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HISTORY OF THE CREEK INDIANS

The history of the Creek or Muskogee Indians is yet unwritten, but their traditions have been better preserved and handed down from generation to generation, perhaps, than have those of any other Indian tribe. They know that they are of Aztec origin and that their ancestors were in Mexico at the time of the Spanish invasion under Cortes. At that time they were not known as Creeks, but as "Muskogees," a sonorous Aztec name they still love. The name "Creek" has never been to their liking, but they have accepted it as a necessary part of their vicissitudes and as a result of the disastrous fortunes of war.

According to their traditions they left Mexico about the year 1520. In all probabilities, however, their exodus from that country was several

years after this date, as the Spanish subjugation of Mexico was not complete before 1525. There are old stories of the unavailing valor of the Muskogees against the invaders who they say came in ships from across the great waters. They tell of the enslavement and degradation of the Aztecs, but the Muskogees were neither to be enslaved nor degraded. They antedated the Boers in trekking by more than two centuries. According to their legends, some priests of the Toltec faith came with them but these had disappeared, as well as all the forms and ceremonies of that faith, when next they come in contact with the white race during the eighteenth century.

Muskogee traditions are rich in stories of a thousand battles as the tribe fought its way to the northeast, seeking to get as far away as it could from the land it was leaving. The Muskogees, as far as can be gathered from these traditions, inhabited a part of Mexico somewhere in the vicinity of what is now the city of Vera Cruz. The sea and the seashore appear as parts of their panoramic history, and in their wanderings they appear never

to have got far away from the gulf. They numbered many fighting men, and, if their traditions are to be believed, they prevailed against all the enemies coming up against them, including the warlike Comanches, then numerous in all the southwest; the Machez, the Alabama Indians and other once powerful tribes. Tradition seems to be borne out by the fact that they did finally establish themselves in Alabama and Georgia, driving out the tribes then inhabiting that country. They set up their Toltec altars and altar fires, but that fervid tropical faith, it seems, could not long survive a change of latitude, for tradition soon becomes silent as gods and sacrifices, and the Muskogees became creatures of their new environments, caring nothing for sacrifices and ceremonies and having for their religion a vague apprehension of a "Great Spirit" and a "Happy Hunting Ground."

It was in this condition that the white man found the Muskogees when he came again. The white man gave the tribe the name of "Creeks" because of their propensity for a well-watered country. He found them and their neighbors, the Seminoles,

more troublesome than any of the other tribes of the Southeast. This may have been, and doubtless was the result of hereditary bitterness and distrust, surviving for three centuries, and moving them to accept death as a welcome alternative of what they feared was to be slavery in the event of their subjugation. General Jackson, who led one campaign against them, is on record with the saying that "they fought like devils." Desultory warfare, directed against the white man, continued until 1832, when the treaty was made under which the Creeks or Muskogees now hold their present homes in the Indian Territory.

What is not tradition in Creek history is a number of illustrious names. All of the full-bloods, including "Crazy Snake" and his deluded followers, have inheritance in the glory of Charchachee of Tustennuggee. This was one of the great warrior chiefs of the tribe. His glory is not recorded on any printed page, but it is enshrined in the hearts of his tribesmen. And it is not a matter of tradition, merely, for he appeared in that warlike time when the Creek was a dangerous antagonist for even such a warrior as Andrew Jackson.

In that time the tribe held a position against the assaults of the United States troops, under the command of Jackson himself until 600 of the Indians were killed. It was a defeat, but the Creeks cherish the memory of such a battle. Charchachee left a long line of descendants in the tribe and much of his blood flows today in Creek veins. Little of it is found among the half or quarter castes, for there is an aristocracy in the tribe which has sought to keep itself unspotted from the world, and the descendants of Charchachee are in it and of it. And perhaps there can be found nowhere in the world a prouder or more exclusive aristocracy than this. Even when the most improvident and ignorant, as it sometimes is, it asserts itself imperiously.

Thluco, of Weatherford, is another historic name in Creek geneology. His descendants are numerous among the full-bloods and some of them are to be found among those not wholly of the Indian strain. For the most part however, the descendants of the great have kept themselves free from contamination. This is particularly true of those of the old Chief Menewa, who lived a century ago, but whose memory

is cherished and whose posterity delight in honoring it. They are compelled to acknowledge, however, that some of the names which add luster to Creek history are not of Indian sound or origin. McGillivray is suggestive of the canny Scot, who cast his fortunes with the tribe, and whose diplomatic talents assisted in the formation of some of the treaties which have brought the tribe great advantages in dealing with the U. S. Government. The descendants of McGillivray are not as sand from the sea shore for multitude, but they are to be found, if not wholly among the full-bloods, then among the half breeds, or quarter bloods, and they, as a rule, display the qualities which made their paternal ancestor the children of McIntosh whose name is equally suggestive of the fine art of getting the best of a bargain, an accomplishment upon the possession of which, in their dealings with the government, the Creeks have of late years found many reasons to congratulate themselves. The half breeds has, in truth, cut considerable of a figure in Creek history during the last half century.

But perhaps there is no more illustrious

half-breed in Creek history than Paddy Carr. His father was an Irishman, and his mother one of the fairest of the Creek women. Paddy has left no diplomatic legacy to the tribe, and none of the treaties in which Uncle Sam was given the worst of it are to be credited to him. But in border foray, and leading the Creek van in all their battles with hostile tribes, he gave new luster to the Creek name. If all this could be forgotten, in these "weak piping times of peace," the story of his house would still survive in the lingering recollections of the beauty of his famous twin daughters, Ari and Adne. Ari and Adne, tradition has it, were peerless even among the women of the quarter bloods, and one who has seen the perfect loveliness of many of the young fourth caste women of this Indian country will understand the superlative degree of comparison. Mrs. Paddy Carr was the flower of that tribe, when the valor and wit of the half breed Paddy broke down the exclusiveness of the full-blood caste of that day, and the first fruit of the union was Ari and Adne, with as high a place among the Creek immortals as belongs to warriors or statesman. It may be added that such an immortality means something, in a

land where handsome young women are by no means rare.

-- Wagoner Record.