

In the minds eye of the anglo and other races of people, the Indian is not an Indian unless he is dressed in buckskin, beaded accessories, eagle feathers, and brightly colored cloth. It only confuses the matter to say that the Cherokees, Delawares, Shawnees, and ~~other~~ other tribes form a minority number that do not dress in conformity. The Cherokees, as history records, have never used bead work or feather adornments as a tribe. Perhaps some dress customs were retained after the Cherokees left their early Iroquoian influence, but was forgotten. Even to-day it would be rare to see a Cherokee with Indian jewelry or feather adornments of Cherokee origin. For three hundred or more years the Cherokees have dressed in conservative western style.

In his younger years Swimmer Henry worked among the Osages in the Hominy and Fairfax country and learned of their customs and could speak their language. After a few years he became homesick for his native flint rock hills and returned home, never to leave again. Osage and Cherokee customs and beliefs are nearly as different as Cherokee and anglo ways. He also learned to speak the Otoe language in his travels away from the Cherokee Nation. He, like many other Indians, have been able to learn other languages in their travels. Swimmer can speak Cherokee, Osage, Otoe, as well as English.

He recalls the days when the nearest grist mill was at Southwest City, Mo. Later the Becks put in a mill on Flint Creek. After that other grist mills were built throughout the country, including one in Spade Hollow. As the Cherokees continued to build their Nation in the west many progressed and improved conditions for themselves. One was Wash Swimmer, a full-blood who operated a thrashing machine outfit on Rowe Prairie, Lowrey Prairie, and in other adjoining areas. At one time Andy Dick operated a country store on Snake Creek a mile and a half southeast of the Henry home. Andy Dick was also an Indian Officer working out of the Saline District Court.

Swimmer lives alone in his little house constructed of native sawed lumber. Nearby are two of his boys who come often to see about him and take care of his needs. He remembers when families lived very close to each other and saw to each others welfare and needs. This attitude of concern for one another has changed along with much of the way of life for the present day. He says people seldom visit each other like they used to do. His answer to this change is well stated when he says they "take up the style".