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before frisco indians!

by bob warren

“DID INDIANS EVER LIVE IN THIS PART OF TEXAS?” The answer is a resounding, “Yes!” Until about 1855, American Indians lived right here on the land we now know as Frisco. They usually built their homes in settlements

near running water. It’s around those streams that most Indian artifacts have been found in this area.

Lifetime Frisco resident, Otis Newman, tells of such finds near a never-dry spring not far from his home in the west part of town. Others tell of arrowheads being turned up regularly a few years ago, as fields were cultivated near Stewart Creek, Rowlett Creek, and other streams. “But,” you say, “Weren’t all Indians hostile, always on the war path, whooping and hollering, looking for someone to massacre?” The answer to that one is, “No.” You’ve been watching too many old western movies. Just like today, there were “good guys” and “bad guys.” We’ll get to the bad ones later, but the early settlers who came here were fortunate to find friendly Indians.

To see what these pre-Frisco, native Americans were like let’s go to the book, *A History of Collin County* by Stambaugh and Stambaugh. When the white man came to the Southwest, even before Texas became a Republic in 1836, they found this to be one of the most thickly settled areas in North America. Indians of the Wichita branch of the Caddo tribe occupied this part of the country. They lived, not in wigwams, but in well built houses with walls and roofs made of overlapping layers of prairie grass. These Indians were farmers who supplemented their food supplies by hunting and fishing. They grew corn (two crops a year), beans, pumpkins, sunflowers, tobacco, and had orchards of peach, plum and fig trees. It is said, “The men helped the women in the fields and did the hunting.” (Sounds good to me.)

The Caddo Indians communicated through a well-developed sign language, and were known to other tribes as “Pierced Nose” because of their habit of wearing metal rings in the nose and earlobes. Both sexes wore leggings and moccasins of deer and buffalo hide. History tells us that the Caddo tribe welcomed travelers and strangers, and were always friendly. Otis Newman confirms that as he tells of his great grandfa-

ther, who came here in 1841 and homesteaded 200 acres to begin the family farm. He, and other white settlers, found the local Indians to be good neighbors with whom they could freely trade and barter. The Caddoes

lived in this general area until 1855 when they were placed on the Brazos Indian Reservation. A few years later, as white settlers continued to take over the land, the Caddoes were transferred to another reservation in Oklahoma

But some Indians were bad. The Comanche’s, a fierce nomadic group of warriors from the Texas Panhandle, made occasional forays into this part of the country. At least seven major attacks on settlers in this area are attributed to these savages as they raided from the west, then “high-tailed it” back home.

The fall of 1844 saw Collin County’s last major Indian raid, a very bloody one. The story, one not for the faint of heart, goes like this. Jerimiah Muncey, his wife, four children, and McBain Jameson had settled near here on Rowlett Creek, living in a hut while their log house was being built. One day, settlers Leonard Searcy, William Rice and their two sons went hunting on Rowlett Creek. After pitching camp, Searcy rode to the Muncey hut where he discovered that Indians had attacked that morning and had brutally murdered Muncey, his wife and their three-year-old child. Mrs. Muncey’s body was badly mutilated, and the child’s head had been crushed. Their oldest son, away from home at the time of the attack was safe, but the two younger boys were missing. (Later, it was discovered, their captors killed the boys as they retreated westward.)

Searcy ran back to his camp and found that his son and the Rice boy had gone hunting. The two frightened fathers went searching for their sons and soon came upon the butchered body of young Rice. The Searcy boy had escaped, and was found alive about ten miles north on Wilson Creek.

The site of the Muncey massacre has been located at a place now called “Indian Hole,” a sharp bend in Rowlett Creek about 300 yards downstream from the bridge on US Highway 75. The victims of what today would be called a “terrorist attack” lay buried where they were killed.

So goes the story of pre-Frisco Indians, some good and some bad, but that’s the way it was in these parts in the very early days.

Frisco native Bob Warren is a humorist, historian and former Frisco mayor.

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