

LEWIS, S. R.

INTERVIEW.

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INTERVIEW WITH S. R. LEWIS
Tulsa Attorney
316 Alex, Bldg.

SECOND STREET CEMETERY

The four corners that mark the intersection of Frisco Avenue at Second Street occupy what was once the first cemetery of "Tulsey Town". The land for this first city cemetery was obtained from George Perryman about 1882. Perryman, leading Creek citizen, brother of Legus later chief of the Creeks, gave it as a burial ground under the only rights that he at that time had possessory rights.

For some reason, possibly "neglect of duty" on the part of city officials, the land was platted (Gus Patton, surveyor) into city lots as Tulsa expanded. Two squatters who had small shacks on part of the land claimed them as improvements and filed for possession. The court later recognized the claims and the land passed into private ownership.

In 1916 the city commission was petitioned to acquire the land for preservation. I drew up the petition, it still lies in the dusty records of a city hall storage vault unanswered. Forethought on the part of interested parties could have saved this sacred spot, proper filing before it fell into private ownership.

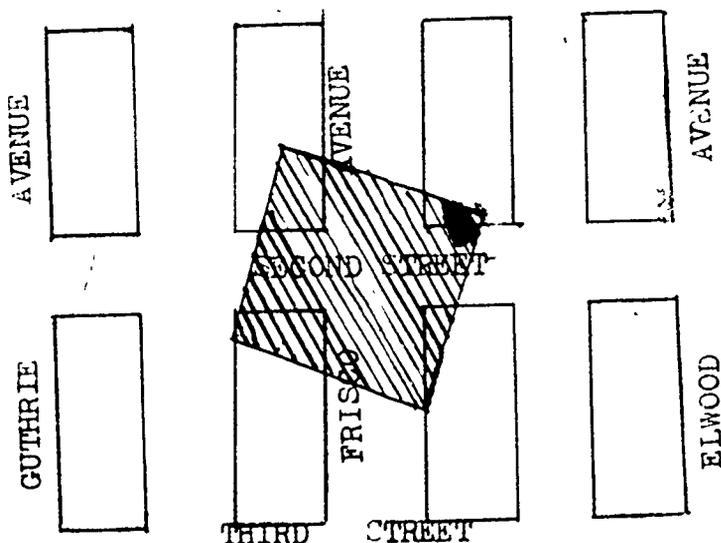
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At least two hundred bodies are buried there, possibly more. Many of them were people who had been actively identified with Tulsa's pioneer development. T. J. Archer, who built the first store, James Crutchfield, landowner and member of the Cherokee Council were interred there but later removed when the plot was abandoned. The first wife of T. E. Smiley, another pioneer, was buried there, but the body was later removed. Two United States deputy marshals, William Moody and Frank Sennett, killed in line of duty are buried there.

So "Tulsey Town's" first cemetery lies under the paved roadway squarely in the center of the busy intersection of Second Street at Frisco Avenue.

Note

Mr. S. R. Lewis was rather personal about this for his brother is buried there. Years later when he went to remove the body the marker had been lost. So was it with many graves.



The shaded area shows the location of Tulsa's first burial ground according to a survey made by J. Gus Patton on Sept. 18, 1915 and still on file in the city hall.

Effie S. Jackson
Interviewer,
August 5, 1937.

Interview with S. R. Lewis
314 Alexander Bldg.,
Tulsa, Oklahoma

The Keetoowah Society

The Keetoowah Society originated among the Cherokees possibly 200 years ago. The principle involved was to protect the rights and privileges of fullblood Cherokees against aggression from any source, especially to guard their political and civil rights. The origin of the work goes back to the early history of the Cherokees who called themselves the "kituwaha" meaning "Real people" or "principal people". They used this name especially on ceremonial occasions.

This genuine Cherokee feeling in its highest patriotic sense prevailed with the fullbloods especially at the time of the Removal. As political problems arose and seeming aggression of their rights took place, under the leadership of Reverend John B. Jones, son of the missionary, Evan Jones, an adopted citizen of the Cherokee Nation, this secret society was formally organized about 1859. The feeling between the Loyalists and Secessionists had much to do with it. The members of the Keetoowah were Loyalists. In fact they wore sort of an insignia—two pins crossed on the left coat lapel.

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For that reason they were often called "Pin Indians." They had secret signs and passwords.

This society was formed primarily to cultivate a national feeling among the fullbloods, and stressed patriotism. It is said to be the only lodge in ^{the} United States where the principal emblem is the United States flag. A sacred relic of the old organization is the historic "Keetoowah flag"- a flag of the Union which was presented to them early in the stirring days of the Civil War. Who the keeper of the relic ~~is~~ is not known at this time, but it is doubtless treasured in one of the old Indian homes in the mountains of eastern Oklahoma. Mr. Lewis said the last time he saw it was January 8, 1927, at Oklahoma City, carried in a parade by Price Cochran, President of the original Keetoowahs. Lewis thinks Price's widow has it if it is not in the possession of the State Historical Society. The Cochran address is Hulbert, Oklahoma. In describing the flag, Mr. Lewis said it was the national flag embroidered across in English "Friends of the Union", below that there were some Cherokee characters.

From the time of the organization of this society, while non-sectarian, the Baptists had the largest following in membership. Early in the history of the society Budd Gritts, a Baptist Minister and fullblood Cherokee, drafted a

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constitution and laws of government. Before the separation of the Keetoowahs into two factions, the Night Hawks and Original Keetoowahs, ^{they} numbered about 6,000. At first limited to fullbloods, after the War half-bloods and a few adopted citizens were taken in. There are about 3,000 members now.

The headquarters of the Night hawk Keetoowahs is the old council ground ten miles southeast of Gore. Here they meet annually on July 19th to relight their sacred fires and perform ceremonial rituals. The belief is that the sacred ashes were brought from the ancient council ground at the time of the Removal. These ashes were brought by the fire-carriers "Itsil-sunti", then the chosen fire-keepers kept the sacred ashes in the recesses of secret places until it was time to gather around the council fire again and renew the spirit of the Keetoowahs with firing the sacred ashes. This council ground is about one half mile southeast of Red Bird Smith's home. The ceremonial lasts twenty-four hours.

About 1895 Red Bird Smith, a noted leader, and his followers broke with the original society and formed a dissenting band known as the Night Hawks due to their constant perseverance. This band opposed allotment of the

Cherokee land and dissolution of Cherokee Tribal Government. He was Chief and leader of his people from 1908 until his death in 1918. He became more liberal in his views during his last years as indicated in his speeches.

The Original Keetoowahs were more conciliatory in their attitude toward the Government. Their leaders were Daniel Red Bird, Daniel Gritts and Dave Muskrat. They held their annual meetings near Chewey at Pumpkin Hollow. This is ten miles northeast of Proctor, named in honor of Eli Pumpkin, on whose land the dances are held and who for years has been a leader among his people and an interpreter. This place is about three miles north of Chewey, a settlement of about fifty people. The Cherokees prefer to call it Going-snake, named for one of the districts of the old Cherokee Nation in territorial days.

A narrow trail leads to the enclosure where the twenty-four hour ceremonial is held. This place is enclosed by hickory trees and the interior is almost hidden from the outside world. The day opens with the traditional baseball game (Indian ball). Adjoining the baseball field is the eternal fire around which the Indians perform their dances. To the beat of a tom tom and the voice of the braves and squaws, these men and women repeat the dances originated by

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their ancestors. To one side of the dancing arena is stacked a large pile of wood used to keep the fire burning throughout the night. The dance starts about 8:30 at night-begins in a slow walk around the blaze and becomes a faster pace that eventually develops into a race with each person waving his hands over his head and chanting some Indian chant. This goes on through the night until morning finds only the survival of the fittest. Three hours of speech-making by leaders of the clans precede the dancing. A similar ceremony is held by the Night Hawks at their annual conclave at Gore, Oklahoma. Mr. S. R. Lewis has been one of the speakers at this ceremonial.

Mr. S. R. Lewis has been a member of the Night Hawk Keetoowah for many years. According to Mr. Lewis, very few Tulsans belong to the society. W. Tate Brady and S. G. Maxfield, deceased, were members, George McCoy and J. G. Sanders are members, Dr. Paul Truett has recently been taken in as an adopted member.

Mr. Lewis makes this statement as to the service rendered by the Keetoowah societies: For eight years the two Keetoowah societies worked diligently and faithfully for approval and passage of an act of Congress giving unto the Chero-

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kees the right to file suit against the United States Government in the Court of Claims for any tribal claim that the Cherokees should have against the Federal Government growing out of treaty stipulations and acts of Congress. This jurisdiction bill was finally passed March 1924.

(As a member of the society-Night hawk branch-Mr. Lewis rendered legal aid.)