

INDEX CARD

Removal--Seminole

SEMINOLE REMOVAL

An interview with Dick McGirt, age 65,  
Tuckabutchee town (tulwa), 21 miles  
southwest of Okemah, Okla.

Billie Byrd, Field Worker  
Indian-Pioneer S-149  
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The government orders for the removal of the Seminole Indians in the old country to the new Indian Territory was under way. The Seminoles did not want to come to the country west of the Mississippi river.

They resisted the move. The Indians were victorious in battle, killing many of the whites, but more forces were sent by the government, and the Seminoles were overpowered and they surrendered.

There were four of us men who had always caused trouble and caused the tribe to move in a disobedient manner.

The rest of the members of our tribe was quickly mobilized while the four of us were off on a hunting trip. Our wives and children taken by the white men along with the rest of the Seminoles.

P. 2.

Because our families were in the hands of the government authorities so we thought it best to surrender. We were bound and made prisoners.

The four of us were constantly guarded. The guards would often ask us if we had the courage to be killed and if we were ready to die. The guards talked as if we were to be killed after we had crossed the river. Still, we never said anything.

As we were going along a trail to the river and just before we reached the river, one of the prisoners saw a crow feather on the ground which he picked up. We hadn't gone much further when another one of the prisoners saw a blue jay feather which he also picked up. After they had picked up the feathers they stuck them in their hats and then we gave our tribal war whoop. We then told our guards that we were ready and unafraid to die.

When we reached the river, we were put on the boat with the rest of the members of our people and tribe. The four of us that were held prisoners were placed in a separate small room from the rest of

P. 3.

our people. One of the prisoners took sick while we were being held in this room.

The guards were in the same room with the prisoners, but they were asleep when the following incident took place. I said to the others, "Let's make an escape. I am going to make a dash for the door and break the door down and when I do that the rest of you follow me and do whatever I do on the boat."

The sick man said, "I will stay in here and carry out the will of God to die."

So two men stayed while another man and I dashed through the door.

Just as we went out the door, shots rang out in the room that we had just left--the room where the sick man and the other had stayed. We knew that those shots had taken the lives of our comrades.

We concealed ourselves in the lower part of the boat. Everything was in confusion on board the big boat and several smaller boats were lowered into

P. 4.

the water while a search was made on the boat as well as in the water. We were never found.

After things had quieted down, we dared to swim the mighty river. We hung on to a log that happened to be floating in the water. Once we saw a large snake that had a head shaped like the head of a cow, but we safely reached shore.

This is a story told by an old Seminole man who was one of the prisoners that made the escape and as he told it to Dick McGirt.