

Notice of Copyright

Published and unpublished materials may be protected by Copyright Law (Title 17, U.S. Code). Any copies of published and unpublished materials provided by the Western History Collections are for research, scholarship, and study purposes only.

Use of certain published materials and manuscripts is restricted by law, by reason of their origin, or by donor agreement. For the protection of its holdings, the Western History Collections also reserves the right to restrict the use of unprocessed materials, or books and documents of exceptional value and fragility. Use of any material is subject to the approval of the Curator.

Citing Resources from the Western History Collections

For citations in published or unpublished papers, this repository should be listed as the Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.

An example of a proper citation:

Oklahoma Federation of Labor Collection, M452, Box 5, Folder 2. Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.

6919

6001365

6755

6894-A

5875

5876

INDEX CARDS

Creek Nation
Indian Craft
Tribe-Creek
Indian-Superstitions
Indian Mission-Tulahassee
Toll Bridge
Indian Medicine
Light Horsemen
Creek Government

Jefferson Berryhill, Field Worker
Indian-Pioneer History
July 23, 1937

366

An interview with Alec Berryhill
about Indian Superstition.

In the days when there was no guns or were scarce, the Indians had to make bows and arrows to kill game. There were many different kinds of wood to make arrows with, some for squirrels, fish, etc.

Mr. Berryhill learned to make arrows from some of the older men. I have learned to make an arrow from him.

Of all the different kinds of arrows, there is a mysterious one called ringed arrow or Rattlesnake arrow.

It is made of dogwood, first it is scraped, then a bark of elm is wrapped from end to end, then in burning it it must be handled or straighten with care while it is still hot; when burned right it will create designs of pretty color. If one uses two strips of bark on the arrow end to end, there are black diamonds on the arrow; they resemble a rattlesnake; Creeks call it "Rattlesnake Arrows."

It was a dangerous arrow to make, not very many were made because after you make one, you are

supposed to shoot something of real life with the very first shot or a snake will bit you. Mr. Berryhill said the Indians usually shot a frog or a chicken for the first shot to keep the snake away from their tepees.

I have made some of these arrows and sold them for a good price. If you wish some for exhibit, I will be glad to send some to you.

INTERVIEW WITH ALEC BERRYHILL
Jefferson Berryhill, Field Worker
May 18, 1937

Mr. Alec Berryhill was born four miles north and three-quarters of a mile west of Okmulgee, in the year of 1870. He now lives on route one out of Okmulgee.

He is a half-Creek Indian and half Irish. His father was an Irishman and his mother was a fullblood Creek Indian of the Concharty clan.

The reason I have made a report on Indian Superstition is because it seems true, I have seen it proved. For instance a storm or a tornado came through our village in the year of 1926. The older men of us made medicine and our homes were the only ones not damaged, all others were destroyed and many killed. Only colored and whites were killed, not an Indian, although in the midst of the storm.

Mr. Berryhill said he was never afraid of storms, as the old men of the tribe seem to know when a storm was coming and he would warn his people. Then he himself was not afraid because he believed in his medicine and the Great Spirit. When a storm was approaching, he would move off to himself, then chant some mysterious tune. While

doing this he would have an axe in his hand. Having doctored the axe, he points it toward the oncoming clouds, then pretends to split the dark clouds and he sticks the axe in the ground. The clouds then split and take another course.

This has been proven by actual experience.

Jefferson Berryhill, Field Worker
Indian-Pioneer History
July 5, 1937

370

Indian Mission and Toll Bridge
An interview with Alec Berryhill

There was a school or a mission for the Indians located at Porter and about twelve of the Creek Indian boys were sent there. The government paid for their attendance. It was called Tallahassee Mission. All of those who attended school at that mission are dead, excepting one, but now he is an old man.

A toll bridge was located about six miles southwest of Okmulgee about twenty yards east of what is now the Sharp River bridge. It was owned by a man named Jefferson Berryhill and operated by Robert Berryhill, the admission to cross was fifty cents to a person.

It is said many times he had to get rough with the customer to collect his fee as some would not pay when taken across. All that remains of the toll bridge now is some rocks which can be seen at the edge of the water.

I wish to state now that I have been making reports on the graves which are neglected and in bad condition, as I understand that they are to be repaired or fixed up. There is an Indian grave located four miles and about hundred and fifty yards west of Okmulgee,

Oklahoma, on the north side of the paved highway #75. It, being an old graveyard, has grown up in trees and thickets. Only one grave, which was made many years ago, has a marker of hewed post oaks made in the shape of a log house over the grave. There are many old Indians buried there, but being so old it is hard to determine as to the number of the graves, but more than a score of graves are in that old graveyard.

INTERVIEW WITH ALEC BERRYHILL
Jefferson Berryhill, Field Worker
July 19, 1937

MEDICINE FOR SEX DISEASE

The Creek Indian tribe had a way of combatting the dreaded disease. When this method of curing the disease was learned can never be learned. A story goes that a certain tribe of Indians had contracted the disease and many were afflicted. Suffering was great, and the medicine man was called upon to ask the Great Spirit to help them. The medicine man, in obedience to his people's call, went to the Great Spirit. Seeing the plight of the people, He give the medicine man this method.

Snake root are found near the edge of the water, sometimes in the water. Its roots are used, only the ripe or dead roots are of value. About ten roots are required. It is a rare kind of medicine as it is scarce.

Then another kind of weed used is a weed known as black weed. Its roots are gathered and washed clean. Then it is beaten, also the snake root is beaten with a heavy object. Then a weed known as butterfly root is dug. The roots are washed clean and beaten.

The butterfly root can be found most any place. It has a stem about a foot or foot and a half long, the stem being smaller than a pencil. The top when in bloom has a

-2-

fiery red color. Always a bunch of butterflies can be seen on the bloom, which it takes its name after. The roots of it are very large, looks like a good size potatoes. The roots are beaten. Then a cactus root is dug, and the root is peeled with a knife and wrapped in a clean cloth and beaten. All four of the different kind of medicine or roots are put in a large pan or bucket; then it is set on a fire to boil. These roots are beaten to get the good out of them. After it boils a while it is done. A glass of it is given to the patient every two hours till a gallon is consumed, it is usually enough for anyone. It is still used among the Creeks.

There are some who never buy any medicine from the white doctor or any drug store. It is claimed that it is the best method for sex disease.

Once a man traded a good riding horse for this method. It is a valuable secret that many know and will never tell. I feel that it's my duty to reveal this long kept secret.

Editor's Note:

This manuscript has been left as nearly as possible as it was sent in by the field worker in order to preserve the Indian's method of expressing ideas.

BERRYHILL, ALAC. INTERVIEW.

5875

Jefferson Berryhill, Interviewer
Indian-Pioneer History
May 21, 1937

Lighthorsemen

Alex Berryhill was born at Coweta in the year of 1870, and now lives at four miles north and a three-quarters of miles west of Okmulgee on Route #1.

He is a half Creek Indian and half Irish.

He is sixty-seven years old.

His father was an Irishman and his mother was a full-blood Creek, a Coweta clan.

Mr. Berryhill was just a youngster in those stirring days, yet he knows and remembers seeing the Lighthorsemen doing its duty as a law. It was called the Lighthorsemen because they rode on horses. It consisted of twelve picked men who were honest, good and brave. It had a Chief or a Captain of authority to go and arrest anyone who had violated the law. They were given to understand not to mistreat or shoot any prisoner unless they just had to do it. In obeying the order some were killed in cold blood.

They were not permitted to punish the palefaces but had right to arrest and turn the white prisoners over to whites and its laws.

BERRYHILL, ALEC. INTERVIEW.

5875

2

The duty of Lighthorsemen was to go after the one who had committed a crime and of tentimes some white men would come in the Indian Territory. If caught, the Lighthorsemen would investigate and if found he had no business in the Territory, they would escort them out of the Indian Territory. The Lighthorsemen kept the law and order, to fight the lawless, arrest horse or hog thieves and to arrest murderers, to be held till the law had taken its course.

Editor's Note: Jefferson Berryhill, being of Creek Indian Blood, expresses himself in writing precisely as a fullblood talks. Fearing to lose much of the value of his interviews, no effort is made to put them into correct English.

BERRYHILL, ALEC. INTERVIEW.

5876

Jefferson Berryhill, Interviewer
Indian-Pioneer History
May 21, 1937

Law and Punishment

Alec Berryhill was born at Coweta in Tulsa County, in the year of 1870, and now lives at four miles north and three-fourths of a mile west of Okmulgee on Route #1.

He is a half Creek Indian and half Irish and sixty-seven years old.

His father was an Irishman and his mother was a fullblood Creek of the Coweta clan.

The white men have many laws--some severe and some mild. The Creeks had few laws, yet the punishments were very severe, so that there were not so many law breakers or criminals as has been told. Of course, there were few such as Timmie Jack. He was punish to the extreme of law. The first offense was a punishment of twenty-five lashes. It was law to whip to bring blood and it was executed by the Lighthorsemen. It was required of the Lighthorsemen to give five lashes each, till the law had taken its course. The prisoner was stripped to his waist and suspended or tied by both wrists and hung up just so

2

the toes touch the ground. The legs were tied same as wrist. The second time was a punishment of fifty lashes, the third offense, if not a severe crime such as murder, was seventy-five lashes. If a person fainted during the punishment he was not released till the law was executed.

Stealing horses or hogs or any other crimes the punishment was as I have stated, but for murder it was a punishment of death.

But now we have forgotten or don't know the old Indian law. Maybe if that law was in existence there would not be so many crimes.

Editor's Note: Jefferson Berryhill, being of Creek Indian blood, writes as the Indian talks. Fearing to lose much of its value no attempt is made to change his wording of an interview.