United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

1. Name of Property
   historic name: Comanche Indian Mission Cemetery
   other names/site number: Comanche Indian Cemetery, Yellow Mission Cemetery, Indian Agency Cemetery

2. Location
   street & number: Henry Post Army Airfield, 4900 Area
   city or town: Fort Sill
   state: Oklahoma  code: OK  county: Comanche    code: 031  zip code: 73503

3. State/Federal Agency Certification
   As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,
   I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.
   In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:
   - [ ] national
   - [ ] statewide
   - [x] local
   Signature of certifying official/Title: [Signature]  Date: [2/6/13]
   [State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government]

   In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.
   Signature of commenting official
   Title
   Date

4. National Park Service Certification
   I hereby certify that this property is:
   - [ ] entered in the National Register
   - [ ] determined not eligible for the National Register
   - [ ] determined eligible for the National Register
   - [ ] removed from the National Register
   [other (explain:)]
   Signature of the Keeper: [Signature]  Date of Action: [2/5/2014]
United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service / National Register of Historic Places Registration Form  
NPS Form 10-900  
OMB No. 1024-0018  
(Expires 5/31/2012)

**Comanche Indian Mission Cemetery**  
Name of Property  

**Comanche, Oklahoma**  
County and State  

---

### 5. Classification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply.)</th>
<th>Category of Property (Check only one box.)</th>
<th>Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>private</td>
<td>building(s)</td>
<td>Contributing Noncontributing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>public - Local</td>
<td>district</td>
<td>buildings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>public - State</td>
<td>X site</td>
<td>district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X public - Federal</td>
<td>structure</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>object</td>
<td>site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>object</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Name of related multiple property listing  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A  

---

### 6. Function or Use

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

- Funerary-Cemetery

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

- Funerary-Cemetery
- Defense- Air Facility

---

### 7. Description

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

N/A

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

- foundation:  
- walls:  
- roof:  
- other: Concrete (slab markers)
Comanche Indian Mission Cemetery

Name of Property

Comanche, Oklahoma

County and State

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a summary paragraph that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

The Comanche Indian Mission Cemetery is located in the SE ¼ of the NW ¼ of the SE ¼ of Section 18, Township 2 North, Range 11 West of the Indian Meridian. The Comanche Indian Mission Cemetery is approximately 1.098891 acres and situated on the grassy rolling plain at the southeastern corner of the Henry Post Airfield, adjacent to Rogers Lane and Interstate 44. The Comanche Indian Mission Cemetery today, retains the appearance of a natural prairie grass setting as in its historical times of use.

Historically the Comanche people were comprised of many bands (groups of Comanche people), dispersed geographically in order to survive each other for the good of the whole population. The Comanche Indian Mission Cemetery is representative of the effects of forced acculturation in traditional burial practices of the Comanche people, and indicative of the impact smallpox had on the entire Comanche population at the close of the 19th century. The Comanche Indian Mission Cemetery meets the criteria for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and D in the areas of Ethnic Heritage-Native American and Historic Archeology.

Narrative Description

The Comanche Indian Mission Cemetery (Cemetery) is located in the SE ¼ of the NW ¼ of the SE ¼ of Section 18, Township 2 North, Range 11 West of the Indian Meridian. The Comanche Indian Mission Cemetery is approximately 1.098891 acres and situated on the grassy rolling plain at the southeastern corner of the Henry Post Airfield¹, adjacent to Rogers Lane and Interstate 44.

From a distance the Cemetery today retains the appearance of a natural prairie grass setting with no vertical monuments or identifiable features. Oral tradition indicates approximately 200 below ground burials. In 1917-1918 the Army Quartermaster Corps placed approximately 109 concrete slab markers on graves identified by clergy and family members of the decedents willing to participate in a survey of graves. A "Cemetery List" prepared by Reverend Richard H. Harper in December of 1917 contained a list of the identified burials (see attachment). It is unclear what type of information may have been used by Rev. Harper to identify the location and pattern of graves or later by the Quartermaster in their placement of the grave covers.²

¹The Henry Post Air Field was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1977, but the 10-acre listed site did not include the Cemetery grounds.

²Cemetery List, 12/15/1917, Fort Sill Historic Landmark and Museum, Fort Sill, OK.
The concrete grave cover markers were reportedly covered with three inches of dirt in 1954 to accommodate increasing use of the adjacent Army airfield. The only visible indicators of the cemetery today are a limited number of depressions that conform to the circa 1918 concrete grave covers. Upon inspection, only 49 markers contain actual inscribed names, while another 46 slabs are marked unknown and 14 are marked child or child/sister/brother of. The names inscribed on the existing concrete grave markers were placed on the easternmost side of the slabs and situated to be read from the west. It is likely that the placement of the concrete slabs has protected the below ground burials from degradation and/or inadvertent disturbance/excavation.

The original estimation of graves supports the traditions of the Comanche Tribe. The limited number of markers might reflect the reluctance of some decedents to participate in the grave marking, where it was often considered improper to speak of/or say the name of the deceased. At this time no physical evidence has been identified regarding the existence of other burial markers or tombstones at this site.

During 1984, the Fort Sill Museum Curator supervised the field investigation of the Comanche Mission Cemetery, which included uncovering of a number of concrete slab markers overlaying burial sites. The field investigation included a survey of the site conducted by Army personnel from Battery C, 25th Field Artillery. Based on this survey, the probable cemetery site corners were located and marked. The Fort Sill Grounds Maintenance and Museum staff subsequently located 109 burial sites and uncovered them to the top of the concrete slab markers. The names on the exposed concrete markers were recorded and photographed, the locations of the burial sites were mapped.

---

iii 1955, Morris Swett memo, Department of the Army, 12/15/2009 letter.

iv Weston, page 2-15 and 2-16.
### National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

#### Comanche Indian Mission Cemetery

**Name of Property**: Comanche Indian Mission Cemetery  
**County and State**: Comanche, Oklahoma

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**  
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- [x] A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- [ ] B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- [ ] C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- [x] D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**  
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- [x] A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- [ ] B removed from its original location.
- [ ] C a birthplace or grave.
- [x] D a cemetery.
- [ ] E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- [ ] F a commemorative property.
- [ ] G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

- [ ] Ethnic Heritage - Native American
- [ ] Archeology - Historic

**Period of Significance**

- [ ] 1870-1907 (Reservation Life)

**Significant Dates**

- [ ] 1869-1901 (Reservation Life)
- [ ] 1900-1901 (Smallpox epidemic)

**Significant Person**  
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

- [ ] N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

- [ ] Comanche Tribe

**Architect/Builder**

- [ ] N/A

---

**Period of Significance (Justification)**

(1870-1907) Fort Sill was officially established in 1869. As a direct result of Fort Sill's establishment and the reservation being opened for land settlement, a cultural transition occurred in the behaviors and patterns of traditional Comanche Indian burial practices. Thus, necessitating a localized site for burial of the deceased. The first documented burial dates to approximately 1895, however, oral tradition of the Comanche people places the first burial at this location circa 1870, providing an appropriate start date for the period of significance. Reverend Richard Harper's documentation places the last burial use at 1907, at which point the lands occupied by the cemetery were transferred to Fort Sill.
Comanche Indian Mission Cemetery  
Name of Property

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

The Comanche Indian Mission Cemetery is associated with significant Native American use during a time when Tribes were being forcibly removed to reservations and slowly acculturated into Christian/Euro-American practices through government policy. The Comanche as a Nation hold the cemetery as sacred ground, not only associated with their ancestors during a time of significant tribal upheaval, but also as a symbol of the deprivations faced by the tribe as a result of their treatment and conditions.

Historically, the Comanche people were comprised of many bands (groups of Comanche people), dispersed geographically in order to survive each other for the good of the whole population. The Comanche Indian Mission Cemetery is representative of the effects of forced acculturation in traditional burial practices of the Comanche people, and indicative of the impact smallpox had on the entire Comanche population at the close of the 19th century. The Comanche Indian Mission Cemetery meets the criteria for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and D in the areas of Ethnic-Heritage-Native American and Historic Archeology.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance.)

Criterion ‘A’ association to a specific event:
Historically the Comanche people were comprised of many bands (groups of Comanche people), dispersed geographically in order to survive each other for the good of the whole population. At close of the 19th century, a smallpox epidemic claimed the lives of many Comanche's, which impacted the entire body.

Criterion ‘D’ yielded or likely to yield information:
There is much to be gleaned from the Comanche Indian Mission Cemetery and smallpox event, regarding the effects on Comanche culture, which has not been purveyed or examined in its full extant. The Comanche Indian Mission Cemetery retains the potential to yield significant information in Tribal/Government history. The ability to verify and study the general character of Native American burials during this period of time, when forced acculturation was radically altering Comanche lifeways; the ability to verify whether or not the burials were associated with smallpox deaths; and the ability to study how the treatment of such victims if they existed differed from the treatment of other burials are significant avenues of potential investigation from a scientific and cultural perspective.

Additionally, because little documentary material regarding the Comanche Indian Mission Cemetery exists and considering that these burials were not generally denoted with permanent markers, archeological analysis, even if done with remote sensing such as ground penetrating radar, could further define the number, extant, and physical layout of the burials, providing important information about the landscape, use of space, and boundaries.
Comanche Indian Mission Cemetery
Name of Property
Comanche, Oklahoma
County and State

[As noted in the National Register Bulletin, Guidelines for Evaluating and Registering Cemeteries and Burial Places, cemeteries eligible under National Register Criterion D need not meet Criterion Consideration D.]

special requirements:

Criterion 'A' religious property with historical importance:
The Comanche Indian Mission Cemetery is considered a 'sacred site' by the Comanche people, because of their religious beliefs surrounding the smallpox epidemic.

Criterion 'D' association with historic events:
The Comanche Indian Mission Cemetery site derives its primary significance from its association to a historic event (the 1900-1901 smallpox epidemic).

[The Comanche Indian Mission Cemetery meets the same requirements, in addition to special requirements Criterion 'A' as a religious property with historical importance and Criterion 'D' from its association with historic events as a 'Traditional Cultural Property' (TCP).]

Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

Comanche Nation
The Comanche Nation as it is known today is comprised of many bands or groups of people who historically were geographically dispersed over broad areas of the southern and Southwestern Great Plains from Colorado and Wyoming to Kansas, Arkansas, Oklahoma and Texas.

Before being placed on the reservation, the Comanche in historical times were nomadic bison hunters organized into numerous bands, of which five were always prominent—the Quahadi (Kwahadi), the Penateka (Penande), the Nokoni (Detsanayuka), the Yamparika, and the Kotsoteka. The bands were nearly autonomous and interconnections were very loose. Bison were the subsistence mainstay from the time the Comanche moved onto the plains. After the horse was acquired, they usually staged communal hunts under the direction of a hunt leader. Bison were shot with bows and arrows (later with rifles), stabbed with lances, or sometimes driven over a cliff. Men did the hunting and women the butchering. Other game hunted included elk, deer, black bear, antelope, and, at times, wild horses. In times of necessity, their own horses would supply the food. Numerous wild plants were collected by the women, and agricultural products could be traded for with other tribes. The bison-hide-covered tipi was the basic dwelling, with wooden frame bungalows and houses replacing them in modern times.

As noted above, the political structure was loosely organized, but each band had an elected nonhereditary chief. Comanche religious practice was very individualistic, with emphasis being laid on the male vision quest. The quest gave power to individuals but entailed restrictive practices and taboos. There were no priests and few group ceremonies. The Comanche believed in a creator spirit and its counterpart, an evil spirit, and accepted the Sun, the Earth, and the Moon as deities. The religion was animistic with natural objects and animal spirits (except for dogs and horses) having various powers. Medicine men served as intermediaries and helpers with the spirits and also served practically as curers.

v The Comanche had acquired horses from the Pueblo Indians after the Pueblo Revolt in 1680, and the horse became a key element in the emergence of a distinctive Comanche culture. "Comanche Timeline". Comanchelanguage.org., retrieved 2012-06-18.

vi Historic narrative on early Comanche culture excerpted from http://www.everyculture.com/North-America/Comanche.html
From the eighteenth century to the mid-nineteenth centuries, the Comanche concentrated their settlements in the Wichita Mountains in what is now southwestern Oklahoma, while still roaming vast stretches from the Arkansas River on the north to the Mexican state of Coahuila on the south in search of buffalo. This nomadic tradition would greatly exacerbate the negative impacts of forced reservation life on the Comanche in later years, including the concentration of individuals long used to dispersed lifestyles. The buffalo were their lifeblood as they depended on the animal as their main source of food and used its hide for clothing and shelter. For decades, the Comanche served as a formidable barrier to white settlement across a wide swath of the middle of the country. Because of the barrier, some have contended that the Comanche were the most powerful tribe in U.S. history. As non-native settlers began to encroach on their territory, conflicts were inevitable. vii

During the first half of the nineteenth century there was continual strife between the Comanche, Mexicans, Texans, and the U.S. Army. Texas, an independent republic from 1836 to 1845, had as its stated policy a refusal to acknowledge Indian title to land. Officials operated under the assumption that Native Americans had the "grim choice of emigration, expulsion, or extermination" viii As a result, Texas settlers in particular carried out a merciless campaign of harassment and intimidation toward their Indian neighbors.

In addition, the Comanche faced the constant threat of annihilation due to waves of epidemics from Eurasian diseases to which they had no immunity, such as smallpox and measles. Outbreaks of smallpox (1817, 1848) and cholera (1849) took a major toll on the Comanche, whose population dropped from an estimated 20,000 in mid-century to just a few thousand by the 1870s.

In 1867, the Medicine Lodge Treaty with the United States was signed and the Comanche, along with the Kiowa and Kiowa-Apache moved to a reservation in southwest Oklahoma.

Reservation life for the Comanche actually began in 1869, as a result of the Treaty, which promised schools, churches, and annuities in return for the Indians agreeing to live on reservation lands established in the Indian Territory, thus beginning a lengthy and arduous transition from a free people to constrained reservation life. The provisions of the treaty effectively entitled the transfer of vast tracts of land totaling over 60,000 square miles in return for a reservation area initially totaling less than 5,000 square miles of land, an amount which would be continually reduced in later years. ix

The Comanche reluctantly met the terms of the agreement and were forcibly moved onto reservation lands. Incensed over the loss of their lands and the devastation brought by buffalo hunters, whiskey peddlers, and others, however, raiding parties continued to venture out in search of traditional and accustomed hunting locations and/or retribution. Chaffing at the sedentary life envisioned for them, along with longstanding animosity with Texas residents in particular spurred the Comanche Indians to continued unrest in the unsettled areas of the region. The Fort Sill Reservation and Agency for a time offered a degree of protection and refuge as the Agency Agent, Lawrie Tatum was reluctant to believe the charges against his Indian residents. Finally, the Red River War (1874-75) brought to a conclusion most of the Comanche raiding and restricted the Comanche to the reservation lands. x

Once estimated to number in the thousands, the Comanche population, according to an 1875 reservation census, had been reduced to 1,597. Reservation life necessitated a complete restructuring of Comanche society as the government attempted to transform the hunters and warriors into farmers and stockmen. Their cultural values and beliefs were under constant attack as they were encouraged to take up the white man's ways. Unable to subsist themselves, and only begrudgingly supported by the government, the Comanche suffered terribly. xi

---

viii Gibson, p. 345
ix http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comanche
x Soldier and Brave; Historic Places Associated with Indian Affairs and the Indian Wars in the Trans-Mississippi West, National Park Service, Washington, DC http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/soldier/siteb25.htm
xi http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/bmc72; Texas Historical Commission.
With the ratification of the Jerome Agreement on June 6, 1900, the Comanche, Kiowa, and Apache tribes gave up the reserved reservation lands in compensation for 160-acre allotments which were to be held in trust for them by the government. With the allotments, the government-intended transition from nomadic hunters to agricultural farmers and ranchers was complete. The former reservation areas not given as Indian allotments were opened to non-Indian settlement by lottery on August 6, 1901.

According to provisions of the Jerome Agreement, each man, woman, and child would receive 160 acres of land, with additional acreage set aside for church, agency, and school use. Comanche leaders protested the allotment on multiple grounds, but the federal government upheld the agreement. Lands not allotted to the Indians were thrown open to the public, and whites soon outnumbered Indians on the former reservation. The post-allotment period was a difficult time for the Comanche, who continued to lose their land as a result of financial reverses or fraudulent schemes. Many were forced to leave the vicinity of the old reservation to seek employment, and those who remained were divided by factionalism. World War II accelerated the breakup of Comanche society as members of the tribe left to find jobs in the defense industry or join the military service. In the postwar years, the Comanche population continued to disperse in search of economic opportunity.

In the 1960s the Comanche, encouraged by a resurgence of Indian nationalism, began to work together to rebuild their society. They underwent important political changes as a result of that initiative. Although they maintained ties with the Kiowas and Apaches, the Comanche established their own tribal government, which operates in a bustling complex near Lawton, Oklahoma. In 1995 the Comanche had an enrolled tribal population of 9,722 scattered across the United States. The People are also united by pride in their rich Comanche heritage, an element that has remained constant through years of tumultuous change.xii

Fort Sill
Established on January 8, 1869, as Camp Wachita by Major General Phillip Sheridan, US Army, Fort Sill was renamed on August 1, 1869. The original Fort Sill reservation of 36 square miles was established in 1871 by Executive Order. The Post was envisioned as a support facility to house both infantry and mounted cavalry troops assigned to settle the Apache, Kiowa, and Comanche Indians on their reservation and to stop hostile Indians from raiding border settlements located between Texas and Kansas.

The Fort expanded several times, most notably in 1897, 1901, and 1907. The Comanche Indian Mission Cemetery lies within the acreage transferred to the Fort in 1907, coinciding with the establishment of the Army Field Artillery branch at Fort Sill. The 1917 establishment of the Henry Post Army Airfield in the area adjacent to the cemetery brought the Fort in direct contact with the Comanche Mission Cemetery.

Today Fort Sill serves as heart of the United States Army Field Artillery School as well as the Marine Corps' site for Field Artillery MOS school, United States Army Air Defense Artillery School, and the 31st Air Defense Artillery Brigade, on a site of over 90,000 acres.xiii

Fort Sill Agency
The Fort Sill Indian Agency was originally established as part of the obligations that resulted from the signing of the Medicine Lodge Treaty with the Kiowa, Comanche, and Apache Indians on October 21, 1867 and ratified by the United States Senate in July 25, 1868. The Treaty required that the Kiowa, Comanche and Plains Apache Indians settle on a reservation located south of the Washita River and North of the Red River, located within Indian Territory or the present day State of Oklahoma. The Indian Agency site was located to the southwest of Fort Sill within lands designated by the Treaty as reservation lands due to the proximity to available timber and water. The Treaty also specifically required the provision, at federal expense, of warehouse, residential, and schoolhouse facilities for the operation of the mission.xiv

---


xiii Ibid.

xiv Weston, page 2-6
Agency would serve as the direct liaison between the tribes and the government, all within the shadow of the military at nearby Fort Sill.

The physical site of the original Fort Sill Indian Agency was approximately 3 miles to the southeast of the Fort Sill Old Post on the east bank of Cache Creek, south of the confluence of Medicine Creek. Religious organizations were chosen to provide the Indian Agents to the Indian agencies established under the requirements of the Medicine Lodge Treaty, partly to reduce the potential for the type of corruption and mistreatment that had afflicted earlier Indian Agents and Agencies. Religious institutions it was thought would also be able to bring with them the correct morality to the Indian people. In the case of the Fort Sill Indian Agency, the Society of Friends (Quakers) were selected for managing the Agency. The first civilian Agent appointed was Lawrie Tatum, a Quaker from Iowa who arrived in 1869. His first goal—attempt to immediately transform his recalcitrant wards into peaceful farmers. By 1870 the Agency had relocated to the west side of Cache Creek and the first modest adobe buildings were completed.

"... hundreds of tipi, thousands of horses, scores of women in bright-hued blankets, and uncountable numbers of playing children and barking dogs made a most colorful and noisy scene, at times verging on pandemonium. Fort Sill was truly an "Indian Post."

The Agency Village served as the distribution point for "annuity goods" distributed to the reservation Indians, requiring tribal bands and groups to congregate periodically at Fort Sill from their disparate reservation homes. "I saw the Indians drawing their annuity goods to-day—they came in on the 19th—and it was a real sight to see each chief with his little band circled around him, all sitting cross-legged on the grass, with all the goods apportioned in a circle and one or two members of the band assisting the chief in distributing the same. The goods consisted of blankets, muslin, calico, strouding, coats, pants, shirts, frying pans, kettles, tin-cups, & c., & c. Some of them seemed pleased but others were not."

The Old Agency Village, also known as the Red Store had three general stores, a blacksmith shop, a church that also served as a school, and a few homes. The settlement existed until Lawton was created on August 6, 1901.

In 1871 Rev. Josiah Butler, a Quaker, (and his wife Elizabeth), founded Josiah Missionary School, which later became known as Fort Sill Indian School. Initially, the facility provided education to the Apache, Comanche, and Kiowa from a fairly substantial, 1 ½-story, adobe and rubble masonry structure, with a kitchen, dining room, and dormitory. The school operation meant that Indian youths were kept congregated at the Agency for extended periods, which may again have exacerbated the spread of small-pox and other readily communicable diseases. In 1958 the school (now housed in newer facilities) continued as a boarding school for American Indians, with 41 faculty and 230 students.

Fort Sill Agency Mission
In the year 1895 the Women's Executive Committee of the Reformed Church in America (later known as the Women's Board of Domestic Missions) sent into the field the Reverend Frank Wright, a member of the Choctaw tribe. It was thought that there were both a need and an opportunity for more Christian work among the Comanche people. In 1906, the
Comanche Indian Mission Cemetery

Comanche, Oklahoma

Name of Property

Women’s Board of Domestic Missions established the Dutch Reform Church. Originally consisting of three adobe buildings, the Mission was reportedly located east of the railroad tracks southeast of the cemetery.

With all his heart and soul Dr. Wright entered this field. A mile north of the townsite of Lawton, Oklahoma, a piece of land containing one hundred and twenty acres was obtained from the Government, by Act of Congress, for missionary uses. Here a church and parsonage were erected later. xx

Comanche Mission Cemetery

The earliest known and documented burials there occurred from about 1895 forward. If burial records ever existed, those of the earliest burials have been lost to time.

Although the Department of the Army and the Department of the Interior required extensive documentation regarding the operational management of Indian agencies, little information regarding the date of establishment of the cemetery has been located, to date. This may be due in part to the 1879 consolidation of the Fort Sill Indian Agency with the Indian Agency located in Anadarko, Oklahoma, upon which Fort Sill became a sub-agency with management decisions made from Anadarko.

The earliest recorded information regarding the Comanche Mission Cemetery site comes from Department of the Interior files that date from August 1907, regarding the location of the Cemetery. The letters reference the potential transfer of these lands to Fort Sill. The letter dated August 12, 1907 from John B. Blackman, Indian Agent, Kiowa Indian Agency, Anadarko, Oklahoma requested the Fort Sill Sub-agency farmer (Walter D. Silcott) to locate the Cemetery on a plat Sheet and report on the number of grave sites within the site. On August 17, 1907, Mr. Silcott recorded the location of the site and reported 70 individual burial plots were identified. Further documentation states that on December 10, 1907, the Department of the Interior requested that the Kiowa Indian Agent determined the feasibility of removing the remains buried in the Cemetery and reinterring the remains on non-military lands set aside for the Dutch Reformed Church located to the south of Fort Sill adjacent to the City of Lawton. No further records verifying any actual relocation efforts have been identified. xxi

In 1916, the Comanche Mission Cemetery was again surveyed by S. A. Joyner, Comanche County Supervisor. The monument corners of the Cemetery were identified and located from this survey. Located on military land, the Cemetery was once again the subject of possible relocation discussions. xxii

The Reverend Richard H. Harper compiled the only known listing of the burials in the Cemetery during his assignment at the mission from 1914 to 1923. The most detailed description and discussion of the Cemetery occurred in 1917, when the Reverend Richard H. Harper, Missionary, Reformed Missionary Church identified 64 burial sites with the remains of 68 individuals located within the surveyed Comanche Mission Cemetery site. The Harper letter also states the Comanche Mission Cemetery was used from approximately 1895 to 1907, or a period of about 10 years. xxiii

The Harper letter is based on interviews he conducted in determining the names of the remains buried in the Cemetery and is the first written mention of the age of the Cemetery, and its approximate period of use. xxiv The letter also stated the desire to delineate the individual burial sites with markers with the identified names. (Figure 1)


xxi Weston, page 2-12

xxii Weston page 2-13

xxiii Weston page 2-14

xxiv The year 1895 merely represents the earliest documented burial date and not necessarily the earliest burial, which Comanche oral tradition place as early as the 1870s.
Comanche Indian Mission Cemetery

Based upon an internal Army memorandum (Swett, 1955), the Quartermaster Corps placed concrete slab markers over the individual burial sites in 1918. The concrete markers were inscribed with the information obtained from Reverend Harper's study. According to the same Army document, the concrete slab markers were covered with 3 inches of soil by the Army Engineers due to interference with aircraft landings. xxv

Details of what might have happened to this cemetery between 1917 and the early-1950s have not been found.

During 1984, the Fort Sill Museum Curator supervised the field investigation of the Comanche Mission Cemetery, which included uncovering of a number of concrete slab markers overlaying burial sites. The field investigation included a survey of the site conducted by Army personnel from Battery C, 25th Field Artillery. Based on this survey, the probable Cemetery site corners were located and marked. The Fort Sill Grounds Maintenance and Museum staff located 109 burial sites and uncovered them to the top of the concrete slab markers. The names on the exposed concrete markers were recorded and photographed, the locations of the burial sites were mapped. xxvi

Smallpox epidemic 1900-1901

Ever since the first contact of Comanche with Europeans in the early nineteenth century, smallpox and other communicable diseases had taken a toll on Indian lives. The scattered nature of the Comanche Nation throughout most of the century, however, kept such deaths minimized. The confinement of the Indians to reservations and agency villages, particularly while awaiting periodic actions requiring the convening of individuals in a single location, such as allotment and schooling, disrupted the protective shield of dispersion.

The most severe epidemic was 1900-1901 in which smallpox outbreaks were recorded throughout Indian Territory. During this outbreak, 163 Comanche deaths from smallpox were reported in the 1901 Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to Secretary of the Interior. However, Comanche oral traditions document a greater impact of these events, although official records may have sometimes under-reported the outbreaks due to incomplete information available to them. Included in these traditions is the belief that the number of deaths so overwhelmed the ability of the Agencies to manage burials in an accustomed manner that mass burials may have occurred. While no documented records or evidence has been found for this claim, oral history accounts with the Comanche nation are closely held.

Other Fort Sill Cemeteries

With the development of the original Fort Sill Post, a military cemetery was established and located west of the Old Post quadrangle in 1889. The oldest portion of the Fort Sill Post Cemetery is an area known as Chief's Knoll and contains the graves of distinguished Native Americans that were prominent during the early post period. The site was listed in the National Register in 1978. The Fort Sill Post Cemetery remains active and is maintained by the Army. xxvii

The Otipoby Comanche Cemetery is located in the Fort Sill East Range and was originally established by the Comanche Indians in 1888 when they began to abandon their traditional burial practices of interring the deceased in unmarked locations throughout the Wichita Mountains and began to adopt the Christian customary practice of burying the dead in cemeteries. The Otipoby cemetery was located on was selected lands that had been part of the 100 acre allotment chosen by Hugh Otipoby in 1901. It remained a privately owned cemetery until it was donated by the Otipoby family in 1929 to the Comanche Tribe. The Army purchased the property in 1942 as part of the expansion of Fort Sill during World War II. The Otipoby Cemetery was listed in the National Register in 1977. The cemetery contained approximately 160 marked graves, although only 53 were originally marked with permanent type headstones. In the mid-1960s the Fort Sill Museum, in cooperation with the Comanche Tribe, undertook the project of identifying and permanently marking the other graves with modern headstones. xxviii

xxv Weston page 2-14; The issue of the existence of any previous markers or headstones is unresolved based on the 1907, 1916, or 1917 reports.
xxvi Weston, page 2-15 and 2-16
xxvii Weston, page 2-11
The Apache Prisoner of War Cemeteries were established concurrent to the placement of members of the three Apache Tribes that were held as prisoners of war at Fort Sill beginning in 1894. Approximately 320 Apache prisoners of war are buried in the cemeteries with the practice ending in 1914 when most of the Apaches were moved to the Mescalero Apache Reservation or settled on local land allotments located near Fort Sill. These Army maintained cemeteries, one per each for the Chiricahua, Warm Springs, and Nedni tribal bands, are located on the East Range Complex and west bank of Beef Creek. From 1958 to 1977, the cemeteries remained in use with the burial of survivors and descendents of the prisoners of war. In 1958, the Fort Sill Museum undertook a project to identify and permanently mark with inscribed government headstones all graves in these three cemeteries. The project was completed in 1961. The Apache Prisoner of War Cemeteries were listed in the National Register in 1977. xxx

Prior to establishment of these cemeteries Indian burials followed traditional patterns reflective of the deceased individual’s, or their families' cultural beliefs, including the practice of burying the deceased in caves or crevices in the isolated mountain areas of the region. Often the names of the deceased were no longer spoken or mentioned. Christian missionaries, most notably those associated with the Indian Agencies were the first to convince the Comanche to bury their dead in coffins in dedicated graveyards. xxx

Summary
The Comanche Indian Mission Cemetery is locally significant under National Register Criterion A and D in the areas of Native American ethnic heritage and Historic Archeology. To the Comanche People, the cemetery is a sacred site containing the remains of their ancestors from a time of significant social and cultural change and upheaval. For a people historically comprised of diverse bands dispersed geographically across a broad swath of the American west, the nineteenth century removal and confinement to restrictive reservations represented a dramatic cultural shift. Indian agency sites, mission sites and cemeteries such as this convey significant aspects of that period in history and the effects of forced acculturation, including the dramatic change to traditional burial practices.

For the Comanche people, one of the most traumatic effects of reservation life was the increase in mortality tied to disease. At the close of the nineteenth century, smallpox (‘piah tasi ah quoi,’ which means ‘big grey death of many’ in the Comanche language), claimed the lives of numerous Comanche. The entire Comanche body was impacted as a result of a change in lifestyle from dispersed bands to confinement on a reservation. Current day Comanche tradition holds that burials at the Comanche Indian Mission Cemetery are directly associated with those smallpox deaths.

The Comanche Indian Mission Cemetery also derives National Register significance under Criterion D from its likelihood to yield important information regarding Native American history at the point of intersection between Comanche and Euro-American cultures. There is much to be gleaned from the Comanche Indian Mission Cemetery, regarding the effects on Comanche culture, which has not been purveyed or examined in its full extent. The Comanche Indian Mission Cemetery retains the potential to yield significant information, including the ability to verify and study the general character of Native American burials during this period of time when forced acculturation was radically altering Comanche lifeways, the ability to verify whether or not the burials were associated with smallpox deaths, and the ability to study how the treatment of such victims, if they existed, differed from the treatment of other burials. Additionally, because little documentary material regarding the Comanche Indian Mission Cemetery exists and considering that these burials were not generally denoted by permanent markers, archeological analysis, even if done with remote sensing such a ground penetrating radar, could further define the number, extent, and physical layout of the burials, providing important information about the landscape, use of space, and boundaries.

As a cemetery significant under Criterion D, the property need not meet Criteria Consideration D for cemeteries and burial places.


9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)


Narcomey, G. (2007) Taken from the minutes of Comanche Indian Cemetery Association: Statements by Comanches and a Caucasian. (Comanche Tribal Member) Personal communication.


http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb38/nrb38%20introduction.htm#tcp


Thomas W. Kavanagh, Comanche Political History: An Ethnohistorical Perspective, 1706–1875 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995).

Rupert N. Richardson, The Comanche Barrier to South Plains Settlement (Glendale, California: Clark, 1933; rpt., Millwood, New York: Kraus, 1973).


Previous documentation on file (NPS):
- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey #

Primary location of additional data:
- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: Comanche Nation Historic Preservation Office
Comanche Indian Mission Cemetery

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.098891

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

UTM References
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zone</th>
<th>Easting</th>
<th>Northing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>555654.483236</td>
<td>3833581.455975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>555730.631618</td>
<td>3833576.841452</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>555698.114522</td>
<td>3833503.775643</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>555651.10877</td>
<td>3833513.913861</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The Comanche Indian Mission Cemetery boundaries are indicated on the accompanying USGS map.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The Comanche Indian Mission Cemetery boundaries were defined by a 1984 survey of the Fort Sill Museum, and reaffirmation by the Comanche Nation in June 2007. The site corners were located and marked to provide coordinates during the 1984 survey, and utilized as indicated on the accompanying USGS map. The boundaries reflect the current boundaries of the cemetery as shown in the Memorandum of Agreement Among U.S. Army Garrison Fort Sill, the Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Officer and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation Regarding Improvements to the Indian Agency Cemetery, Fort Sill, Oklahoma (IAC MOA).

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jimmy W. Arterberry, THPO
organization Comanche Nation
street & number P.O. Box 908
city or town Lawton
e-mail jimmya@cne-mail.com

date September 13, 2013
telephone (580) 595-9960
state Oklahoma
telephone (580) 595-9960
zip code 73502
Comanche Indian Mission Cemetery

Comanche, Oklahoma

Name of Property

Comanche Indian Mission Cemetery

County and State

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- Maps: A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

  A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.

- Continuation Sheets

- Additional items: (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: Comanche Indian Mission Cemetery

City or Vicinity: Henry Post Airfield, 4900 Area

County: Comanche

State: Oklahoma

Photographer: Theodore Villicana

Date Photographed: June 15, 2011

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

1 of 4.

Photograph: (#1) Photo taken of the Comanche Indian Mission Cemetery from the northwest corner post, looking southeast. (#2) Photo taken of the Comanche Indian Mission Cemetery from the northeast corner post, looking southwest. (#3) Photo taken of the Comanche Indian Mission Cemetery from Southeast corner post, looking northwest. (#4) Photo taken of the Comanche Indian Mission Cemetery from the southwest corner post, looking northeast.

Property Owner:

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name U. S. Army Ft. Sill, OK

POC: Commander U. S. ARMY Garrison Ft. Sill

street & number 462 Hamilton Road, Suite 120

telephone (580) 442-3106

city or town Fort Sill

state OK

zip code 73503
Comanche Indian Mission Cemetery

Comanche, Oklahoma

Name of Property

County and State

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management. U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.
Cemetery List

1. - Karty's sister
2. - Karty's brother
3. - Mrs. Kate Karty's four children
4. - Emily Naiyak
5. - Comatie
6. - Casper Tissoyo's three children. First child's name, Mary. Other names unknown
7. - Mary Buffalo's child, Amos Tabbytite. This body to be moved, by permission of command officer and health authorities.
8. - Pottoyeh
9. - Donabeta
10. - Tervayaka
11. - Panoyo
12. - Casper Tissoyo's child
13. - Nora
14. - Chaljokea
15. - Lizzie Mullen
16. - Nabeeta
17. - Macell
18. - Aykodrop
19. - Dick
20. - Wamakin
21. - Mohapope
22. - Cqunsh
23. - Tuquolah
24. - Kowanoid
25. - Chasonobeta
26. - Sokake
27. - Popepiy
28. - Child. No name
29. - Child. No name
30. - Big Medicine Man
31. - Blanche Maddox
32. - Jimmae
33. - Small baby. No name
34. - No cho rook
35. - Disawake
36. - Nabo
37. - Tadasomo
38. - Wama
39. - Bako

December 15, 1917
<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>41.</td>
<td>Chi co ny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42.</td>
<td>Pestah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43.</td>
<td>Medikobitty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44.</td>
<td>Tasanezape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44A.</td>
<td>Nagsenworth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45.</td>
<td>Sarah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46.</td>
<td>Tupsanyapeh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47.</td>
<td>Manita Caross</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48.</td>
<td>Naha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49.</td>
<td>Child, no name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50.</td>
<td>Child, no name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51.</td>
<td>Nabo, Tabayah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52.</td>
<td>Nononsoho</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53.</td>
<td>Parker Klarnaschape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54.</td>
<td>Tamoscha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 56. |  }
| 57. | Kobi |
| 58. | Kapakeah |
| 59. | Pesarocah |
| 60. | Nyapa |
| 61. | Kano's boy |
| 62. | No name |
| 63. | Woodie |
| 64. | Tiebo |

It is exceedingly difficult to check up the names as we would like to; have talked with men who were here long ago, and have done best we could. Cemetery was begun 22 years ago, and was closed some ten years ago. So, many locations have been forgotten.

We suggest that names be put on stones without division into syllables. Thus Woed-die should read Woodie.

Respectfully

(Richard H. Harper)

Missionary