

EARLY HISTORY

by Sue Tindol

If I were to go back in time to early days of where our community lies today, we would find saber-tooth tigers, giant lizards, mastadons, and woolly mammoths.

Probably the first man in this area was the primitive stone painters. Later the Shoshones might have come to hunt the big bison, or buffalo, which supplied all their survival needs of food, clothing and shelter. During the 1800's the buffalo roamed over the country in herds of thousands and at times in herds of tens of thousands. At some time following a disagreement, groups broke away from the Shoshones and some became known as the Comanches. Comanches were called the most fierce warriors and brave horsemen of the Plains. Having horses gave them great advantages.

These wandering people claimed land raids of all neighboring tribes as well as villages of Mexico. It helped them become lords over all other tribes. Some say this land covered from Arkansas to the Rio Grande River. They fought off the tribes of Lipans, Kiowas, Apaches and Delaware to gain control of this land of the Great Plains.

Captain R.B. Marcy, an army officer who came to this area October 3, 1849, described the Comanche Trail as a path leading to Chichuahua, Mexico. In the fall of the year, these Indians would ride down into Mexico, as far down as Torreon to raid and plunder. From Captain Marcy's journal, "In September and October the inhabitants of small villages along the trail gathered their families and livestock and moved to larger towns for protection." Any stragglers would be captured by these fierce warriors—the Comanches.

In describing the Comanches as excellent horsemen, Joe Pickle says "they could use their horse as a shield, leaving only one leg hooked over the neck and visible to the enemy, while propelling an arrow from a bow from underneath the neck of the horse, which was moving at full speed." These were a brave, determined people. They lived by their codes and lived in harmony with nature.

The white settlers, the buffalo hunters, the U.S. Army and the Texas Rangers finally conquered these brave people and sent the remaining ones to reservations. "This meant safety for the white man, for the Comanche it meant sorrow and shame," states Joe Pickle in his book, *Getting Started*, a book on the history of Howard County.

The early Indians were a source of a very rich heritage and culture that influenced the settlement of this country. The Indians did not talk of ecology, but put it into practice a life style of protecting water sources and only taking from the land that which was necessary for sustaining life. They have given us much in an early history for us to study and appreciate.

