

INDEX CARDS:

Seminole Nation
Seminole Legend
Wildcat
Seminole Government
Opothleyahola

327

Billie Byrd, Interviewer,
Indian-Pioneer History,
Grant Foreman, Director,
S-149. 6-29-37

An interview with
Willie Larney,
age 68, Seminole,
Chiaha and Hitchita Band,
Seminole, Oklahoma.

SEMINOLES.

I was born near Keokuk Falls (now in the extreme north central part of what is now Seminole County). My father, Yama Larney, and my grandfather were both members of Hitchita town (tulwa) or band, while my mother, Cindy Larney, belonged to the Chiaha band.

I must have been about ten years old when we moved from the vicinity of Keokuk Falls to the Seminole reservation and it was at the reservation that I learned by the many talks among the older people why the Seminoles had settled where they did.

It had been told that a roving band of Seminoles came into the Indian Territory long years ago under the leadership of Co-wak-o-chee (Wildcat), but I do not remember any tales about the hardships or events happening to the Seminoles at the time of removal or on the trip to the Indian Territory. It was similar to that

2

of the other tribes.

Wildcat was leading his roving band of Seminoles to Mexico at one time and in his band was a young man who was a very happy-go-lucky sort of fellow as well as having a pleasing disposition.

This young man would often run ahead of the band although he wasn't the leader and the older members would often caution him about this as the country was still wild and much fear of the whites and other tribes of Indians were felt by the Seminoles because they were so few in number. In the course of the journey, the Seminoles came to a hill and as usual the young man ran on ahead of the band and disappeared over the hill. It was not long after that that the Seminoles heard shrieks and some of the members of the band went to investigate and found the young man dead with an arrow piercing through his waist.

The Seminoles realized that this was some deed of the Comanche tribe and then resolved to make a revenge if possible. The Seminoles had not gone very much further when they found out that they coming onto an encampment

of the Comanches. This seemed to verify their beliefs of the misdeeds of the Comanches in killing their tribesman. The Seminoles surrounded the Comanche camp where every man, woman or child of the Comanches was massacred by the Seminoles.

The Mexican ruler sought out the Seminoles to extend his thanks for killing off the Comanches. It seemed that the Comanches had been giving some trouble to the Mexican people and had even wanted to possess the land that belonged to the Mexicans.

It was then that Chief Wildcat, and a representative from both the Creek and Kickapoo tribes acted as the parties who signed the treaty with the Mexican ruler. This treaty was made as an appreciation of the Mexican ruler to the Seminoles for wiping out their foe, the Comanches. It was in this treaty that the Mexican ruler set aside a certain portion of land to the Seminoles under Chief Wildcat.

Co-wak-o-chee (Wildcat) died in Mexico and was buried there. Some, such as George Jones, present chief of the Seminoles, Chili Fish, chairman of the Seminole Council, and two others whose name I cannot recall,

4

have made many trips to Mexico and report that they have seen Wildcat's grave.

It was some time before the Seminoles were led back to the Indian Territory by a man named John Chumpa. When this band arrived in the Indian Territory, their leader, John Chumpa, requested a certain piece of land from the Muskogee-Creek tribe whereon they could establish a permanent settlement, make their own laws and make their homes. This request was fulfilled.

The Seminoles are under their own council which consists of forty-two members. Three members are selected as representatives from the fourteen bands within the Seminole tribe, namely, Ocheeoes, New Comer band, Hitchita band, Chi-a-ha band, Mekusukey band, Kinkihe or Baker band, Fushutchee band, Tussegaya band, Bruner band, Carolina band, and four other bands whose names I have forgotten now. The bands of Bruner, Carolina, Kinkihe or Baker, and Fushutchee were composed of persons having the names of the bands, that is, all the persons named Bruner belonged to the Bruner band and all the Carolinas belonged to the Carolina band, etc.

The Seminoles have their customary tribal chief

5

and the chairman who presides at all business meetings, clerk and treasurer. These officers are appointed or elected every four years by a majority vote of the members of the Seminole tribe.

I have served on this council as a representative from the Chi-a-ha and Hitchita band, serving as secretary on different committees such as resolution committees and on the committee that selects a man to run for the chief of the tribe. I gave up all activity in the interests of the tribe due to ill health.

My grandfather, my father and mother joined Opothle yahola in the flight to Leroy, Kansas, during the Civil War. At the close of the war, my parents were stationed at Ft. Gibson before they returned to their homes. Jimmie Chupee was in command of the group of men who went to the Seminole reservation or Seminole lands to make certain that no enemies were near so that a safe return could be made. Jimmie Chupee, after making investigation, returned to Ft. Gibson and reported that the coast was clear and the Seminoles began their journey to their homes.

A CUSTOM

A Seminole man desiring a wife would kill four deer .

6

He would give the first three deer away but he had to eat of the fourth deer. He would then make his wooing.