

Dr. Sibley gives a careful account of the Indian tribes in the Red River region; peoples most of whom have long since disappeared. Intertribal war, conflicts with the French, and the small-pox might account, in his opinion, for the rapid extinction of the natives. The Comanches were then, as for long after, the scourge of the plains. Sibley thought them inclined to be friendly to the French and Americans, but gives abundant evidence of their hostility to the Spaniards. They made a pastime of stealing not only horses, but children. There were many white slaves in the lodges of the Comanches, some of whom were captured so young that they knew nothing of their origin.

A supplementary expedition of more formidable proportions was despatched up Red River in the year 1806. Two army officers, Captains Sparks and Humphreys, seventeen privates, and a black servant, together with Thomas Freeman, a surveyor, and Dr. Peter Custis, a naturalist, made up the party. They embarked on May 3, in two flat-bottomed barges and a pirogue, and reached the westernmost white settlement, forty-five miles above Natchitoches, without incident. Here they were overtaken by an Indian runner sent by Dr. Sibley, now Indian agent at Natchitoches, with the news that Spanish dragoons were marching from Nacogdoches to intercept the Americans. The Caddoes, near whose village the Spanish force was encamped, also gave warning; but Sparks' instructions had been to explore the river to its source unless stopped by a force superior to his own, and he pushed on. A few