

ROSS, S. W.

TWENTY-FIFTH INTERVIEW 13668
CHEROKEE GO BLE

302

An Interview with S. W. Ross, Park Hill.
By - Elizabeth Ross, Investigator.
April 20, 1938.

THE CHEROKEE GOBBLE.

The Cherokee gobble, as it has been designated, was an almost perfect imitation of the gobbling of the wild turkey and was indicative of defiance. Individual Cherokees sometimes gobbled when contending with an antagonist. In time of war when numbers of Cherokees advanced against the enemy they all gobbled in unison, producing a great volume of sound which was terrifying to those against whom the Cherokees fought.

There is no way of determining when the Cherokees first made use of the "gobble" but no doubt it was known centuries ago. Had there been a Cherokee alphabet in long past years it is probable that many interesting references would have been made, in writing, to episodes connected with the battle cry.

In the period of the Civil War in the United States many Cherokees enlisted in the Union Army, forming a brigade which saw service in Indian Territory and in bordering states. The majority of the men composing the brigade

were full bloods. They participated in a number of actions and have been mentioned as having gobbled lustily and in unison preparatory to setting out on expeditions, or when going into action.

The most important Civil War action in Indian Territory was that which is known as the battle of Elk Creek, or Honey Springs in the summer of 1863. In the Federal forces which were led to the scene of action by Major General James G. Blunt, were the Cherokees of the Union Indian Brigade. In the opposing Confederate Army under command of Brigadier General Douglas H. Cooper, were many Indian soldiers from several tribes, including a number of Cherokees, who belonged to the Confederate Indian Brigade. When the time came for the Union Cherokees to advance they did so with loud and defiant gobbling, followed with a great and piercing war whoop. Relating matters connected with the battle, some time after the close of the War, Hughie McPherson of Fort Smith, who had served in the Confederate Indian Brigade, was accustomed to relate that the gobbling of the Union Cherokees was quite terrifying to many of the members of other Indian Nations. As the ad-

ROSS, S. W.

TWENTY-FIFTH INTERVIEW

#13668

vance was made, according to Mr. McPherson, the mounted Indians from several sections of the Indian Territory began to exhibit nervousness. Some of them chewed their tobacco with great rapidity, and the rattling of their feet in the stirrups was distinctly audible, but the men remained in line until there suddenly arose the menacing gobbling of practically the entire Union Indian Brigade. The gobbling was distinctly heard above the crash of the muskets in other portions of the battlefield and the line then broke and the men fell into disorder. Hughie McPherson and his comrades of the Confederate Brigade were, of course, familiar with the war cry, as it might be called, of their Union Cherokee antagonists, but to the other Indians its sound was quite demoralizing, according to McPherson.

Occasionally in recent years instances have been noted in which some full blood Cherokees gave utterance to the old time gobble. At this present time, 1938, there are numbers of the native Cherokees who could, should occasion require, gobble as well as once did their ancestors. It is probable that the warriors of

ROSS, S. W.

TWENTY-FIFTH INTERVIEW.

#13668396

4

the great war chief Aganstata gobbled as they made their onslaught on Fort London in the time of the Cherokee War of 1760. Various persons, Indians of other tribes, some fullbloods and others of mixed white and Indian blood, as well as some negroes have at times sought to initiate the Cherokee gobble but with indifferent success.

Authority: S. W. Ross, Park Hill, Oklahoma.