

ROSS, S. W.

HOME MADE TOBACCO. 12732

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INTERVIEW

#12732

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Investigator  
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Interview with S. W. Ross  
Park Hill, Oklahoma.

Home Made Tobacco.

Tobacco was once raised in considerable quantities in the Cherokee Nation. Stores were few and far between and, manufactured tobacco was used by comparatively few persons. Consequently, attention was given to the culture of "home-made tobacco", or "long green", as it was often called. Some of those who raised the tobacco were more skilled than others in its proper cure after it had ripened. While some of it well suited the smokers, some did not, maintaining a green color and poor flavor, and giving forth offensive odor when being smoked. The term, "long green" tobacco no doubt originated from the poorly cured variety.

Many of the old-time Cherokees have been referred to as smoking "talony", which means that well-cured leaves of the white sumach shrub were mixed with the dry leaf tobacco, all well shredded. The "talony" was usually carried in a buckskin or cloth bag. The mixture produced a pleasant odor

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it has been said, and when setting forth on a visit or a trip to some distant section, the smoker saw that his tobacco bag was well-filled with his favorite mixture.

Those who chewed tobacco made use of the home raised variety. When not properly cured the chewer sometimes experienced unpleasant feelings, and instances have been known where illness ensued temporarily after using some of the "long green" in too large quantities. Once there was an Indian youth named Looney Going-to-sleep who obtained a quantity of poorly cured new tobacco and chewed vigorously. He fell unconscious beside a road and was there found and assisted by a resident of the neighborhood. After some hours the youth recovered his usual degree of health, but did not indulge in regular use of the "long green" thereafter.

Besides being smoked or chewed the leaves of the home-raised tobacco were often used with good effect in reducing sprained ankles and limbs swollen from rheumatism.

A man suffering from blood poison was in danger of losing an arm. Physicians had decided upon amputation.

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They postponed the amputation from evening until morning. In the interval some one thought of the curative effects of leaf tobacco. A "hand", (a plaited bunch of tobacco leaves) was procured, several leaves well moistened in water and applied to the swollen arm. The pain was soon relieved and when the physicians arrived in the morning the swelling was reduced to such extent that the operation was not performed. Recovery followed rapidly.

A little girl at Fort Gibson was bitten on the foot by a copperhead snake, (one of the poisonous varieties of serpents). She was carried into the house and placed on the bed and a physician summoned. A workman came along at that instant and taking a "chew" of tobacco from his mouth placed it on the wound. In a short while the physician arrived and pronounced the child to be doing well.

The home-raised tobacco could not be twisted and sold, such being forbidden by the United States revenue law, but numbers of the people made twists for their own use and convenience.

E. C. Boudinot, a Cherokee citizen once built a tobacco factory, contending that the revenue laws did not apply

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to Cherokee citizens in their own country. But after test in the United States courts the government won the case.

In these days, 1938, there are old tobacco users who maintain that the home-raised and cured tobacco is superior to the manufactured smoking and chewing tobacco. The latter, they say, is filled with adulterants, copperas being one, whereas the home-made tobacco is not.