

COFFEE, JIMMY.

SECOND INTERVIEW

13763

16

COFFEE, JIMMY.

SECOND INTERVIEW

13763

COFFEE, JIMMY. SECOND INTERVIEW

#13763

Billie Byrd  
Journalist  
April 27, 1938.

Interview with Jimmy Coffee,  
Henryetta, Oklahoma.

The trouble with Ispahecha, who was trying his best to establish a tribal form of government separate from that already working, caused some of the Muskogee-Creeks to leave their home communities and flee among other tribes to stay until everything was in harmony. Some went north to the Cherokee country, south to Choctaw and other places.

In those times, many of the Indians were found living in settlements and near one another. They had lived together and knew one another but at the disturbances they were forced to move and leave, some never to return. Some left in many scattered directions without knowing their destinies. Some of them had left without families but when they returned had a family of one or two, while others were at the head of large families.

It was during this time that my father and mother also left this country and went to the country

COFFEE, JIMMY.      SECOND INTERVIEW      #13763

-2-

around the Verdigris and Arkansas rivers, where the old people settled when they first moved to the Indian Territory. I was about ten when the movement was brought about to return to the country we had left as well as our homes and people. The conditions around our old home communities were not known, so certain groups were dispatched and permitted to proceed with investigations before making any kind of trip back to the old homes. When a satisfactory report was made, we were put across the Arkansas River by ferry.

After we reached the country where we had been living before our flight, my mother and father only spent a short time there before taking up their trip, with others, to the Hillaby Creek country in the western part of the Muskogee-Creek country. A number of Indians were encamped here trying to escape the troublous days of Ispahecha in his efforts to gain control. In this settlement was a small group from my own tribal town of Ka-la-gee, so that was why my mother and father joined others of our tribal town (tulwa) who were leaving for

COFFEE, JIMMY. SECOND INTERVIEW

#13763

-3-

the new settlement to join others at Hillaby Creek. My sister and I, for some reason I don't know, were left around the old settlement of Ka-la-gee which was, at that time, near the present Mufaula, in McIntosh County, Oklahoma. The epidemic of the small-pox took hold of the new settlement of Ki-ala-gee at Hillaby Creek and took many lives. Among that group was my father and mother and I never saw my father, Ka-bee-cha Harjo, again from the day he left my sister and I at the old settlement.

#### Stories.

The early day eating houses were new to the Indians and they did not go there for their meals very often. Everything was difficult to what they were accustomed in their own primitive dwellings. They probably, at first, were accustomed to eating on the ground, or rude constructed tables with the meals prepared out in the open. It seemed strange eating in clean dwellings, and altogether new things such as the whites prepared. They all did not take up the

COFFEE, JIMMY. SECOND INTERVIEW. [ ] #13763

-4-

habit of eating in the restaurants, but the custom was gradually spread.

There is a story, its source and origin not known, of an Indian's first experience in eating in a restaurant. This Indian gave his order, watching the waiter all the time as he went about his duties before the order was filled by the cook. When the order was at last brought in, the old Indian went leisurely about eating. Indians, as a rule, are heavy eaters, and he didn't seem to have sufficiently dined.

On the table was a pitcher of syrup which he poured into his plate, then he began to lick that which was dripping down the sides from the mouth of the pitcher. The waiter having seen this promptly took the pitcher outside and threw it into a trash can.

The Indian did not miss any of this and just as soon as the waiter returned to the room, the Indian drew his attention and showed him just what he thought about the whole act. He took the fork and knife and cut the plate that had been set down before him into two pieces. He was showing off his skill.

COFFEE, JIMMY. SECOND INTERVIEW. #13763

-5-

When the first mild and non-intoxicant drinks were becoming popular, an Indian woman became very fond of one in particular. Everytime she went to town she had one certain place to buy this drink. The clerk told her the price was a nickel when she asked, and she didn't know any other price, but there happened to be a change in the clerks when on her next stop at the store. She asked, as was her custom, the price and the new clerk told her five cents. This was something new and the lady replied, "I thought it was a nickel all the time".