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Pete W. Cole,
Investigator,
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An interview with Susan Porter,
An aged Choctaw woman of Atoka,
Aged 67.

My name is Susan Porter and I am a Choctaw, sixty-seven years old.

Now and then we hear or read in some books which relate incidents, that the Choctaws used to dine on dogs and cats and other unknown edible meat, when there is no truth in it, but the Choctaws do enjoy other meat such as wild game, turkeys, ducks and other kinds. Although not all of the Choctaw Indians like to eat coon, opossum and skunks. That rattlesnakes are used as an edible food is still denied and are yet to be seen eaten by the Choctaws. Also that the dog and cat meat are set on the table for a lunch.

The opossum, coon and skunks are killed for their hides and furs and also cooked for table use for those who like to eat that kind of meat and rattlesnakes are killed for their skins and oil. It has been declared that when an opossum meat is fried, the grease is saved for medicinal use

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to be used for measles. Skunk grease is taken internally for whooping cough, while the grease of a coon is used in preparation for making home-made soap. It is told by old-timers that when rattlesnake oil or grease is rubbed on a child in its infancy by the child's parents who continue to rub pure snake oil on him at all times until he is grown, that action does not strain him in his work or in his walk and that he will be limber and active. When this kind of treatment was given children by their parents they walked with ease, stood erect and walked with easy motions that gave grace to their bearing. Most of these children are fleet runners and agile in their movements, as well as athletic and are good marksmen or actors. It was believed that all this was caused by the use of snake oil.

For the girls, the skin of an eel was taken when it had been dried and cut in strips and wrapped around the full length of the hair and kept for a few days at a time which tended to make the hair grow long as the oil of the eel tends to help the growth of hair and some young girls make their hair grow as long as they are tall. Men as well let their

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hair grow long and sometimes a lock on the top of the head, called the scalp lock was carefully braided.

We have read and heard much about the different kind of edible meats but not all of these kind of meat are eaten by the Choctaw Indians. It is true that land terrapin are edible but there are some kinds which stay under the water and are not edible. There are two kinds of land turtles - both are good to eat yet there is hardly any meat on them but those who like them may cook them either by boiling them in hot water or by roasting them.

When any number of terrapin are found, a big pot filled with water is put on the fire and when it boils the unfortunate tortoise are thrown into the pot where they will swim and kick around for an instant until dead; then are allowed to remain in boiling water until cooked done; then taken out, the shell pulled apart and the best pieces of meat cut out and seasoned with salt and pepper, and the terrapins are then ready for eating. Eggs which are cooked with the meat are the best food to those who like them.

The tortoise hunting was done more among the widows than others although other women hunted for these land tortoises.

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for table use, but the widows usually were given the credit. A widow usually trains her dog to hunt these turtles and when trained the dog usually locates the turtles and makes this known by barking or by bringing the findings to his owner. Very often the tortoise dog will go out and when he finds a tortoise he will bring it home in his mouth. When two or more persons lived in a community the women would usually set a day for the big turtle drive and would bring in from one-half to a big burlap sack full in a day's time and of course a great time was had watching the unfortunates trying to escape from a big coal of fire, or when thrown into hot boiling water, ^{as they} would swim around in torture until dead. It was thought by a different race of people that the Indians ate these land turtles for some other cause or for the relief of pain, but these are mistakes and they were used only to relieve one's hunger. It also has been said and has been seen that a sick patient of long period usually desires turtle soup or other wild game meat and that if given them in time the patient recovers from illness, though this is

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not true in all cases. The young crows and hawks are good dishes when cooked properly. I have tried these and know that they are good to eat.