

SIEMERS, JOE

INTERVIEW

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Billie Byrd,  
Journalist,  
November 24, 1937.

An Interview with Mr. Joe Simmers,  
Creek, age 57, Fish Pond Town (tulwa)  
Bearden, Oklahoma.

I have heard the telling of stories of some wild Indian tribes that were living here before the removal of the Muskogee Creeks to this part of the country that is now known as Oklahoma. These tribes were living or roaming over what had been set aside as the Indian Territory for a long time before the government took it into their hands.

They had roamed with the change in the seasons, going to grassy places during the winter months and returning with the return of warm weather.

When the other Indians began to move into what land was supposedly to be theirs, the wilder Indians began to resent this intrusion and they were hostile to them.

There were several tribes but they would just come and go anywhere. Some settled in the Missouri Valley, in what is now Kansas, but had no real special places to stay. Of

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these wild tribes, there were the Osages, Kansas, Comanches, Kickapoos and others.

It was even before the early explorers came that these wild tribes lived in what is now Oklahoma and that is why they wanted to see any other tribes make a home where they had roamed around and lived.

As the Indians who were removed from the Eastern country began to settle and before the government took steps to quiet the wild Indians, they were going about plundering the homes and destroying everything they did not like.

In a southwestern direction about four miles from Bearden, Oklahoma, and near my home, were found remains of the arms of some of the Indians. They had probably been the victims of a raid as guns and bullets are said to have been found there. Some guns were found still leaning against the trees as they had been hurriedly left. Later on, some found the decaying gun stocks to be partly filled with gold.

Stories have been told of the Osage Trail (Ka-sha-see Ne-ne). I know of a part of the trail that took its

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course in a northeasterly direction from what is now Cromwell, and on along the hills until the trail was zig-zagged along the Canadian bottoms. These scattered trails were called by the older Indians the wa-sha-see Ne-ne, but I never knew just what tribes had traveled them.

Those wandering wild tribes did not seem to have any certain destination to go so that they stopped and made camp long enough to hunt and store up provisions.

The Arapaho Tribe is said to have been another of the small tribes that roamed over the Indian Territory but they went as far south as to Mexico. It is said that there are a number who stayed there.

Around District 32, east of Meletka, there are said to be many remembrances found that tell of the wild Indians and that part is thought to have been a vicinity in which the Osage War Trail passed.

The people who were trying to make settlements in the early territorial days were always kept in fear and danger as the wild Indians went on with their murdering,

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but, after many attempts, the government finally made negotiations with them and checked their wild acts by setting aside reservations for them although they did not like the idea.

I have heard ~~was~~ tell of the Chitto Harjo (Crazy Snake) movement. When the allotments were platted, those settlers who had made their homes and improvements on the land which they claimed as their own were forced to abandon the land, but they did not leave without removing the buildings and sometimes even burning them.

They did not want anyone else to have use of the buildings as they had been through hard work to make all that had been made.

Sam Bear, near the place known as Okfuskee, in northeastern Okfuskee County, has told that he is a member of the To-to-al-gee tribal town that was in existence during the removal days but which has been extinct a long time. There are a few members of this town which are to be found living in scattered areas and there are now no tribal ceremonial grounds of this town.

[Note: The manuscripts of Billie Byrd, an Indian, are included in this project as Mr. Byrd writes them. Ed.]