

ROSS, S. W.

HOMESPUN CLOTHING.

13522

428

ROSS, S. W.

INTERVIEW

13522

Elizabeth Ross,  
Investigator,  
March 31, 1938.

An Interview with Mr. S. W. Ross,  
Park Hill, Oklahoma.

#### Homespun Clothing.

Spinning wheels and looms were introduced into the original Cherokee country east of the Mississippi River before the close of the eighteenth century, and articles of wearing apparel were made in the homes but not until after the removal to Indian Territory in 1838 did spinning wheels and looms become numerous among the Cherokees. Having their own alphabet, their national newspaper, and materials and methods of making clothing, many of the Cherokees felt that they could live independently and not be under the necessity of buying various articles, among them clothing. Many persons believe that the principal articles made by the Cherokee women were the bright-colored loose coats, which are usually called hunting shirts. This is erroneous. Not only were coats of more somber color made, but various other articles of wear, trousers and vests

ROSS, S. W.

INTERVIEW

13522

- 2 -

included. These articles were blue, black, brown, and gray, in solid colors. But they were not as numerous as the so-called hunting shirts, which were striped in colors in many instances.

Many years have passed since the spinning wheels and looms were in almost general use. Old and middle aged and young women engaged in their operation and there were quite young girls who soon became able to produce satisfactory specimens of cloth. While the men engaged in building rail fences and cultivating tracts of land, and in hunting wild game, the women gave attention to their tasks and the preparation of clothing for all members of the family engaged a considerable part of their time, as those who were able to recall the earlier periods were accustomed to relate in recent years.

When far advanced in years, some of the older natives, though the use of the looms had long been neglected, expressed their desire for the old time home-made clothing. Old men and women of the white race, as many

ROSS, S.W.

INTERVIEW 13522

- 3 -

have remembered, have believed that the old styles in clothing were much more appropriate than styles of later days. This manner of thinking characterized numbers of the older Cherokees. Often these persons have been designated as "old-time" Indians. It has been said that the first spinning wheel in the history of the Cherokees was brought into their country by a young white man when he returned from a visit to the white settlement. This young man had a Cherokee wife and he brought the wheel to her as a gift. Other women who saw the spinning wheel became greatly interested and wished that they, too, might acquire similar wheels.

In the beginning the spinning wheels, as well as the looms, were made by white mechanics, but eventually Cherokees who had acquired carpenters' tools began making the articles and thus the demand was supplied. It is probable that the old spinning wheels and occasional looms preserved here and there in localities once of the Cherokee nation were made by Cherokee mechanics. In the possession of the Meigs family at Park Hill is a spinning wheel which was made by

ROSS, S. W.

INTERVIEW

13522

- 4 -

Mr. Blevins, a white man of Evansville, Arkansas, who was Mrs. R. Robert Meig's father.

Long after the spinning wheels and looms fell into almost entire disuse there were some of the women who continued making woolen socks. Many of the older men would wear no other variety of socks, especially in the winter season.

ROSS, S. W.

MUSKOGEE AVENUE AT TALLEMAH.

#1323