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Creek Legend

## A TRIBAL TOWN

An interview of Simon Johnson,  
age 47, Ochai tribal town, (tulwa),  
Hanna, Oklahoma.

Billie Byrd, Interviewer  
Indian-Pioneer History  
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Among the Indians known as the Muskogee-Creek tribe of Indians, there have been tribal divisions in their respective settlements in Alabama and Georgia. Some are ancient tribal towns, that is some had been adopted and their existence dated as far back as when these Indians lived in these two states before the removal.

Each tribal town had their own busk grounds, each having their own customs about the tribal laws and rules.

There was the certain customary method of moving the site of the busk grounds---this moving being designated by the removal of the tribal council fire to the desired location. It was the custom for the tribal town chief (tulwa mekko) with usually two other men to accomplish this task of moving the council <sup>fire</sup> which never was extinguished all during the rites of moving it. Much reverence was shown to the

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council fire that was in the process of being moved to another location. Fasting was accompanied with these rites.

Most of the council fires of the different busk grounds now within the Muskogee-Creek territory in the present Oklahoma were brought by the Indians during their migration and forced removal to the western homes. Everything in regard to the moving of the council fire as to how it should be done and where the fire was to be taken and located was all under the direction of the tribal town chief. Whoever was chosen to aid in the removal of the council fire was instructed very strictly to what was required of them, what they should or should not eat, they were to eat only certain food, and told what they should or should not do. These chosen men were further forbidden to mingle with the women or use a cup for drinking purposes which had been used by the women.

The tribal town of Cohai, as it has been told, was an adopted tribal town composed of a tribe from Tennessee. The older members of that town still relate stories that have been handed about this tribal town. It is likely that Hotulka Emathla, who lived as a

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well-known leader and spokesman of that town, had told the younger generation that lived in his time the manner of how the ceremonial council fire had been brought to its present location.

It has been told that the council fire was always in the care and in charge of two picked men and these two were the only ones who could carry the council fire all during the time of the removal. They served as the fire carriers until they had selected a site for the council fire in the new home.

These two chosen men were not free to eat any kind of food that they wished but only took meals then called, hum-pe-ta hut-ke (white meals). These meals usually consisted of one or two different dishes made of white articles of food. It contained no kind of seasoning or flavoring that had been added. There was the usual Indian corn bread that was white and without leavening and white sofkey, corn and water boiled together until the corn was tender. The other members of the town, all during the move, were free to eat anything. The more they ate the better it was for them to more strongly endure the fatiguing trip. All these observations were kept until the new home

was reached and the council fire was permanently or temporarily laid in the ground in a hole the depth of the length of the human arm. Some of the older members ~~have~~ said they often see the flames of the original council fire that had been laid in the present ceremonial grounds of the Ochai tribal town---this occurrence is during the misty, rainy season of the year.

The present chief, George Deo, is a very young man, who is a descendant of Hotulke Emathla.