



# Empire of the Summer Moon: Quanah Parker and the Rise and Fall of the Comanches, the Most Powerful Indian Tribe in American History

By S. C. Gwynne

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**Empire of the Summer Moon: Quanah Parker and the Rise and Fall of the Comanches, the Most Powerful Indian Tribe in American History** By S. C. Gwynne

In the tradition of *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*, a stunningly vivid historical account of the forty-year battle between Comanche Indians and white settlers for control of the American West, centering on Quanah, the greatest Comanche chief of them all.

S. C. Gwynne's *Empire of the Summer Moon* spans two astonishing stories. The first traces the rise and fall of the Comanches, the most powerful Indian tribe in American history. The second entails one of the most remarkable narratives ever to come out of the Old West: the epic saga of the pioneer woman Cynthia Ann Parker and her mixed-blood son Quanah, who became the last and greatest chief of the Comanches.

Although readers may be more familiar with the tribal names Apache and Sioux, it was in fact the legendary fighting ability of the Comanches that determined just how and when the American West opened up. Comanche boys became adept bareback riders by age six; full Comanche braves were considered the best horsemen who ever rode. They were so masterful at war and so skillful with their arrows and lances that they stopped the northern drive of colonial Spain from Mexico and halted the French expansion westward from Louisiana. White settlers arriving in Texas from the eastern United States were surprised to find the frontier being rolled *backward* by Comanches incensed by the invasion of their tribal lands. So effective were the Comanches that they forced the creation of the Texas Rangers and account for the advent of the new weapon specifically designed to fight them: the six-gun.

The war with the Comanches lasted four decades, in effect holding up the development of the new American nation. Gwynne's exhilarating account delivers a sweeping narrative that encompasses Spanish colonialism, the Civil War, the destruction of the buffalo herds, and the arrival of the railroads—a historical feast for anyone interested in how the United States came into being.

Against this backdrop Gwynne presents the compelling drama of Cynthia Ann Parker, a lovely nine-year-old girl with cornflower-blue eyes who was kidnapped by Comanches from the far Texas frontier in 1836. She grew to love her captors and became infamous as the "White Squaw" who refused to return until her tragic capture by Texas Rangers in 1860. More famous still was her son Quanah, a warrior who was never defeated and whose guerrilla wars in the Texas Panhandle made him a legend.

S. C. Gwynne's account of these events is meticulously researched, intellectually provocative, and, above all, thrillingly told. *Empire of the Summer Moon* announces him as a major new writer of American history.

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### Editorial Review

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The vast, semi-arid grasslands of the southern Great Plains could be dominated by hunters and warriors on horseback. In the first half of the nineteenth century, the Comanches, often referred to as “lords of the Plains,” were the single most powerful military force in the region, to the frustration of both the Mexican and U.S. governments. In this engrossing chronicle, award-winning journalist Gwynne traces the rise of the Comanche people from their roots as primitive bands of hunter-gatherers to their mastery of the horse and emergence as the feared power brokers of the area. At the center of the narrative is the charismatic Quanah Parker, who skillfully navigated the gaps between his traditional culture and the emerging, settled culture of the late-nineteenth century. Quanah was the son of a Comanche warrior and a woman named Cynthia Ann Parker, who was kidnapped at the age of nine and chose to stay with the Comanches. Quanah was a brilliant, feared war chief who guided his people in adapting to new realities after their final suppression by the U.S. Calvary. An outstanding addition to western-history collections. --Jay Freeman

### Review

“Transcendent . . . *Empire of the Summer Moon* is nothing short of a revelation . . . will leave dust and blood on your jeans.”--*New York Times Book Review*

"In *Empire of the Summer Moon*, Sam Swynne has given us a rich, vividly detailed rendering of an important era in our history and of two great men, Quanah Parker and Ranald Slidel Mackenzie, whose struggles did much to define it."

-Larry McMurtry

### About the Author

S.C. Gwynne is the author of the *New York Times* bestsellers *Rebel Yell* and *Empire of the Summer Moon*, which was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Critics Circle Award. He spent most of his career as a journalist, including stints with *Time* as bureau chief, national correspondent, and senior editor, and with *Texas Monthly* as executive editor. He lives in Austin, Texas, with his wife.

### Users Review

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#### Vicky Moore:

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**Jill White:**

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**Mark Bunnell:**

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