



# **Battles of the Red River War: Archeological Perspectives on the Indian Campaign of 1874**

*J. Brett Cruse*

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Battles of the Red River War unearths a long-buried record of the collision of two cultures.

In 1874, U.S. forces led by Col. Ranald S. Mackenzie carried out a surprise attack on several Cheyenne, Comanche, and Kiowa bands that had taken refuge in the Palo Duro Canyon of the Texas panhandle and destroyed their winter stores and horses. After this devastating loss, many of these Indians returned to their reservations and effectively brought to a close what has come to be known as the Red River War, a campaign carried out by the U.S. Army during 1874 as a result of Indian attacks on white settlers in the region. After this operation, the Southern Plains Indians would never again pose a coherent threat to whites' expansion and settlement across their ancestral homelands.

Until now, the few historians who have undertaken to tell the story of the Red River War have had to rely on the official records of the battles and a handful of extant accounts, letters, and journals of the U.S. Army participants. Starting in 1998, J. Brett Cruse, under the auspices of the Texas Historical Commission, conducted archeological investigations at six battle sites. In the artifacts they unearthed, Cruse and his teams found clues that would both correct and complete the written records and aid understanding of the Indian perspectives on this clash of cultures.

Including a chapter on historiography and archival research by Martha Doty Freeman and an analysis of cartridges and bullets by Douglas D. Scott, this rigorously researched and lavishly illustrated work will commend itself to archeologists, military historians and scientists, and students and scholars of the Westward Expansion.

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