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INDEX CARDS:

Cherokee Nation  
Secret Societies

Gus Hummingbird, Interviewer  
Indian-Pioneer History  
July 26, 1937

166

This interview with Mr. Hogner is a story told to him by his folks on secret societies, politics and allotment.

Clem Hogner is a fullblood Cherokee born in Coingsnake District September 18, 1885. His father died when Clem was a small child and his widowed mother reared and tried to educate him in the schools of the Cherokee Nation. Clem received a fair education in the rural schools of that time. He completed the sixth grade.

Mr. Hogner knows many things concerning the history of the Cherokee people before statehood as told to him by his folks, who were a well to do family during the territorial days. They were all members of the "Night Hawk".

#### Secret Societies

The oldest secret society known among the Cherokees is the Kee-Too-Wah. This Society according to the old timers started back in the old country or in the Cherokee Nation east.

The beginning of this society was caused by the Cherokees themselves. The Cherokees lived in the three states of Tennessee, Georgia and North Carolina. The white people lived all around the Cherokees, and in some of these states were even

2

allowed to enter by the Cherokees themselves, providing they had some kind of trade which would help the Cherokees develop their country.

Many white men entered those states by just having grist mills or saw mills. These the Cherokees thought were necessary in the development of their country.

These white people who were permitted in these states were not allowed to vote at first but if a permitted white man married a Cherokee, he then became a member of that tribe. This law was passed by the mixed bloods several years after allowing white people in these states. By that time there were many mixed blood Cherokees in those three states, and therefore the Cherokees became a mixed tribe.

Schools were established also. This caused trouble with the old Cherokees. The children learned more ways like the white man. The old Cherokees claim this was one thing that hastened the "Removal." After the younger generation received an education they became smart men. They learned the game of "graft"; getting by at the expense of others. The

3

Ridges and the Boudinots were all smart men.

These young people becoming so smart and learning the game of graft was the cause of the Kee-Too-Wah organization. Some people claim that the said organization was a spirit or some Supreme Being that the Cherokees believed existed to protect them. Kee-Too-Wah is not a Cherokee word at all.

Many Cherokees teach that this word means a treaty.

It is not so. Mr. Hogner's mother was a niece of Alex Bigwolfe who came from North Carolina in 1837.

Mrs. Hogner was born just four years after the Cherokees came to this country. Mrs. Hogner's uncle, the said Bigwolfe, was a member of the Kee-Too-Wah organization. From this source, Glem Hogner states that this was just a name given to this society. The old Cherokees knew that the educated Cherokees were going to betray the tribe. So they formed this organization to protect their country. There was already much talk about moving the Cherokees to the Western country, and they knew that the younger men were not as honest as the older ones. The younger educated Cherokees and those who intermarried with the whites had increased to such an

4

extent that they almost outnumbered the fullbloods. Jealousy already existed among them. The older Cherokees hated the whites and the younger ones were intermarrying with them. So this organization was started. At first it was really a secret society. They met in the woods at mid-night. They stationed guards around their meetings, so no spy could hear of their plans. This was a political organization but there were not enough of those old timers to control the elections. So at the election preceding the removal, the mixed Cherokees were elected to the legislature to cause the removal.

All the relatives of the Ridge boys who signed the treaty were members of this organization. The Night Hawk and the Pen (Pin) Indians were a part of the said Kee-Too-Wah.

#### Night Hawks

This Night Hawk organization was started after the Cherokees came west. This was an organization consisting mostly of the uneducated Cherokees. It was started only by a very few men. The leaders of this organization told the unlearned Cherokees that they would get all their land back that they had sold in the east. Some believed, others did not.

To this day there are several hundred who still cling to that old belief. Their ceremonial grounds are located near Gore, Chewey, and another near Marble City. The leaders at Gore are the descendants of Redbird Smith and at Chewey, of Eli Pumpkin. It is not known who was the first to start this organization. After they had been wronged in the East by their own men, this organization and all its members promised never to agree to anything that a white man or an educated Cherokee had to offer. Until this day this bunch will not sign any papers unless their chief tells them to do so.

#### Pens (Pins)

This bunch thought that they had been wronged so much that a part of them organized what was known as Pen (Pia) Indians. This organization was an organization to kill all of the crooked Cherokees. This was a part of the Night Hawks. The Cherokees who did not think they would ever get back their land lost by the treaty did not join this organization.

The Night Hawks did not believe in education. They wanted to live like the old way as they did in the East. They still believe that way, and will live that way as long as any member of the old set lives.

The Night Hawks would not vote in the allotment election when the President of the United States allowed this law to be voted on by popular vote after the Council and Senate had passed it. This bunch, several thousand of them, said that the government agreed to never molest them any more. They would not take any part in the election and this caused defeat of the allotment law. The same thing happened in this country, the mixed bloods were the ones that caused this law to pass. At one time there was one fullblood white man in the Cherokee Nation legislature named Bill West, who now lives at Chewey, Oklahoma. West had married a quarter-blood Cherokee named Still. The Cherokee Legislature was composed mostly of white men when this law was passed.

#### Pea Indians (Pia)

This was an organization of Cherokees thought to be straight. They called themselves "Pia". The purpose of this was to hunt and kill the betrayers, of the Cherokees back in the East. At that time the Cherokees were straight people. If any crooked deal was made by any member of their tribe, they just killed him. The son of one of these Pea (Pia) Indians, who killed Major Ridge, is still living.