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INDEX CARDS:

Hillside Mission

Silver Lake

Osages

Hunting

Chief Turtle Soup of Shawnee

Effie Jackson,  
Interviewer.

June 28, 1937,

An Interview With S. M. Abbott,  
Hillside Mission, two miles north  
and three-fourths mile east of  
Skiatook on Highway #11.

I found Mr. Abbott even more feeble than at my previous visit, June 16. He was very busy, studying his Bible and was very loathe to talk. When he did talk it was always the story of "long ago", the 70's and 80's. To him, as he sits in that little old rocker, in that bit of a bay window, with twenty-four rooms of an old mission crumbling around him, time stands still.

Yes, he would be glad for me to read his manuscript- there it was in that filing case, on top of that old chest of drawers- only one request, "Please do not mix the pages, they are loose-leaf." There they were, four hundred and fifty pages of them, heavy, yellowed (once white) sheets, legal size, written in ink, rather small writing, at times printed-phonetic spelling. As he recalled some of his experiences he became more "chatty". I talked with him about giving or selling the manuscript to the Oklahoma Historical Society. This did not interest him at all. In fact he seemed to take a childish glee in stating that he would soon have no use for it and would leave it to his children. (He has tried to have it published but it seems

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that it would cost him \$700.00}.

Finding that he was not at all interested in parting with it, I decided to spend a few hours reading it. He was very willing, inclined to interrupt as I read, wishing to insert even more detail. He states in the opening lines that the manuscript covers his pioneer experiences among the Osages, Cherokees and Shawnees in that locality during the year 1880. In reality he said the year was 1879, the year he and his mother came from Chautauqua, Kansas; but for reasons of his own, he preferred to call it 1880. The description of the preparation, loading three wagons with household goods, utensils and tools for making a home in the wilderness (as he called it) was interesting. He had chosen this area for its good hunting, (he had made a trip there previously). He detailed the journey, difficulty of passage, method of crossing streams, no civilization until they came to Silver Lake, mill and supply house of Jake Bartles.

He set up a home for himself and mother on the Tyner place. The six men who had accompanied him on his journey to help bring his household effects returned to Kansas. He must have a habitation for his mother, so he took a deserted "pole tent" Indian house, and made it into

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their first home in 1879. The "Star House" was not built until 1882. He had the help and devotion of an Indian, Harvey Big Fox, throughout the year. Mr. Abbott said, "Big Fox would rather be my dog than anybody else's slave."

Among the tools he had brought from Kansas (originally from Fulton, Illinois) were an adz and a broad-ax. He still had these in his possession and insisted that we go to an old cupboard and get them out. He wanted to personally show them to us. The detail of re-building that first house was very interesting. You hewed each log with him, put in each wooden pin, smoothed each floor board. Then he built a snare fireplace and protected the outer covering to make it storm-proof. The task done he was ready for the purpose of his coming - to hunt. And hunt he did for a year, with only Indians for his companions, oftentimes alone, so goes his story.

He depicts, as only a hunter can, the story of killing his first deer, but the look in its eyes as he killed it seems to be the haunting theme of the tragedy he weaves through the other pages, always there seems to be a presiding Nemesis. After the killing of the deer he seems to lose himself in Indian lore and legend and at times a touch of witchcraft. He picks up another bit of good

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description as he tells how he and Big Fox make their first canoe from a cottonwood tree thirty feet long and three and one-half feet in diameter. He used his ever-faithful adz to hollow it out.

The canoe made, he goes alone on a trip to unknown waters, as he tells it in his story. (In reality Bird Creek). Then he strikes another note of witchery. He kills another deer. According to Shawnee belief, if you partake of the blood of the first deer you kill (which he had done), you are under a ban and cannot kill another deer without suffering some punishment. He describes in detail the penalty he had to pay as imposed upon him by Chief Turtle Soup, a Shawnee. Now he was ordered to plunge, stripped, into the icy water where the deer had fallen. Diving, he was to bring up whatever his hands first touched and lay it as a token before the Chief. Behold, he touched the fallen deer, which rose in a miraculous fashion to the surface; with super-human effort he dragged it to the waiting Chief.

Fact and fiction melt together as this gleaming spirit of revenge, now in the form of a gold and bronze serpent image, pursues him at every turn. He meets the Princess (an Indian maiden of French descent, and still

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says to this day that she was his one and only love).

He finishes his story in the same vein. The avenging spirit of the deer he had killed, the deer, as he said, that had talked with him and begged for its life, appears as a serpent to destroy the beautiful Princess.

Whenever Mr. Abbott gave descriptions of constructions, building the home, ranch, mission, etc., he seemed very practical-minded, but the moment he entered the woods or approached a stream, he became "fancy-minded". He told me the woods always gave a spell over him.

While I was reading the manuscript, Mr. Abbott's son, William R. Abbott, wife and child (of 1112 Classen Boulevard, Oklahoma City), drove up. He had come to see his father. The son seemed to resent my presence. Accordingly I shortened my visit.

Earlier in the interview, while talking of the Historical Society, Mr. Abbott said he had given a bed that had belonged to his mother to the Society. He described it as an old spindle top, four poster, rope bed she had brought from Illinois. He had also given a hand-made cradle. He asked me to dig into a rabbit hole in the wall and get a little tin trunk. This trunk was about eleven inches long, six inches high and four inches wide, he said it was one hundred and

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fifty years old. It had belonged to his father, who had fought under Harrison in the Black Hawk War. His father had used it as a bank, filled it with gold and buried it during the Indian Wars. It is still well preserved. In this trunk Mr. Abbott keeps a parchment document about ten by fourteen inches. It is a land patent for one hundred and sixty acres, (twenty-five cents an acre,) Fulton, Illinois, signed by James Monroe when he was president of the United States.

#### Field Worker's Note:

On my return to Skiatook, I stopped at the farm of A. T. Feree, one mile north of Skiatook on Highway #11. I talked with both Mr. and Mrs. Feree. I asked them about an abandoned Indian Cemetery in that vicinity. Mr. Feree said he had lived in the neighborhood thirty-seven years, had leased the farm he now lived on twenty years ago and had cleared it. He had leased it from "old man Tyner". Said he had never seen or heard of a cemetery in the vicinity. Mr. Feree said there was a pile of rocks, about where Mr. Abbott said the cemetery had been, but nothing to indicate a cemetery otherwise. He had cleared the ground and had it under cultivation.

He said that when he was farming on Quapaw Creek he frequently found lone Indian graves, or sometimes two together, cribbed and covered with logs. He said that it was customary to respect these graves. He said it was possible that there might have been an Indian cemetery in that region at one time. I told him what Mr. Abbott had said. He replied that all the people in the community had a great deal of regard for "old man Abbott"--that they considered his memory good and his statements correct.