

The Quapaws, like some other tribes of Indians, are seriously trying to preserve their language, customs, and other features of their way of life. The center of much of the tribe's activities is the Quapaw Long House at Beaver Springs, the old and long established meeting grounds of these Indians. Classes of instruction are conducted among the Quapaws to teach and preserve their language. Bob tells that the Quapaw and Osage languages are very similar. With the strong influence of Anglo association among the young people, the many features of Indian life are attacked. Some of his observations among Indians are hard to explain. For instance, last year at the Quapaw annual Pow-wow, his wife (who is full blood Cherokee) overheard three Indian women carrying on a conversation, yet each speaking in their own, and different, tribal language. Perhaps this may not be so unusual, as when traveling in Arizona, he has overheard a Mexican and a Navajo talking to each other, and again each speaking in their own tongue. So it is very likely that by reason of environment and association bilingual usage among Indians would not be unusual. Some of the older Indians of today who attended Indian schools thirty to fifty years ago tell that they were forbidden to speak their native language at the schools, and to do so brought punishment. This remembrance among many has left a sour taste toward that establishment and idea. Now that same establishment reverses itself and encourages bilingual training. There is a lot to be said about the ideas and objectives of the whiteman in his relation to the Indian, and most of it would curdle a rattlesnake's milk. Nevertheless, the Indian of today is tenaciously holding on to all that is of the way of their forefathers, and it has been found good.

The Quapaws have been most fortunate, as many still live on their own land, most having been allotments of their folks. The Whitebird allotment joins the town on Quapaw, and this was also the home of Robert's father. As the town came into being the family home was moved so it would be on a street. The Whitebird children attended the public schools, and their mother found it very hard to teach them their native language and customs. The elder folks foresaw the importance of their children getting an education as they knew it would be part of their hope and salvation in a changing world. Although caught between two ways of life, the Indian will always be an Indian.

Important to the Indians of early days was the Medicine House which was located near Beaver Springs. Here secrecy attended the peyote ceremony, burial rituals, and other spiritual activities. Few would be living now, that could, but probably would not tell of those things. Perhaps even now the four-day mourning time is observed. Robert tells that he has assisted in some of the ceremonies and rituals. It is his opinion that the leader of any of the old rituals was the supreme authority and he was never questioned.

In former days and at meetings there was kept what was called a "running table". Prepared food was kept on this table for the portion of the meeting and any one was welcome to partake, but that custom has died out.