

HARJOCHEE, JIMMIE.

INTERVIEW

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Billie Byrd,
Journalist.
February 17, 1938.

Interview with Jimmie Harjochee,
Okemah, Oklahoma.

Payments And Buried Treasure.

Jim Bullett, an old Indian who now lives south of Muskogee, likes to tell of the time he served as interpreter for the Indians at the time just after the Civil War when the Indians received payments from the Government.

The Indians of those times didn't buy very much of anything because they didn't need so much and the prices of things were low so it seemed that the Indians always had money on hand all times at their homes. The money was mostly in gold and was not taken to banks for safe-keeping but was kept in the homes placed in a pot with a lid or in a sack called "se-ma-ho th-ka-sego". (No closing but sacks with draw strings.)

The old Eastern country Indians had pounded and made some of the gold coins into rings and ear rings for ornaments. I have heard some of the old Indians tell of having

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heard the older ones tell of incidents at the time of the sinking of the Monmouth on the Mississippi River. The whites or the Indians coming upon victims of the wreck would search the bodies for any valuables. The body and fingers of some were swollen and had become bloated so that it was not easy to remove a ring from the finger but by cutting off the finger, the ring was removed from the body while the ear rings were just jerked off the ears of the dead without much effort.

I have heard from those who have encountered and know of some of the superstitious occurrences and believe in them as to the recovery of reported treasures. Different stories are told and in numerous ways but these occurrences are believed to happen as a protection of any treasure or anything sacred that has been hidden by the old Indians who believed strongly in the using of the tribal herbal medicines prepared especially for the purpose of hiding the treasure.

There is a certain hilly spot in the Cherokee country where there is reported to be gold that had been buried by some old Indians. The belief is substantiated by the ap-

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pearance of a feather causing fluttering sounds before the large rocks of the hills just when someone approaches it -- that is, if with the purpose of locating any treasure or hunting for any. No one has ever located any valuables that may have been hidden, but some have been confronted by the appearance of the fluttering feather.

I have lived and spent some time among the Cherokee people and there is one old Cherokee Indian lady who lives in the Cherokee country now, who knows of and has told of buried gold-- in a grave. She saw it when it was buried and knows the exact spot where it was buried but her husband will not consent to any one digging for it. She says she is willing to lead any one to the place but her husband's will is respected and she has never led any one to the place.

The young people wonder and think about the amount of work that one person did in going about constructing the split rail fence around a chosen spot of ground. Even a small area of ground took quite a number of the rails to make a suitable enclosure.

It took more than one person to do all the work required in the cutting of a tree, trimming, cutting into suitable

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length logs, the splitting of logs and the hauling of them. The neighbors of a community all joined in helping one another in the work of cutting and splitting rails during the fall and winter months when there wasn't field work to be done. Some of the men cut down trees, some trimmed, some cut into suitable lengths, some did the splitting while others hauled the rails to a designated place. When one place had enough the party would move on to another place.

It took two or four men to lay the rails in zig-zagged fashion after all the work of fixing them had been completed.