

SHERWOOD, CARL

CREEK INDIAN DOCTOR.

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Interviewer  
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In 1907 and 1908 I worked for G. Vest Reynolds in a general merchandise store at Yahola. The store now stands on the bank of Cane Creek, at the west end of the bridge, but at that time there was no bridge. When the creek was on a rampage after heavy rains in the spring, we used to cross in a small row boat using one paddle instead of a pair of oars. We did this for the convenience of customers who lived on the south side of the creek. They would whoop or shoot to notify us they wanted someone to bring the boat across and get them. They made their purchases at the store, and then we delivered them and their merchandise safely to the other side.

One of the customers was Doctor Yahola, a full blood Creek Indian, who had a good practice as the Midland Valley passenger trains stopped at the box car depot at Yahola. Many Indians from far and near would unload and go single file through the woods in the Cane Creek bottom. This trail passed the store. Dr. Yahola lived about two miles

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southwest in a two room log cabin, which was on a prairie where he could stand in his doorway and look any direction. If a white person knocked at his door they received no reply, as Dr. Yahola spoke the Creek language only. When his patients paid him in paper money or currency he brought it to the store and had it changed into silver dollars.

In 1908 his cabin caught on fire in some way and burned to the ground. The next morning he sent his grandson up to the store with thirty-two silver dollars which had been melted together. He wanted new money for it. I told him that he would have to take it to some bank in Muskogee where he probably could get fifty per cent of its value as it was rated ~~as bullion~~ in that shape.

The Indian doctors are very skillful in the treatment of many diseases by the use of their decoctions. Their knowledge of the medicinal character of leaves, roots and the bark of trees and plants, in which the prairies and woodlands abounded was remarkable, since all they knew was by experimentation. Cold and hot baths have always been in common use. Dr. Yahola was familiar with the medicinal

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character of nearly every plant, including the shrubs that grow in the forests.

A paste made of persimmons and flour and baked slightly in an oven or over a fire was prescribed for a lax condition of the bowels. Poultices made of mullen, slippery elm, or ground ivy was healing to either fresh or indolent wounds or old sores. A decoction of pleurisy root produced copious perspiration and cured many ailments. For the bite of a poisonous rattle-snake, they used a weed known to them as the rattle-snakes master. This weed is as beautiful as some of our tame flowers we have in our gardens. It grows about three feet high, and the leaves are like some ferns, the blossoms are of a coral color and grow all around the stem. This plant has only one straight stem and is found at the foot of hills and mountains in the timber. They are in full bloom and grow in abundance at the foot of a range of mountains west of Porum. After the blossom leaves, a pod forms and this is mashed and ground and made into a hot poultice and applied to the bite.

In fact some of the Indian medicine men had a knowledge of herbs far superior to that of many white doctors.