16.3 THE TEXAS RANGERS AND AMERICAN INDIANS
During the 1850’s, hundreds of new settlers moved westward into Texas. Many of these settlers moved onto the lands of the American Indians, creating conflicts. As fighting erupted, frontier settlers asked the government for protection.
Once Texas had become a state, the federal government was responsible for solving conflicts with American Indians within the state.

This task was difficult, partly because the state owned the public land that Indians claimed.

Texas policies encouraged settlers to move west and didn’t recognize American Indians’ land rights.
CONFlicts ON THE FRONTIER

- At the time, the U.S. Policy was to place troops along the frontier to guard settlements and keep settlers from moving further west onto Indian lands.
- U.S. troops had difficulty fulfilling their task, however.
- Most troops set to the frontier were infantry or foot soldiers.
- They were no match for the Comanche and Kiowa, who were expert horse riders.
Texas Governor George T. Wood called out the Texas Rangers to help.
The Rangers had horses and could cover land as quickly as the Comanche and Kiowa did.
In addition, the Rangers had the Colt six-shooter, a powerful new weapon that could fire six shots in a row.
It gave the Rangers a great advantage in frontier warfare.
Capt. John S. “Rip” Ford

The Rangers were so effective that the federal government agreed to pay them to guard the Texas frontier.

Captain John S. “Rip” Ford and his Rangers established a camp east of Laredo, where they fought several battles with the Comanche.

The Rangers patrolled the frontier throughout the 1850’s.
While the Rangers fought on the open plains, the federal government tried to protect settlers by building forts.

By 1849, a line of eight forts stretched from the Rio Grande to the Trinity River.
ESTABLISHING FRONTIER FORTS

- **Texas Forts**
  - Fort Duncan, near Eagle Pass, stood furthest to the south, while Fort Martin Scott protected the German settlers in Fredericksburg.
  - To the north, Fort Worth guarded the banks of the Trinity River.
  - In Medina County, Fort Lincoln was built on a high bank of Seco Creek.
  - These forts protected not only settlers but also travel routes, which had become busier since the discovery of gold in California.
Settlers soon established homesteads **west** of the original line of forts.

The army abandoned these forts and built a new line of forts farther west.
The forts did not stop conflicts between settlers and American Indians, however.

The forts were too far apart to protect settlers or prevent them from moving west.

The forts had too few troops and were often short of supplies.
THE RESERVATION POLICY

- As a result of conflicts of the Texas frontier, the federal government worked with the state to create a new policy.
- The U.S. government planned to move the Texas Indians onto reservations.
- The federal government would manage the reservations while Texas would maintain ownership of the land.
THE RESERVATION POLICY

- In the 1850’s, Texas received federal aid and set aside thousands of acres of land for reservations.
- In 1854, the U.S. Army opened the Brazos Indian Reservation just south of Fort Belknap.
- About 2,000 American Indians, including Caddo, Tonkawa, and Waco, settled on the reservation.
Indians used part of their land for farming, receiving $80,000 worth of supplies and cattle a year from the federal government.

Some 40 miles from the Brazos Indian Reservation, officials created another reservation.

About 450 Penateka Comanche settled on this Comanche Indian reservation.
The Reservation Policy

- Government agents taught the Comanche, who were traditionally hunters, how to farm.
- The Comanche did not have much luck due to drought in the mid-1850’s.
- Reservations did not attract many American Indians.
- Plans to build a third reservation for the Lipan Apache was scrapped when the Apache refused to move onto the land.
Many Indians lived outside the reservation system.

Most Indians wanted to maintain their traditional way of life, hunting and following buffalo herds.

Settlers, on the other hand, wanted to build farms and homes.

They refused to recognize American Indians’ rights to their hunting grounds.

As a result, violence continued on the frontier.
The Removal of Texas Indians

- Settlers living near reservations often claimed that American Indians stole horses and cattle.
- Angry Texans formed armed groups to patrol the reservation boundaries.
- They sometimes killed Indians found off the reservations.
During the late 1850s some Texas settlers began calling for the end to the reservation system. Settlers wanted Indians totally removed from the state, and the federal government agreed. By 1859, the Indians living on the Brazos and Comanche Reservations had been moved to Indian Territory, which is now Oklahoma.
The removal of the American Indians angered some Texans.

Federal Indian agent Robert S. Neighbors had hoped that Indians on reservations would be treated fairly.

Disappointed with the policy of removal, Neighbors helped the Indians with their difficult move.

After returning to Texas, Neighbors was murdered by an angry Texan at Fort Belknap.
Texas recognized the right of one American Indian group to remain in the state— the Alabama-Coushatta.

This small group moved from Louisiana to Texas in the late 1700’s.

During the Runaway Scrape, the Alabama-Coushatta aided the Texans fleeing east.

Because of this service during the Texas Revolution, many Texas were friendly to them.

In 1854 Texas granted them 1,280 acres in Polk County and added another 3,000 acres in 1928.
THE REMOVAL OF TEXAS INDIANS

- Today, the Alabama-Coushatta, the Tigua Reservation near El Paso, and the Kickapoo Reservation near Eagle Pass are the only reservations in Texas.

- Kickapoo Indians on their reservation, ca 1860's