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LAST MEETING OF CREEK COUNCIL

Guthrie, Okla.

The session of the Creek national council now being held at Okmulgee is full of historical interest from the fact that it will be the last meeting of the Creek legislature under the regime of the Five Civilized Tribes. The coming of statehood will obliterate all lines of the once powerful Indian nations and will destroy the last vestage of authority enjoyed by the original settlers of Indian Territory.

Chief Moty Tiger, who succeeded to the office by the death of Chief Pleasant Porter a few weeks ago, in his message to the council paid a high tribute to the dead chieftain and then called attention to the act which authorizes the chief to deliver deeds to his people. The message states that 37,396 deeds have

been executed to Creek allottees and of this number 27,160 have been delivered. Since each allottee receives two deeds there are 18,696 citizens, 11,893 of which are of Indian blood and 6,805 negro freedmen. Under the new born act of 1905 there has been enrolled 1,728 children of Indian blood and 936 freedmen. Chief Tiger urges in his message that every allottee who is without his deed, to secure it at once.

Chief Tiger urges the council to take action to prevent congress from removing the restrictions upon the land of full-bloods and the homesteads of freedmen. He declares that this would be violating the agreement of the government with the tribe.

PRESERVE COUNCIL HOUSE.

In view of the fact that the present session of the council will doubtless be the last, steps will be taken to preserve the history of the council and the old stone building at Okmulgee, where the Creek legislators have met for the last thirty years. Okmulgee has been the capital of the Creek nation since 1868, when the first council house, a rough log structure, was built upon the spot where the present building stands. The previous year the council met three miles west of Okmulgee and a

constitution was adopted which took much of the power away from the town kings and vested it in the courts. There were six of these, and the judges were appointed by the council. Previous to that time the town king of each town, who sat in the house of kings, as at present, had almost absolute power over his people and could order them punished for all crimes and could act as judge in all their disputes.

Before removing from their homes in the southland in 1830 to the Indian Territory, the Creek councils were held under huge circular arbors with conical roofs thatched with branches of trees and bark, and seated with rough benches. At night the Creek lawmakers slept under these rude shelters and held their dances there.

The late Chief Porter is authority for the statement that the first council meetings of the Creek nation were held near the mouth of the Verdigris river, six miles northwest of Muskogee, after their migration to Indian Territory. These sessions were held under arbors similar to those of the southern nation. Later, however, the Creek capital was removed to an elevated spot twenty miles from the present capital, known as Council Hill, where the town of

Council Hill now stands. Shortly thereafter, for the sake of convenience, two subordinate councils were organized, one for the Creeks living in the northern part of the nation, held at Coweta, and the other at Tuckabatchee town, for the benefit of the southern Creeks. The acts of these councils were reviewed and subject to revision or repeal by the central body.

CIVIL WAR INTERPOSED.

Then the civil war interposed and most of the male citizens were engaged in that great struggle. They were about equally divided between the northern and southern armies and in the heat of the struggle they were too busy for legislative duties and no session of the council was held during the entire war. When the war had ended, the Creeks bridged the gulf that separated them and held a council meeting at Red Tree, six miles southwest of Okmulgee, and at the same time ratified the agreement with the United States known as the treaty of 1866. The next year the constitution was adopted and the history of the Creek law-making body as it is today.

Moty Tiger, the present chief, who has been a member of the council almost continuously since the civil war says that the council house at Okmulgee

has never been the scene of a disturbance. As the late Chief Porter expressed it, "An Indian who cannot hold his temper is not fit to make laws for the nation." Since the Christian religion has been adopted by the Creeks it has been the custom to hold religious services in the council houses instead of dancing as former days.

The building contains four large rooms, two on the second floor for the council chambers and the United States clerks and tribal chiefs' office down stairs. Directly in front of this building stands the "execution tree," where until the power of the Indian courts was abolished by congress a few years ago Indian criminals were executed by shooting. The marks of bullets can still be seen in the form of scars on the bark. The condemned criminal was given time to go home and arrange his affairs and on the appointed day he returned to the historic square surrounding the council house. Here he was tied to the tree, a piece of paper the size of a human heart pinned over his breast and he was shot to death, usually by some friend of his own choosing.

The Creek council is composed of two houses

-- the branch house of warriors and the upper branch called the house of kings. There are 142 members of the council, forty-seven in the house of kings and ninety-five in the house of warriors. Council members receive \$4 a day for their services. At present no act of the Indian council becomes legal unless approved by the president of the United States.