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Seminole Tribal Court House
Execution Tree

OLD TRIBAL COURT SITES

An interview of Freelyn Alex,
age 65, Coweta town (tulwa),
Wewoka, Oklahoma.

Billie Byrd, Interviewer
Indian-Pioneer History
9-30-37

The Muskogee alley which runs north and south in the city of Wewoka in Seminole County is a dividing line of the Seminole and Creek nation. It cuts through half of the 100 Block of North Wewoka Avenue and the 100 Block of South Wewoka Avenue. On these spots which were once thickly wooded places was set the tribal court house during the territorial days. The spots are now marked by the present day bustle of business within the Deblar Building, the First National Bank Building and other buildings, including the present courthouse of Wewoka.

The 100 Block of North Wewoka Avenue marks the historical spot of the traditional story of the Seminole tribal court which was once located just across the line in the Creek nation or just East and across what is now Muskogee Alley. Then, the 100 Block of South Wewoka Avenue is found the present site of the Seminole County court house which is was the first

site chosen by the Seminoles for their tribal court house. From this we know that the Seminole tribal court house was first located just over into the boundary of the Creek nation and was later moved over into the Seminole nation at the spot where the present court house in Wewoka is now located.

Those early day tribal courts were very useful institutions in enforcing the laws and keeping order in the territorial days as Wewoka was once the district within the Muskogee-Creek nation which was made up of law-abiding citizens of the Muskogee-Creek tribal form of government which maintained the light-horsemen as its officers with the judge, prosecuting attorney and other officers. Outlaws and wrongdoers were tried in these courts and the sentences passed with the executions being carried out.

An execution tree, a pecan tree, still stands on the lawn of the present Wewoka court house, and it is believed to be the only execution tree that still stands from the early days. There was another execution tree that stood in that city on the 28th Block and on the corner of West First Wewoka Avenue. This tree, when

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the town of Wewoka was rapidly being started, was plugged up and thrown away as the town site was being extended but it was later picked up, trimmed and is now preserved by the Historical Society at Oklahoma City.

When a criminal once went through the tribal trials and courts and whatever sentence was passed, it was likely that this criminal never returned to be sentenced, because some of the criminals never lived to see the courts again and some turned out for the best and made some of the best law abiding citizens that were highly esteemed. Those early tribal laws were so strict with heavy sentences that if a person lived through it, they would never want to come under the tribal laws for a second time. During the present, many of them return time and time again for some wrong act.