

CHUPCO, LILE

INTERVIEW

12645

**109**

CHUPCO, LILE.

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12645

Nettie Cain  
Investigator  
January 11, 1938.

Interview with Lile Chupco  
Holdenville, Oklahoma  
Route #1, Box 167

Lile Chupco, Seminole Indian, who belongs to the Mekusuky Seminoles, was born near old Wetumka in the year 1855. She was seven years old when the Civil War began.

Her father was Puskey Yahola and her mother was Cic-ssie who came from Florida with the Seminoles. Her father and mother separated when Lile was a small child. Her mother and another sister then lived with an aunt.

At the outbreak of the Civil War, the Seminole Indians called their people together and appointed Opuithla Yahola as their leader. He then called his people together and they all started north to Kansas. The Government soldiers protected them in many ways but nevertheless they suffered many hardships as among the tribes there were several hundred of them, and food was not plentiful. They reached Kansas and

CHUPCO, LILE.

INTERVIEW.

12645

2

camped at a small place called Ellis. Soon after they reached Kansas the men all joined the army and a sister of Lile's, Hutipkee, volunteered her services as a cook; her husband was a soldier. Their mother resented her daughter Hutipkee's serving as a cook but she continued and soon they returned to Fort Gibson and stayed there until the close of the War.

While the Indians were in Kansas, they had an epidemic of smallpox and many of their people died. They had no caskets, in fact, did not know what they were and the men were all gone so the women and small boys would dig a grave, take some old rotten wood, put it in the bottom of the grave, then put a small rock or piece of wood to lay the head of the dead person on and then cover the body and as wood was very scarce they were not allowed to use green wood.

After the close of the Civil War the men returned to Kansas and got their families and they were all very happy that they could return once more to their happy land.

CHUPCO, LILE.

INTERVIEW.

12645

3

After they returned to their homes they still suffered in many ways as food was scarce. The Government would have ration days, and each family would draw groceries but not enough to run from one time to the next. Then later they were paid so much a month; at first \$5.00 and then \$20.00.

The first Baptist Church was organized north of Okemah and was known as the Montezuma Church and some of the members lived near Eufaula. The Indians would gather at the old church and stay two or three weeks. Then a few years later a church was organized near Eufaula and was known as the Mekusukey Church, named for the Mekusukey Indians.

Johnnie Chumper was holding a meeting at this church and Lile and her sister decided to go and she was converted that night.

Lile's husband, Kinder Palmer, served as Light-horseman for several years under the tribal laws under Chief Larney. He would have to keep the prisoners at his home when there were any and Lile would have to feed them.

CHUPCO, LILE.

INTERVIEW.

12645

4

The prisoners were handcuffed and their feet chained to their bed and in the summer they had a large arbor built in the yard and the prisoners were kept out there. At one time they had four men and they were all accused of murder. A Lighthorseman was kept on guard day and night. Lile was afraid of the prisoners but she would cook sofky for them to eat. She was a cook for the Lighthorsemen and had witnessed five executions. These are the names of the men whom she saw executed: Caddo, Conchutie, Pul-omuskie, Saf-uchie and Pou-nugie, these men were all accused of murder.

Many criminals were punished by the whipping lash, and if an Indian woman was caught chasing around with another woman's husband they would cut one ear off and they would cut both ears off of the man. Lile thinks if we had tribal laws today we would have better people.

John Brown was Governor of the Seminole Nation. The Seminole Indians thought he was not honest with them so they put out a spy to check on his record. Washington Bowlegs was the spy; he was a Seminole Freedman, a son of Ceasar Bowlegs. It soon became known

CHUPCOO, LILE.

INTERVIEW.

12645

5

what he was doing so he was killed by four men, three white men and a colored man.

Lile was afraid of the white people when they first began to come to the Indian Territory and when the missionaries began to come to the Indians, the Indians could not understand why the missionaries were there.