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BYRD, BILLIE

BUSK GROUNDS.

#12142

EARLY RELIGIOUS WORK #12363

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Busk Ground Locations

Billie Byrd, Field Worker
Indian-pioneer History
11-13-37

Given by Billie Spencer, age 45, Castle, Oklahoma:
Chi-a-ha (Gar Creek), Seminole County, 31-10-7,
with Billie Larney, the chief. The members were
known to have been originally Cherokees and spoke the
Witchita language.

Given by Eunah Robiye, age 45, Wetumka, Oklahoma:
Alabama-Masada, Hughes County, 22-9-11, Eunah Robiye
the chief. This tribal town was noted for their
excellent ball players and fearless fighters. Since
Masada was a Min town of Alabama they were united and
have been united for years. They united some time
after the Civil War period. The ceremonial fire which
was first laid has never been extinguished or moved and
the fire maker uses the same flint that was brought from
the old country. On western edge of the town of Wetumka,
Oklahoma, was the first busk grounds of Alabama along
the Alabama creek and on the present site of the light
plant to the town of Weleetka. The Alabama tribe settled
all along the hills that lie south from Weleetka.

EARLY RELIGIOUS WORK

From interviews of different church
workers.

(Roley Canard, Wetumka, Oklahoma,
Aaron Grayson, Okemah, Oklahoma,
Samuel Simons, Okemah, Oklahoma,
and others)

Billie Byrd, Field Worker
Indian-Pioneer History
12-9-37

The present state of the Indians with their adoption of the dress and customs of the white people was largely due to the missionaries and the mission schools. Of course, the Indians that are within the Five Civilized Tribes had seen and been in the white civilization prior to their removal from their old eastern home to a west country where new homes and new lives had to be begun.

It is told that some of the older Indians that were living during the removal told of how they sang hymns on their removal trip. These songs seemed to give them more spirit and courage to face whatever was before them.

The Muskogee-Creeks accepted a religion as worshipping a living God largely due to the men who hazarded their lives among the unlearned Indians

during the early days and of the Territorial days. These workers enlightened the Indians so they might become worthy and useful in a civilization that was spreading all around.

Even before those times, the life of the Baptists and their work was heard of and known about. It was to those who, through experience, realized the value of enriching the spiritual life began to talk of the "word", the prolonging of life into a life hereafter, or of how an axe is laid up to every tree so that it may be cut down. Even those early Indians in talking among themselves talked of these things even before their native tongue was put into writing and before the Bible was translated so they could read and understand it. They taught and preached of love but they were tribally and traditionally true and championed the early ceremonial usage. In this, they worshipped idols through their belief of the tribal medicine and customs which they believed aided the earthly life but did not uphold the spiritual ideals.

Before the Civil War, there were not many churches in existence among the early Indians as most of them gathered at their ceremonial grounds to do their celebrating. One of the earliest known churches to

christian---

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be established in the Indian Territory was known as the Fountain Church, September 9, 1832, and among their first members were the white missionaries, Rev. William Lewis and his wife, John Davis, Creek Indian, Quash, Bob and Ned, negroes. There seemed to be no race prejudice in this church.

About sixty-three years ago, the workings of the Muskogee-Creek Baptist churches was started by organizing under the one name of the Association. The members of the early association were few but it is now working with twenty-three Indian Baptist churches as members with a number who have joined the organization as individual members. The Association works to further Christian work by sending missionaries and workers or donating money so that the Gospel may be carried to those who have never heard it.

First steps were taken to christianize the western Wichitas by John McIntosh who was sent by the early Association on this mission. His attempts were not fruitless as he was among the first of those who was responsible for bringing about the christianizing of the Wichitas. They became members of the Association.

The Associational members selected missionaries to be sent to the Seminoles of the Everglades of Florida. The work has been carried on for a number of years with the Seminoles--the results are small compared to the number of Indians in Florida, some of the Seminoles are not in favor of the Christian work as some of them still cling to the old customs and are apparently still uncivilized.

Some of now deceased and older of the missionary workers were, John McIntosh, Rev. McCombs, Peter Ewing, Bunnie McIntosh, Marcie Hargo, William Green (Yahola), James Alexander and others.

Among the Baptist churches who are members of the Association are: (Tuskegee-Creek Tribe)

Big Arbor	Salt Creek
Butler Creek	Tuskegee
Cedar River	Tulochussee
Cedar Springs	West Bufaula
High Spring	Woka
Little Coweta	Woo Jifkee
Little Marsardy	Wetunka
Little Gusselah	Deep Fork Hillabee
Montezuma	Tookparfina
Middle Creek	Greenleaf
Silver Spring	Cherokee New Field
Sand Creek	(Vian, Okla.)

Non-Members of the Association are as follows:

Arbeka	Hillabee
Alabama	Hickory No. 1 & 2.
Little Wewoka	Middle Creek, 2.
Pigeon	Many Springs
Snake Creek	High Spring
Thelewahlee	Sasakwa
Witch Chuppa	Prairie Spring

There are separate schurches that have been established by the newelists and presbyterians. Their work in the church is almost identical but the Methodists (Creek-Muskogees) are organized under the organization known as the Indian Mission with almost the same principles of the Association but they do not send picked missionaries except the donations.

Muskogee-Creek Methodist churches are:

Grant Chapel

Arbela

Mitchita (Seminoles of Oklahoma)

Newoka

Salt Creek

Tlewahlee

Thlophlocco

Springfield

Mitchita

Big Gussetah

Little Gussetah

Honey Creek

New Town

Doncharty

Haikey

Broken Arrow

Davis Chapel

Pickett's Chapel

Choska

(These churches do
not work under the
Mission)

Creek Chapel

Tallahassee

Apulpa's Church

Presbyterian churches

Newoka

Tallahassee

Achena

McGullah's