aspects of the Bacone experience that shaped his decision to remain (there). After he arrived at the school, John immediately became involved in athletics. His leadership qualities were quickly evident to his peers and coach, and he was named football team captain in his first year. John played Left Halfback for the team and was described by his peers as a player that “. . . twists and squirms and snakes his way along.”

This description of John making his away on the gridiron is perfect due to the fact that the Comanche were known as the Snake people.

It is clear that the Indigenous student athletes envisioned the gridiron as a twentieth-century battlefield in which they could count coup on their enemies, just as Tippeconnic and the previous generation of young men viewed war deeds against their enemies. John Bloom notes this traditional transference to a post-colonial context, “He sees this not as a mark of any sort of loss of identity but, rather, as the continuation of long-standing tradition, simply in a new form.”

I grew up in a household that was clearly part of John Tippeconnic’s legacy. In that home, one of John Tippeconnic’s grandchildren certainly viewed his participation in division one college football as his modern day venue for achieving social recognition amongst his people. In 1990, I was a senior linebacker at Colorado State University. Before every game I envisioned making big plays to help us win. I always visualized myself as a Comanche warrior, and the offense as the enemy. Each time I lined up on defense, I was trying to count coup on my enemy. I was always cognizant of my

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169 Bacone College, Bacone Chief 1922, 55.
170 Wallace and Hoebel note in The Comanches: Lords of the South Plains, p. 5., in the sign language used on the plains that the Comanches are known as the snakes and the gesture was made when one placed the right hand palm downward with their forearm across the front of the body, and moving it to the right with a wiggling motion. There are multiple explanations that have been passed down orally over the generations as to why Comanches are called the snake people including a reference to the geographical area around the Snake River where they originated as Shoshone people.
171 Bloom, To Show What an Indian Can Do: Sports at Native American Boarding Schools, 38.
grandfather’s legacy, not only in education but in sports. I was fortunate to count coup on one hundred-seventy five enemies during my senior campaign at Colorado State University, good enough for second all-time in Colorado State University football history.\footnote{All-Time Football Records. “Colorado State University Tackles,” May 5, 2005. http://www.csurams.com/sports/m-footbl/archive/080405aaa.html (accessed June 2, 2014).} Prior to every game, I envisioned myself just as Tippeconnic must have, before he took up arms against his enemies in the nineteenth century, and as my grandfather John did during his athletic career at Bacone and Ottawa University. Certainly the historical circumstances surrounding Bacone athletes sparked this traditional social transference.

At the very least, the Bacone players characterized their gridiron battles as Indians vs whites. “However, Bacone was victorious five times out of the ten games she played, and in some of these games the Indians out-played their white opponents.”\footnote{Bacone College, Bacone Chief 1921, 58.} John would go on to play football in college and his legacy continued when four of his grandchildren would complete in college athletics, three of them at the division one level.

In a boarding school like Bacone, where the student population was not large, students could get to know everyone in their class and most likely everyone in the school. In 1922, during John’s senior year, there were 234 students enrolled in the entire institution. In addition, students who attended Bacone that year represented twenty-one different tribes and five different states. By the fall of 1922, Bacone began its forty-second year and at this point the school had worked with 3,446 Indigenous students since its opening.\footnote{Bacone College, Bacone Chief 1922, 34.} Some of John’s classmates spoke of him with affection and referred to him as Tipp, “John Tipp, the wild Commanche Indian, came from the western part of the state and became an interesting character of our class. He came mostly for the exploring of the state, but while here, became immensely interested in Bacone, and stayed through the four years of high school with his class. During these four years, John has taken part in all school activities, especially in all forms of athletics. John has
many friends, and we know the school will miss him very much." For John Tippeconnic, the feelings were mutual,

In the fall of 1918, I arrived at Bacone with six other members of my tribe. I was pretty disappointed in the outward appearance and size of the school, for I had thought of Bacone as a place of many fine buildings, and the home of many students. My disappointment was so great, that during the first few weeks, I was rather undecided as to whether or not I should stay through the whole year. At last a time came when I had a better understanding of my school, and I had learned the great purpose of Bacone, and what it stands for. Bacone exists not for show or popularity, but for the honor of Christ, and for the strengthening of Indian boys and girls. Nearly everyone on campus is a working Christian who is not ashamed to say so in public or private. This encouraged me very much, and ever since then, I have been trying to grasp the great opportunities that are constantly offered me. Bacone broadened my vision of the meaning of the great word, education, for I now know what a real education must include a working knowledge of Christianity. I have also learned that it is not the school with many fine buildings, many students, or privileges that has the greatest influence over its students; the purpose of the school and the character of its teachers and leaders are worth far more. Each year I came back with greater determination to finish my schooling at Bacone, for she has changed my whole course, and has set me on the narrow road, always to be on the level and play the game square. Bacone has been my school of schools, and I shall always say a good word about her. She always has teachers of the best, who very graciously extend to the students a helping hand, and she will soon have fine buildings and equipment, also. Perhaps, if I had not gone to Bacone, I would be in the same condition as many of my Indian friends are in now. They have neglected the

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175 Bacone College, Bacone Chief 1922, 28.
strengthening of their moral and religious character, and are not completely educated. The great educational opportunities we are facing now, as Indian youths, are far greater than our forefathers ever dreamed. Bacone is meeting the need by increased equipment and broader visions. It is a place of equal feeling, for its students and teachers have no other purpose than that of pulling together for the betterment of the school and its principles. These are the greatest reasons why I stuck to Bacone, and will always feel the thrill of love at the sight of her maroon and white.\textsuperscript{176}

John credited Bacone with strengthening his moral and religious character and he came to appreciate the institution for its educational privileges and the leadership opportunities it provided. John arrived at Bacone as a young man of seventeen who was unsure of his surroundings but after four years he emerged as a man. That man had a foot in two worlds. However, the Comanche ethos remained and for him it meshed well with Christianity because of their shared characteristics. John not only found himself making the transition into manhood at Bacone, he reaffirmed what is was to be a Comanche. He was both a Comanche and a Baptist but as a Comanche man he was free to choose the medicine that would guide him on his life journey, which was about to take him into uncharted waters.

At Bacone, John Tippeconnic found himself. This is evident in one group photograph taken in 1922 of John and ten additional male students (at Bacone). In this photograph John exudes confidence. He has an air of accomplishment about him that is apparent in his posture and gaze. He has the look of a young Comanche warrior who has counted coup in a modern way. John’s look in this photograph is similar to what can be observed in the 1876 photograph of Tippeconnic with his fellow Comanche warriors (fig 6).\textsuperscript{177} Graduating from Bacone was a wonderful

\textsuperscript{176} Bacone College, Bacone Chief 1922, 43.

\textsuperscript{177} Student Group, Bacone, Oklahoma, MRL 10: G.E.E. Lindquist Papers, 55, 1188, The Burke Library Archives (Columbia University Libraries) at Union Theological Seminary, New York. Can be viewed at
accomplishment for this young Comanche man, given that he was only one generation removed from a life on the plains. Regardless of the obstacles that stood between him and academic success in a white world, John overcame them with the character traits of the Comanche Ethos. John would become a warrior, but the early twentieth century called for a different kind of horse. Every Comanche warrior in the pre reservation era needed a horse in order to take an enemy, seize captives, steal enemy horses or hunt. His possession of a horse demonstrated that he was worthy of social recognition as a man amongst the Comanche people. John brought with him to Bacone a Comanche educational foundation and at Bacone he procured the necessary tools to ensure future success in the white academic world. This study contends that John’s accomplishment, as a member of the first generation in his family not born on the plains, set a historic precedent for the Comanche and that it paved the way for those members of our tribe who followed.

Following his graduation from Bacone, John was riding straight ahead into a world no other Comanche had ever entered before, the Post-Secondary arena. However, John wasn’t riding the same horse that enabled his father to become a man; John’s horse was western education and he was prepared to count coup. After John graduated from Bacone, he was admitted to Ottawa University in Kansas.

It could not have been by chance that John Tippeconnic ended up attending Ottawa University nor Bacone College for that matter. Both of these institutions were run by Baptist organizations. This was significant for John, who remained a Baptist throughout his life. John was baptized at Deyo Mission located eight miles West of Lawton, Oklahoma, on October 8, 1916.¹⁷⁸


Figure 6. John Tippeconnic second from left front row.

John and his siblings attended Deyo Mission along with their mother Wimnerchy. Although Tippeconnic did not initially attend Deyo with Wimnerchy and his children, at the end of his life he converted, “Tippeconnic was reared in the old Indian customs, but in the latter months of his life his heart turned toward Christianity.” Before his apparent conversion, it is likely he might have journeyed there with his family simply to see old friends. Wimnerchy’s name does not appear in the baptismal records but according to John’s eldest son Norman, she was the driving force behind the conversion of her children. Although many Comanche attended the mission and subsequently converted to the faith, this does not indicate the abandonment of Numunu values. In fact, it enforced them.

One of Quanah Parker’s wives, “Topay, lived in the Cache area and she would go to church there too, because she had been converted. Even though she kept Indian values, she would go to church every Sunday.” This is consistent with the Comanche

180 Harris, A Comanche Life, ed. H. Henrietta Stockel, 10.
tradition, which allows each individual to find his/her own medicine or religion. Tippeconnic remained true to his own version of Comanche spirituality, even upon conversion, however, he did not impede his family members from seeking their own medicine. After he was baptized at the age of fifteen, it was a logical choice for John to choose Bacone College for the beginning of his secondary education.

Elton Cyrus Deyo was born on a farm near Buffalo, New York, in 1851. The future Reverend Deyo converted to Christianity at the age of thirty-eight. His initial vocation was farming and the rearing of race horses. Following his conversion, in 1889, he changed directions and sold his farm in order to enter the ministry. After he attended the University of Rochester, he moved on to Colgate Theological Seminary where he graduated in 1893. Evidently he made haste to reach the Kiowa, Comanche and Apache reservation because he arrived in October of that same year.181 Apparently, when Deyo arrived Comanches did not roll out the proverbial red carpet for him. Deyo began construction of a church on numerous sites, only to cease building and move to additional locations until he found one that was acceptable to the Comanche.

The first Comanche Mission was established five miles east and two miles south of Cache.182 Organized in 1895, the church included the first Comanche convert and four missionary workers as its charter members.183 However, even after the mission was constructed Deyo had trouble with the Comanche before the allotment era. Prior to allotment Comanche conversions were rare. Once the process had begun, numerous Comanche converted. Church membership may have increased after the breakup of communal land holdings because the services served as a magnet, enabling the Comanche to gather together in one central spot on a regular basis. I am not suggesting that the Comanches who converted to Christianity at Deyo were

182 Ibid.
disingenuous in their faith (they certainly were not). I am only suggesting that the two events were directly related. Groups of the Comanche found that they could gather on Sundays as a community.

One manifestation of these new Comanche church communities occurred at Deyo Mission camp meetings. These annual gatherings typically took place in the fall prior to the start of each academic school year. The Comanche gathered, beginning on Thursday and running through Sunday evening, in part as resistance to the efforts of outside forces to dismantle tribal gatherings. What these outside forces failed to realize was that the Comanche had a long history of adapting to both voluntary and involuntary change. When the allotment process set in amongst the Comanche, conversion rates spiked. Comanche people found a way to rekindle their communities. I am not implying that the Comanches who formed new communities around the church and especially at camp meetings were duplicitous with their adopted faith. However, at least in the early years of the twentieth century, community overshadowed Christianity in regards to Comanche priorities. “In the early days many Indians would come to these meetings in wagons and buggies; put up their tents and brush arbors ahead of time and were ready on the dot when the call for the first meeting opened.”  

Beef was distributed to camp attendees and even visitors could expect to partake in meals provided for them. Every morning before the sun rose, a camp caller would announce the sunrise meeting, and in the early years many people would respond to the calls for the sunrise meeting. Many Comanches participated in the camp meetings during these years; however, as time passed, participation dropped off. This reinforces the point that the Comanche utilized these gatherings to establish new communities, even as proponents of allotment tried to dissolve existing communal ties. As the twentieth century progressed into a modern era, attendance dwindled. “Today these meetings still are carried on, though the crowd may not be

184 Ibid., 9.
as much, nor the testimonies and songs many not be as active, still lost souls come to find relief from their burdened load.”

By 1901, the Comanche had a quarter of a century of experience adapting to situations in which they did not dictate the change. Simply stated, when the United States attempted to break up communal relationships through allotment, Comanche people responded by gathering at church. Morris Foster notes, “A list of converts at the Deyo Baptist Mission shows Comanches seldom turned to Christianity until after allotment but then did so in significant numbers.” In 1895, only one Comanche converted at Deyo and the following year not a single soul donated his/her own to Christianity. In 1898, five Comanches converted at Deyo but no additional Comanche accepted the faith until 1900, and then it was limited to only two. The number of Comanche converts at Deyo would not eclipse two until the year after allotment began in 1902, when six Comanches turned to Christianity. In 1903, just two years after Comanche allotment began, thirty-six Comanches were baptized and became members at Deyo. The evidence suggests that after the reservation was dissolved, Comanches resisted the attempt to break up their communities by forming a new type of gathering at Deyo. This idea is reinforced by the fact that the number of conversions in a one-year period at Deyo would never eclipse those of 1903. One of the thirty-six Comanches baptized by the mission in 1903, was Tosie Tippeconnic. This trend continued throughout communities where the Comanche now lived on their allotments, as Foster notes, “Within a decade of allotment, at least six churches with predominantly Comanche memberships were attracting converts. They corresponded to the local communities that had developed after allotment. Although they were led by Anglo pastors, their members were almost all Comanches, locating them well within the boundaries of the Comanche.

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185 Ibid.
186 Foster, Being Comanche: A Social History of an American Indian Community, 120.
187 Ibid.
188 Ibid.
community as defined by Comanche-Comanche interaction.” By 1920, the number of Indian churches attended by the Comanche, as well as Kiowa and Apache, had increased to thirteen.

The first convert at Deyo was John Timbo. On Sunday December 29, 1895, he was baptized in Cache Creek following the Sabbath morning service at the mission. The Deyo congregation drove their wagons to Cache Creek, where the first Deyo convert was baptized to the hymn of “O Happy Day.” Just prior to this baptism, the first meeting of the mission took place on November 17th, 1895 at Evangel Mission Chapel. There Reverend Deyo, Mrs Deyo, Miss Ida M. Schofield and Lydia H Birkhof met with various representatives, including the Superintendent of Indian Missions, as well as others from the Women’s Baptist Home Mission Society, the Missions in Missouri River District and the General Missionary for Indians in Oklahoma Territory. The name of the church was chosen at this initial meeting. “This church shall be called the First Comanche Baptist Church, of Oklahoma Territory.”

Deyo was a place that played a significant part of John Tippeconnic’s young life, and he would return here each time he came home. Each time he visited Deyo he fit in seamlessly as if he had never left. While Deyo became an important part of John’s adult life, as a young man his baptism proved challenging. “When my father was baptized in Cache Creek he swam away from the preacher when he tried to dunk him under the water.” Deyo played a guiding role in the path the young John Tippeconnic would take in his educational journey. Both Bacone and Deyo grew up on farms in upstate New York and both were influenced by the message of the Indian reform movement. This was also the base for the Revival movement, centered along the Erie Canal and

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190 Foster, *Being Comanche: A Social History of an American Indian Community*, 120-121.
191 Ibid., 121.
193 Ibid.
194 Ibid., 4.
known as the Second Great Awakening. Both, Bacone and Deyo attended Rochester University and advanced their professional careers working directly with Baptist organizations amongst Indigenous peoples in Oklahoma, Indian Territory. While both certainly felt that they were advancing the cause of the American Indian, their efforts fell directly in line with policies promoted by the Indian reform Movement. It is likely that John Tippeconnic and other Comanches were steered from their home church community at Deyo to further opportunities within the Baptist pipeline in Oklahoma. Yet my grandfather accepted this guidance because of the opportunities that a formal education could provide in the changing Comanche world.

By the time John arrived in Kansas to attend Ottawa University, he was prepared and well versed in the rigors of western educational institutions. However, at Ottawa University, John ventured into waters never before tested by a member of the Comanche Nation, a post-secondary education. While John might have been guided by influential figures at Deyo and Bacone, the onus still lay upon this brave young Comanche to become the first tribal member to receive a four-year college degree. Today it would be easy to overlook a Comanche receiving a Bachelor’s degree, but in the early twentieth century, the enormity of his accomplishment cannot be overstated. He was the first generation of his family to be born after the Comanche people ceased to be independent pastoral nomads. In order to fully appreciate this accomplishment, it is imperative that one be cognizant of more than just the standard United States history most Americans possess. One must be knowledgeable of the barriers purposely designed to dismantle tribal communities and culture from the reservation era and through the further dispossession of tribal lands and allotment to the inculcation of Indigenous youth by “benevolent” institutions like Christianity and western formal education. The psychological and physical effect of western benevolence on young Indigenous children has been well documented and is evident in the markings on numerous headstones at many boarding schools across this nation. John

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was fortunate; while he did attend a federal boarding school at Fort Sill he was able to matriculate into a church run institution for high school. While this would not always translate into a positive experience for the Indigenous student, it certainly did so for John Tippeconnic.

John arrived in Ottawa with his boyhood friend Richard Aitson just two years after Indians in the United States were granted citizenship. John and Richard had attended Fort Sill Indian School and Bacone in sync and would continue their educational journey together. On September 12, 1922, John and his partner in education, Richard, began classes at Ottawa University. Shifting the historical gaze back just one generation, I surmise that two young men—a Comanche and a Kiowa in their early twenties—were venturing into Kansas to raid in order to achieve prestige that would elevate their status among their people. A generation later some would have considered it implausible that these two young men were venturing to Kansas with the same goal in mind; however, instead of using a horse to achieve status, they used education.

On Sunday, September 17, 1922, both attended church with their classmates. Some of the freshman did not know their way around and the older students poked fun at them, “Freshies start for church, but many are lost on the way. I’ll bet that is some sophomore’s work.” Freshman at Ottawa donned green caps, at least for the first month, to indicate their status amongst the upperclassmen. This tradition began in 1920, “when they reluctantly agreed to wear a special design of cap.” Both John and Richard participated in a hike for the freshmen organized by the junior class on Saturday September 23, 1922. This Comanche and Kiowa had come a long way since their days

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197 June 2, 1924 the United States Congress granted all Indians U.S. citizenship. However, some states prohibited Indians from voting in elections until the 1960s.
198 Ottawa University, The Ottawan 1923 Yearbook, 138, in author’s possession.
199 Ibid.
200 Ibid.
201 Ottawa University, The Ottawan 1924 Yearbook, 25, in author’s possession.
202 Ottawa University, The Ottawan 1923 Yearbook, 138.
working the farm and learning English at the Fort Sill Indian Boarding School. Without hesitation they jumped into the world of post-secondary education with the same fervor that they plunged into Cache Creek years before as boys. Certainly John remembered being taught the desirable attributes Comanche parents bestowed upon their young as he began his college education such as: “Self reliance, to be dependable in carrying out tasks to completion was an important way of doing things to develop self-confidence.” John exhibited self-confidence when he fully immersed himself in college life, and he began by joining the football team.

Tuesday, September 26, 1922, John and twenty eight other students, including Richard, began football practice. Coach E.R. Elbel entered the 1922 campaign “With practically a new team this year, facing a schedule of the strongest teams in the state, coach developed a good team. The prospects for next year are the best.” This conclusion did not require a gifted prognosticator as the team fell to each of their seven opponents. On October 7, 1922, John suffered misfortune playing halfback while running the ball during the game vs Hays Normal. Ottawa lost the game 19-13. However, he left enough of an impact and impression to be featured in the school’s yearbook, “‘Tipp’ started the season off with a whirl and played wonderful football but in the Hays game he was injured and this kept him out for several games. Tipp is light, but with his speed he is clever at dodging tackles and getting away for long gains. He comes from Bacone.”

Comanche youth were expected to learn responsibility, “They knew the meaning of mutual dependence and that no one person could live to himself and be a successful member of the tribe.” John continued to remember this lesson at Ottawa,

203 Tippeconnic, “Comanche Indian Customs With Educational Implications”, 58.
204 Ottawa University, The Ottawan 1923 Yearbook, 109.
205 Ibid., 110.
206 Ibid., 108.
207 Ibid., 112.
208 Ibid.
209 Tippeconnic, “Comanche Indian Customs With Educational Implications”, 58.
incorporating it with his friend Richard Aitson. On Friday, June 1, 1923, both men finished their final exams. It is assured that both relied on each other for assistance and depended on the other for support as they continued along the educational path. Still other Comanche lessons John utilized during his first year were cooperation and consideration for others. Comanche children were inculcated with advice that stated, “they accepted in all things, were united and considerate of the needs of others...they respected the rights of others to live happy, and useful social lives.”

These attributes were noticed in John as early as his freshman year when his Ottawa classmates described him, “Always striving to please, never to offend.”

John registered for his sophomore year on September 11, 1923. He glowed with confidence by the time he suited up for the first gridiron battle of the season, Ottawa vs. Bethany. Ottawa scored twenty points by halftime and posted the first victory of the season by winning 39-0. The home crowd yelled until they were hoarse. Over the next two weeks the Baptists (Ottawa) defeated the Presbyterians from the College of Emporia and the Catholics from St. Mary by a combined score of 16-3 expanded their record to three wins without a defeat. The next three games saw the Ottawa Braves losing two and tying another, including a 6-0 loss to another denominational school, the Friends College Quakers. On November 23, 1923, Ottawa drubbed Kansas City University by scoring eighteen touchdowns on the way to a 114-0 blowout. John and the rest of the first string were held out beginning in the third quarter but the second string still scored fifty-three points in the second half. On Thanksgiving Day 1923, the team closed the season by playing in eight inches of snow at Pittsburg Teachers College. “The Pittsburg game ended a very successful season for Cowell’s Braves and a record for which O.U. is proud. The Kansas Conference record shows Ottawa with a

210 Ibid.
211 Ottawa University, The Ottawan 1923 Yearbook, 69.
212 Ottawa University, The Ottawan 1924 Yearbook, 9.
213 Ibid., 101.
214 Ibid., 9.
215 Ibid., 102.
216 Ibid., 105.
standing of .667, there being four victories, two defeats and two scoreless ties. Every game found the Ottawa team fighting, and though in many instances against strong odds, they forged on with the spirit that makes Ottawa University known over the state as a school of high standards and clean, sportsmanlike play on every occasion."\(^{217}\)

John continued to be involved in extracurricular activities at Ottawa. In addition to the Stockford Club he joined the Zale Bay Club. This club organized for the first time in 1923 and according to the school, “Zale Bay is an Indian word meaning ‘full of pep’ and the organization designed to make the meaning of that phrase characteristic of the entire student body.”\(^{218}\) The organization coordinated activities during the academic year to foster school spirit. The Comanche Ethos John possessed featured two more attributes taught to him as a child. Reliability and Loyalty. Accordingly, John was raised with the knowledge that honor could be achieved through, “trustworthiness and reliability established by custom from early childhood. Loyalty, was taught to persevere the existence of the institutions; past experience and demonstrated that the tribal strength rested in loyalty to one another and through the group.”\(^{219}\) Apparently these characteristics were evident in John at Ottawa because the members of the Zale Bay Club were elected by both the student body and faculty.\(^{220}\) In the 1925 Ottawa yearbook John handwrote a note next to his photo exhibiting this very spirit, “I think our class is the best, even if I am doing the saying myself, Tipp.”\(^{221}\) When they were not in class or on the field, John and his classmates frequented the Pastime theatre to take in silent films followed by trips to Bennett’s Ice Cream parlor in town. Yet another Comanche value John was raised with was “Neatness, dignity was attained by those who were orderly and clean.”\(^{222}\) It is likely that John also frequented the city barbershop because in

\(^{217}\) Ibid.
\(^{218}\) Ibid., 101.
\(^{219}\) Tippeconnic, “Comanche Indian Customs With Educational Implications”, 58-59.
\(^{220}\) Ottawa University, The Ottawan 1924 Yearbook, 101.
\(^{221}\) Ottawa University, The Ottawan 1925 Yearbook, 48.
\(^{222}\) Tippeconnic, “Comanche Indian Customs With Educational Implications”, 58.
each photo in which he appears he is dressed smartly and well groomed. John continued as an active member of clubs, organizations and sports at Ottawa until he graduated in June, 1926. A photo in the 1926 annual shows him wearing a graduation cap with a tassel. He was the first Comanche to don the regalia marking a college graduate.

By the end of the 1926-1927 academic year, John Tippeconnic, along with his boyhood friend Richard Aitson, had successfully completed the Ottawa University degree requirements and both of them procured Bachelor of Arts degrees. More than fifty percent of the freshmen from John’s initial year at Ottawa did not make it to graduation. By graduating from Ottawa, John secured a place in Comanche history.

Retention of Indigenous students today at four-year post-secondary institutions is a constant challenge, which makes John’s success all the more impressive. His accomplishment provided the foundation for all Comanches who would follow. Through this achievement he emerged as a modern day warrior. However, instead of counting coup on an enemy as his father had done in order to achieve social status, he became a warrior by utilizing his mind. Although John’s accomplishment required an altogether different type of bravery, it was valor nonetheless. He had to have the courage to venture into waters never before tested by another Comanche. He not only tested unexplored waters, he learned to swim. Armed with a college education, John entered the professional world as the first Comanche in our people’s history to receive a four-year college degree.

In 1927, shortly after graduation, he tested the waters of the professional world as a teacher among the Cherokee at Sequoyah Boarding School in Tahlequah, Oklahoma. The next year John took a

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223 Ottawa University, *The Ottawan* 1925 Yearbook, 48, in author’s possession. (Neatness did not imply short clean cut hair. It is no secret that Comanche men would spend hours braiding and re-braiding their hair until it was just rite before they would venture out, even in the pre-reservation period. In this context neatness applies to John because he is always well groomed and smartly dressed.)

224 Ottawa University, *The Ottawan* 1926 Yearbook, 37, in author’s possession.

225 Ottawa University, *The Ottawan* 1923 Yearbook, 121.
position as boy’s dormitory advisor at an Indian boarding school on the Wind River (Shoshone/Arapaho) Reservation in Ft. Washakie, Wyoming amongst the Comanche’s closest relatives, the Shoshone. Fluent in his language, John could communicate with the Shoshone students and their parents who, like his own family, might have spoken only their native tongue. At Fort Washakie he also taught, served as farm agent, principle teacher as well as the Principal. In Ft. Washakie John met and married Juanita Ghormley, a Cherokee who, ironically had attended Chilocco Indian School in Muskogee. They were married on June 2, 1927. Following John’s stint in Wyoming, he and his new bride took employment amongst the Mohave people at the Truxton Boarding School in Arizona. His next opportunity in education landed John and Juanita on the White Mountain Apache Reservation, also in Arizona, where he served as a teacher. It was here that their first attempt at parenthood ended tragically when their first child was stillborn. In 1933, while the young couple still resided and worked amongst the Whiteriver Apache people, Norman Tippeconnic (my father) arrived in the world.

John’s next educational employment took him to Valentine, Arizona, where he worked as a teacher and principal in Hualapai country. Each summer he attended Arizona State Teachers College in Flagstaff, and in August 1942, he procured a Master’s degree. This was a significant accomplishment; as it meant that he had become the first Comanche to receive a Master’s degree and the first Native American in the state of Arizona to earn an MA. One newspaper suggested that he might have been the first Indian in the nation to earn a Master’s degree.

John W, Tippeconnic, Comanche Indian who will graduate from Flagstaff State college distinction of being the first of his tribe and potentially the first Indian in the nation to receive a master of arts degree. Tippeconnie is a teacher at Peach

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226 Comanche’s and Shoshone’s speak the same language with only a few minor differences. Comanche’s originated as Shoshone people.
228 Obituary of Juanita Tippeconnic, Sunday Constitution, May 21, 1995. Lawton, OK.
229 Arizona State Teachers College became Northern Arizona University
230 John Tippeconnic III to Norman W. Tippeconnic, personal letter written as an explanation accompanied to copies of John Tippeconnic’s Masters thesis (in possession of author).
Springs and has attended summer sessions at the local college for the past four years. He has attended the Colorado Agricultural College at Ft. Collins, Colorado and received his bachelor’s degree at Ottawa college in Kansas and took some work at Colorado State college at Greeley. For his master’s thesis, Tippeconnie chose a comparison of the education of Indian children by the inheritance system. He interviewed 25 Indians from 50 to 85 years of age, and, according to his thesis, those educated by the inheritance system have more respect for elders, self reliance, reverence, truthfulness, honesty, welfare of the tribe, courtesy and stick-to-it-iveness. Tippeconnie is the first Comanche Indian to graduate from Flagstaff State College. Other tribes which have been represented in graduating classes include Hopi, Navajo and Sioux. Each representative from these tribes received a bachelor’s degree.231

On August 27, 1942, the Fort Sill News also recorded this monumental event but did so with a bit more perspective, background and a display of humility from John Tippeconnic. In an article titled, “Indian Receives Master’s Degree: John W. Tippeconnie Graduated in Arizona,”

It’s a far-cry from the son of non-English speaking Comanche Indians to a master’s degree from a recognized American college...but that’s the achievement of John W. Tippeconnie, native of Comanche county. Tippeconnie doesn’t claim to be the first Indian to advance so far in modern education, but he does believe that he’s the first fullblooded member of the Comanche tribe to obtain a master’s degree. The degree was obtained recently from the Flagstaff, Ariz., state college. Tippeconnie will teach this winter at Mexican Springs, N. M., a three-room community school. Arizona newspapers said he was the first American Indian to receive a master’s degree, but Tippeconnie doesn’t make this claim. Forty years old, married and father of four sons, he left here in 1927. He has taught for seven years in Arizona, Oklahoma, Wyoming and now New Mexico, attending college intermittently. Tippeconnie based his thesis on a comparison of Indian children by the inheritance system, concluding that the old Indian has more confidence in the inheritance system. Tippeconnie was born near Cache. His father, Tippeconnie (meaning Stone House)

is dead, his mother, Winnerchy, is still living, near Cache. He attended school at Cameron during the first World War after going through the first six grades at the Fort Sill Indian school.232

My own education and career inadvertently followed a path similar to my grandfather’s. Upon graduation from high school, I accepted an athletic scholarship to play football at Colorado State University (CSU). Like my grandfather, I played football in college for four years. John took classes from the Colorado Agricultural college, which was renamed Colorado State University.233 John worked, although in what capacity I have no knowledge, at Colorado State College in Greeley, Colorado. In 1995, I was hired by the same institution, which had changed its name to the University of Northern Colorado (UNC), as the first Director of Native American Student Services. However, when I attended CSU and later worked at UNC, I was ignorant of the fact that I was not the first Tippeconnic to attend and work at these institutions. It was only later as I conducted research for this project that I became aware of these similarities, learning the path I was taking to achieve my own social and professional recognition amongst Comanche people was initially established by the route forged by my grandfather. Therefore, it is my contention that John Tippeconnic not only paved the way for me to procure an education and profession, he did so for every Comanche who followed down the road to higher education. This study asserts that John’s educational legacy is as historically significant as the legacy of Quanah Parker, Ten Bears, Green Horn and other great Comanche leaders. Today, at Northern Arizona University (formerly Flagstaff State College) my grandfather’s legacy lives on through a scholarship in his name, awarded to multiple students each year.234 John W. Tippeconnic Memorial Scholarship awardees must be at least one quarter American Indian and enrolled in a federally recognized tribe. In addition, the scholarship gives preference to Education majors.235

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233 J.C. McCaskill to John W. Tippeconnic, 4 November 1937, United States Department of the Interior, Office of Indian Affairs, Washington, D.C.
234 Eugene M. Hughes, President Northern Arizona University to John W. Tippeconnic, 27 February 1992, The John W. Tippeconnic Memorial Scholarship, Northern Arizona University Foundation, Inc..
235 S. Theodore Ford, Vice President for University Advancement, to John Tippeconnic III, 25 November 1997, Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, AZ.
Following his graduation from Bacone, John Tippeconnic ventured into the post-secondary world. By graduating from Ottawa University, he became the first Comanche to procure a four-year college degree. However, he was not finished. During his summer breaks he attended the Flagstaff State College and became the first Indigenous American in Arizona to earn a graduate degree (Masters). In doing so, John became a warrior, and the vehicle he used, education, deviated from the horse utilized by his father. By World War II everything had changed for the Comanche, from the reservation and allotment to the attempted break up of tribal communities; however, one thing remained the same. The Comanche always found ways to adapt to the changes around them, whether they were imposed or voluntary. John not only adapted, he thrived, and in doing so he put himself in the category of great Comanche leaders.
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