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Review of *Frontier Blood: The Saga of the Parker Family* By Jo Ella Powell Exley

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Frontier Blood: The Saga of the Parker Family. By Jo Ella Powell Exley. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2001. Photographs, notes, bibliography, index. xiii+331 pp. \$29.95.

These are the stories of four generations of one family that moved West with the frontier, and of one individual who emerged from the meeting of the frontier with the people who were already there. Elder John Parker, born in Maryland in 1758, had a son, Daniel, in Virginia in 1781. Daniel's son James W. was born in Georgia in 1797, and another, Silas, was born in Tennessee in 1804. James W.'s daughter, Rachel, was born in Illinois in 1819, as was Silas's daughter Cynthia Ann in 1826 and his son John in 1829. Cynthia Ann's son, Quanah, was born in Comanchería in 1849.

Several of these stories are well known, although not necessarily by the same people. Daniel Parker, founder of the Two-Seed Predestinarian Baptist movement, is familiar to historians of American religious groups. Rachel Plummer, Cynthia Ann, and Quanah are well known to historians of the American West. This book brings their stories together, albeit not altogether successfully.

The basic problem is documentary. While there is significant documentation for most of the Anglo-American Parkers, the documentation for Cynthia Ann's life with the Comanches, for her Comanche husband, and for Quanah before 1875 is practically nonexistent. Consequently, Exley must resort to such locutions as "According to legend" and to Quanah's own reminiscences, which are often difficult to reconcile with other documentary sources relating to Quanah and his parents. Moreover, Exley makes little effort to address these historical questions or to critique her sources. This is particularly unfortunate, since a previous writer on Cynthia Ann (Margaret Schmidt Hacker, in *Cynthia Ann Parker: The Life and the Legend*, 1990) has noted that the basic facts of her life have been "so exaggerated and romanticized that it is difficult—if not impossible—to determine the true

nature of her Comanche experiences." A little more effort in that direction would have been welcome.

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