

INDEX CARDS

Perryman, uses
Choski bottoms
Slaves--Creek
Dyes--Creek
household Manufactures--Creek
Freighting
Civil War--Creek Nation
Frédnaen--Creek
Collections
Crist Hills--Muskogee
Sawmills--Creek Nation
Food--Creek
Pottery--Creek
Paint--Creek
Dances--Creek
Medicine Creek
Basketry--Creek
Cemeteries--Creek
Ranching--Creek Nation
Hotels--Creek Nation
Mercantile establishments--Creek Nation
Lee
Sawokla
Choski post
Turner, Clarence W.
Law enforcement--Creek
Courts--Creek
Green Beach war
Mounds
Snake Uprising
Capitols--Creek
Schools--Creek Nation

INTERVIEW WITH JOHN HARRISON (COLORED)

By

L. W. Wilson -----Field Worker.
Historical Indian Research Work.

John Harrison answered the questions asked and volunteered the following information.

I was born in 1857 on a plantation owned by Moses Perryman. This plantation was located near the present inland town of Clarksville, Oklahoma or about eight miles east of the present town of Haskell, Oklahoma and is known as the Choski bottoms.

Perryman was a Creek Indian and later his brother Joe Perryman became a Creek Chief of the Creek Nation. I now live near the present east city limits of Haskell, Oklahoma on the Haskell-Porter Oklahoma highway.

MOTHER ----- Katie Harrison was born in Georgia and was moved to Indian Territory as a slave in 1837, was sold on the block at a place unknown to me, shortly after her arrival from the old country (meaning Georgia). Mose Perryman bought Mother. She is buried at Yahola, Oklahoma.

FATHER ----- Harry Harrison was born in Georgia and came same time as mother in 1837. Perryman bought him and later sold him to a slave buyer just before the Civil War - took him away - and no one ever knew what become of him.

LIFE AND CUSTOMS BEFORE THE CIVIL WAR.

I don't know much about things before the War, only what Mother told me. She said she did not have to worry about food, clothing, medicines, etc., because her master cared well for all of them.

There was game of all kinds, squirrel, rabbits, wild turkeys, opossum, coon, quails, deer, etc.

The cabins on the plantation were constructed of logs - stood on end and some were laid horizontally with clap board roofs, puncheon floors, shuttle windows and large stone fire places.

The slaves were made to card the wool and cotton and would spin it on the spinning wheel into thread and then reel it and run it through the loom and make their own cloth. The thread was usually dyed before it was woven. The dye was made with sumac, and copperas which would make a very good tan. Indigo was purchased at trading posts and all shades of blue could be made. Sycamore and red oak bark would make a pink or red.

They made their own shoes on the plantation. A cow hide would be freed from hair by ashes and would be tanned with bark and from these cow hides shoes were made as well as pieces of harness. As there was no shoe nails, shoe pegs were whittled out and the soles were put on with these pegs. The rest of the shoes were sewed together with waxed thread attached to hog bristles and drawn through the hole that was made by the pegging awl.

The provisions for the plantation was hauled from Fort Gibson, Indian Territory, Fort Smith, Arkansas, and Coffeyville, Kansas, by freight wagons owned by Mose Perryman, who owned the plantation.

The cooking of their food was done in the fire place with pots, skillets, dutch ovens, etc. Other instruments about the fire place were fire dog, hooks, and tongs. Master Perryman had a cook stove in his home at this time, but like the slaves cooked their food in the fireplace a long time before the day of his cook stove.

There were all kinds of wild fruit and berries. Blackberries, dewberries, gooseberries,

strawberries, mulberries, grapes, cherries, and wild plum.

Wild game was in abundance. Wild turkey, quail, rabbit, squirrel, mink, muskrat, deer, wild pigeon, and some bear, and buffalo. The streams were full of fish.

There were plenty of nuts in the fall of the year. Hickory nuts, walnuts, and pecans.

Mother has told me that before the War that the people as a whole were living very comfortably and satisfied. The Indians, Creek Indians had intermarried with the white and colored and became citizens of the tribe and that they too were satisfied with the full blood in this new land of theirs.

CIVIL WAR

The slave owners which were practically all Indians or descendants of the Indians owned many slaves and naturally they were not interested in the War at its beginning. They did not care to take sides with either the North or South until the question of slavery arose. Most all of the slave

owners made a treaty with Albert Pike, Confederate Commissioner to fight with the South. This is also true of many of the full blood Creeks. There was a faction, however, that did not care to be bound to the treaty and sought to take refuge in Kansas and arranged to go there taking with them all of their possessions. Enroute to Kansas they were overtaken and attacked by the Confederates. They suffered a great loss at the hands of the Confederates, and they finished their trip into Kansas in a terrible storm in the dead of winter, sick, dying, and destitute. They were very angry at the Confederates and all of them enlisted in the Northern Army. There were some, however, who enlisted in the Northern Army that stayed at home and if I remember right they organized three regiments of the Creeks and they were stationed at Fort Gibson under the command of General Blunt. Those who joined the Confederacy were also organized into regiments and they were stationed in the Choctaw, and Chickasaw Nation at Fort Washita and at other Forts in that locality under

the command of Colonel D. H. Cooper and J. M. McIntosh.

Mother and I were taken to Fort Washita and finally to Texas and then returned to Indian Territory in 1866. I was about ten years old. The negroes were freed and mother knew nothing more to do than to return to the locality in the Indian Territory where she had lived. We finally got back to what is now Yahola, Oklahoma. I don't remember the road we traveled, but it must have been the old Arbuckle road. I remember mother and I walked across the prairie through the high grass and we came to the Bluford Miller ranch near the old trading post at Lee. Mother went to work there for Mr. Miller and I helped around the ranch as only a boy could do. We stayed there about five years and moved to the Creek Agency which was on the South side of Fern Mountain northwest of the present city of Muskogee, Oklahoma. I can't tell of any battles other than what I was told after I grew up, by my relatives. They have told me that the battle of Honey Spring which was located near the present town of Oktaha,

7

Oklahoma, was fought in mid summer - in July, and that the Northern Army whipped the Southern Army and drove them back into the wilderness of the North Canadian river. Many lives were lost on both sides. The battle lasted from the break of day until late that evening in July. If you will see my nephew, Jake Simmons, he has all the records and can tell you more about the battle on Elk Creek or Honey Spring. (See the interviewer's report on Jake Simmons.)

LIFE AND CUSTOMS BEFORE THE CIVIL WAR

All of the Nations of the Five Tribes suffered extensively account of the War. The Choctaw, and Chickasaw Nation suffered because it was in their Territory that the Confederate Army was quartered and lived during the life of the War and it was naturally a drain on the citizenship of those tribes. The Creek Nation suffered a great deal because most of the fighting and pilfering was done in the Creek Nation. Cabins were burned, horses and cattle were

driven off. Part of their land was taken away from them due to a conference held at Fort Smith, Arkansas in 1865, thus reducing the acreage. For my personal advantage, however, my folks who were slaves were freed, and more too, the slaves became citizens of the tribe and became ownership in the land as much as the Creek themselves and also, we enjoyed a part of the tribal fund.

It required a number of years for the people to reestablish themselves after the War because they had to go about building cabins, schools, and churches. In short, they had to do all over again what they had done before the war. They were benefited by the railroads being built through the Territory although many objected for fear it would prevent them from retaining their ranches intact. Wild Indians began to move in from Kansas, Nebraska, and Colorado. The Sac and Fox Indians came to the Creek Nation. Part of the Creek Nation had already been given to the Arapahoes on the extreme west of the originally Cherokee Nation. The Sac and Fox Indian later became citizens of the Nation. We

were surrounded by the Delawares, Shawnees, Osages, Quapaws, Senecas, and other small tribes in the Cherokee Nation with the Kiowas, Kickapoo, Cheyennes, Arapahoes, Comanches and other tribes to the south and west of us in the Choctaw, Seminole, and Chickasaw Nations.

There was a great deal of trouble existing at all times between these wild Indians and it became necessary for the Government to send troops into the Territory and rehabilitate their forts and make additional forts to house the troops so that they could handle these wild Indians from committing all kinds of lawlessness, not only between themselves but others who lived in the Territory. It required a number of attacks on these Indians by the troops driving them back to their own reservation but they at last made them understand that the Government really meant business and little trouble was experienced thereafter.

The country as a whole was of original virgin state except for clearings here and there.

Wild game, wild fruit, and berries, nuts and fish were as plentiful as they were before the war.

The population had not increased to the extent that these things would be destroyed or used.

Corn, Wheat, Oats, and Cotton were being raised. They raised some sheep and the cattle industry grew immensely. From the old mortar and pestle like the one I have shown you back by the side of the house in which we ground our corn and wheat, as they did before the war, came the hand grinders, horse power, and water mills to grind the grain. From cutting the grain with a scythe and cradle attached and threshing it out with frails and treading out with horses came the mowing machines, reapers, and binders to do the work.

I remember the first grist mill at Muskogee. It was located near the present site of the Selby Mills in Muskogee which is located between Callahan street and little Dayton street on North Cherokee St. It was owned by a man named Foreman. Mr. Foreman constructed a large tank or pond at what would be

now Commercial street, between North Second and Third streets in the city of Muskogee, Oklahoma, at the present site of the Swift Packing Company. From this pond he secured his water for the mill to operate. Later on he erected a cotton gin and one day the gin broke down. While he was working on it his arm got caught in the gin, seriously injuring it, and he sold out stock, lock and barrel and left for Texas.

A little north and west of the present Veteran's Hospital on Agency Hill was located a grist mill and saw mill owned and operated by an old German named Dresback. He also owned a saw mill at one time up on the Verdigris River.

* OVERLAND CATTLE TRADE.

Shortly after the war people in Texas who owned thousands of heads of cattle began driving them to the northern markets in Kansas, Missouri, and some as far as Illinois. The price of meat in the northern states was very high due to the scarcity of cattle. There were no railroads on

which the cattle could be shipped and they had no other alternative than to drive them through the country, and they chose to drive them through the Territory because the grass was abundant, namely Buffalo grass, sage grass and blue stem grass and more too there were a number of Creeks, Rivers, and streams where the cattle could secure water. This method of marketing cattle started in about 1871 and ceased in 1875. The cattle at first were driven straight through the country without delay and naturally when they reached the market they were poor and un-fit for human consumption. The owners of cattle thus driven suffered great losses and they would often arrive at Wichita, Kansas, or Albiene, Kansas with what is known as Texas fever and they would spread the disease among the native cattle of Kansas and the people began to criticize this method and would often cause their herds to stampede and often times would take some of the herders and hang them which naturally spread fear among the herders. They also lost many cattle on these drives which were an

profitable. I mean that they died enroute.

As this system proved to be so unprofitable they got the idea that they could start grazing them through slowly and they started this practice. From herds of fifty thousand head they continued increasing the herds until I would say before they ceased this practice that it had increased to five thousand head. This proved very profitable for the cattle gradually became acclimated and with the abundance of grass they would arrive at the Northern markets, fat and in the best of condition/ After the railroads were built this practice of grazing them through diminished and the railroad began to handle them to market.

CATTLE RANCHES IN OKLAHOMA.

After the railroads started operation, cattle were shipped to points in Oklahoma and placed on the open range. Were fattened, reloaded into freight cars, and then to the market. These Texas cattle were of all kinds and description and were of all colors. Some were the old long horn type and some

14

were Mexican type. In the early eighties ranches sprang up all over the Territory. They were no fences and the cattle grazed at will and naturally would mix and mingle into cattle on various ranches. I mean by that, that these ranches would over lap each other.

On each ranch was a number of buildings which consisted of the owners home if he lived at the ranch and if he did not, there was a house which the foreman and his family resided in, cook shack, bunk house, sheds, and coralls. The corall was used mostly for the branding of calves and yearlings.

The employees on the ranch consisted of foreman, herder, wrangler, and a group who would care for the salt licks and etc. The number of employees was of course according to the size of the ranch.

They would have round ups of cattle two or three times a year, at which time they would cut out all cattle that did not belong to them and drive them back to their home range.

The ranch hands as a rule were all jolly good fellows and enjoyed their work. Most of them despised

lawlessness in all its forms. Very few of them were educated but they were brave men and loved to play pranks on each other. They, as a rule, enjoyed a stomp dance with the Indians as much as did the Indians themselves.

OPENING OF LANDS TO WHITE SETTLERS.

Land was being opened all over the Territory to white settlers at various times but the two principal and major openings were the opening of the Oklahoma Country in 1889 and the opening of the Cherokee Strip in 1893. The settlers at these two openings had plenty of trouble in trying to make a living on the land but with perseverance and patience they succeeded. They had to construct themselves cabins, schools, dig wells, and start farming.

INDIAN CUSTOMS.

The Indians rations consisted of all kinds of wild game, corn bread, hominy gritts, and pork. They did their cooking in pots and skilletts on the open fire and fire place. Having all kinds of

wild fruits and berries they had what we called plenty of dessert. Many of the Indians made their dishes from clay like plates, cups, bowls, and etc, and from these they would eat their meals.

They painted their faces with a solution made from barks of trees. They would take bark and boil it down to a thick liquid and in this liquid they would stir a starch made from corn meal, and in some cases there was different colored rocks that were soft enough to rub on their faces.

Each year, usually in July they would have their annual stomp dances. At these stomp dances they would tie shells around their ankles and beat on a drum made from a cow hide and dance and sing. They would usually fast three days and then would take a medicine that would cause them to vomit, claiming that would cleanse their system and souls of all the impurities and then they would enjoy the roasted corn and barbecue that was in waiting for them.

They had medicine men which we would call doctors, that would administer to them in case of illness. These medicine men gathered all kinds of roots, herbs, and leaves, and prepared them into the form of medicine. They used what they called bone set, button snake roots, sassafras, butterfly root, golden rods, and etc.,.

The Indians naturally loved to make pretty things out of bark and clay. Out of clay they would make all kinds of beads. They would take the clay and roll it into little balls of all sizes and let them lay in the sun and dry. Of course, a hole would be punched through each bead so that they could string them and they were dyed with different solutions of bark in order to make them different colors. From bark they would make baskets of all sizes including the ladel and riddle through which they sifted their meal.

BURIAL GROUNDS

I knew a lot of burial grounds. I can't tell you how to get to them, however, I could take you to many of them. Every family had their own private

cemetery. You can easily locate the old cemetery where my mother is buried, at the present town of Yahola, Oklahoma. There is a number of old graves there. Yahola, after whom the town is named, is buried there.

RANCHES

As you are today interviewing Jake Simmons, I will not go into detail of the different ranches because he can give you those much better than I, but if you choose, I will name some of them for you and that will assist you in getting the details regarding them. The names of these ranches are as follows: Mose Perryman ranch, Rider Fields ranch, Dave Andersen ranch, Fort Sango ranch, A Choler Fife ranch, Dave Carr ranch, McDermott ranch, Judge M. B. Moore ranch, Billy Brown ranch, Bill Harvester ranch, George Martin ranch, Jeff Davis ranch, Nip Blackstone ranch, Ed Halsell ranch, Blue Starr ranch, Jim Edgewood ranch and Hector Perryman ranch.

FORDS AND FERRIES.

~~I will give you the names of the fords and~~
ferris which I call to memory and will also let Jake Simmons give you the details as we both know them in

the same way. These ferries are as follows:
The Mingo ferry, Gentry ferry, Googy Soogy
ferry, Fry ferry, Simon Brown ferry, and the
Tobe Drew ferry.

I cannot recall any particular Fords,
but I do remember of hearing Jake say there
was a ford across the north or south Canadian
River that they called Rock Ford.

FINANCING.

In the early days there were no banks in
the country and people had to do their banking
with the merchant. The first bank that I can
recall was in Muskogee Indian Territory and was
run by a man by the name of John Dill. It was
located on north Main street on the east side
of the street between Okmulgee and Broadway,
in the city of Muskogee, Oklahoma, and this
was in about 1888 and the next year what is now
the First National Bank and Trust Company of
~~Muskogee was organized.~~

GHOST TOWN

I told you in the beginning that I moved

to the old Creek Agency on the south side of Fern Mountain which is some three miles northwest of the present city of Muskogee, Oklahoma. When I first moved there it consisted of only two stores which were owned by two men by the names of Adkinson and Patterson. Later on two additional merchants came in but I do not remember their names. There was a hotel also that was run by a colored woman known to all as Big Sarah. She later moved to Muskogee. This was a thriving village after the war, and quite a few families lived there. I remember some of them as being Peter Stidham, Simon Brown, (Simon Brown operated the ferry) Joe Davis, Jess Franklin, Morris Stidham, Tobe McIntosh, Nap Wiseman, and their families together with many more. This village no longer exists.

Lee Post was about three miles north of the present town of Boynton, Oklahoma, on Cedar Creek. This village consisted of a store, Post office, Stage stand, Hotel, Creek Court House, and the whipping post. It no longer exists.

Sawokla was located about a mile south and a mile west of the present town of Haskell, Oklahoma and consisted of one store and the Post Office in connection. This store was first owned by a man by the name of Bradford and later by a man named E. B. Harris who is still living and runs a store at Haskell, Oklahoma. With the railroad coming through the country, the town of Haskell sprang up and the town of Sawokla passed out.

The Choski Post was located about two and one half mile east of the present town of Haskell, and consisted of a store run by C. W. Turner and there was also a post office in connection with this store. There was a hotel there and this building still stands and is being used as a farm house. Like Sawokla, this town passed out when Haskell sprang up. There was other places I know but I can't recall them ~~just~~ now. Maybe Jake will be able to help you.

INDIAN POLICE AND LAWS.

Each tribe had their own laws and Police.
In the Creek Nation they had an organization known

as the Light Horsemen. The Nation was divided into three districts and in each district was a Squad of Light Horsemen of five, and one of these five was the Captain. I recall some of them as being John Sixkiller, Wiley McIntosh, George McIntosh and John West.

The Judge of the Court was Judge Reed, a colored man and he held Court in the one room log cabin at Lee Post that I have spoken of as now being a ghost town. If the Light Horsemen picked up a prisoner for any offense he would be taken before Judge Reed. Minor offenses were usually paid out, but like stealing, or what we would call petit larceny, if found guilty would be sentenced to be whipped at the Whipping Post, for the first offense the prisoner would get twenty five lashes. For the second offense fifty lashes, and for the third offense he would be shot. For the crime of murder he was always shot. Yes, I remember some who were whipped to the post particularly one by the name of Charlie Adams and others

namely Sonny Grayson, Tom Canard and many others. There was one shot as I recall it for killing his wife or his neighbors wife I forget which, by the name of Jerry Stidham.

GREEN PEACH WAR.

The Green Peach War started as I recall it in 1882 and was not settled until the summer of 1884. This war started due to an entanglement between the Ischarsphieche and the Checotah factions. An election was held in 1882 and the result of that election was that Ischarsphieche was defeated for Creek Chief and he enlisted forces against the Checotah faction as he did not want to permit Checotah to take charge of the Creek Nation. They were Hundreds of men lined up on both sides and I believe their first squirmish was near the present town of Taft, Oklahom.a, and another near the present town of Yahola, Oklahoma. They continued fighting at intervals until in the late Fall of 1882, when Ischarsphieche ^{agreed} through his spokesman Lee Perryman to quit the rebellion.

At this point things rather quieted down but Ischaspieche went to Okmulgee, Indian Territory and met one of his bosom friends, "Sleeping Rabbit" and they ^{reorganized} ~~reorganized~~ and again met the Checotah Army southwest of Okmulgee and a number were killed on both sides including "Sleeping Rabbit." Ischaspieche retreated into the Sac and Fox country and finally into the Cheyenne country where he and his organization were taken captive by the troops from Fort Gibson and held prisoners at Fort Gibson until a treaty was signed by Ischaspieche. I went with them to Fort Gibson - but I will let Jake tell you more of this for he was active with the Ischaspieche faction.

INDIAN MOUNDS

There is a number of Indian mounds in the vicinity of the present Bald Hill, Oklahoma, Council Hill, Oklahoma, Summitt, Oklahoma, and about 4 miles northeast of Muskogee, Oklahoma.

ROADS AND TRAILS.

I will also leave the roads and trails of which

I know to Jake, to give you the details and will only name them here. The Texas Road, The Chisolm Trail, The Arbuckle Road, and the Old Stage Route.

THE CRAZY SNAKE REBELLION

The Crazy Snake Rebellion happened only a few years ago. The reason they called it Crazy Snake was because an old Indian by the name of Chitto Harjo was called crazy for his activities. He went about the country soliciting funds for the purpose of employing lawyers to defend what he called the Indian rights on account of certain treaties and that it was a violation for the Territory to become a state and some of the Indians were crazy enough to believe him. While in fact it was just a get rich quick scheme with Chitto, and of course, the law stepped in and took a hand and possibly one or two of the officers and a like number of the Indians were killed, but Chitto was arrested and things quieted down and they let him go.

OUTLAWS.

I knew quite a number of the outlaws. The James boys, The Dalton Boys, Cherokee Bill, The Buck

Gang, Verdigris Kid, and a number of others, and could tell many episodes in which they figure but will leave this to someone else to tell.

CREEKS CHIEFS.

I can't recall all the Chief's, but I will say that I do remember Ischarspieche, Sam Checoteh, Joe Perryman, Legas Perryman, Pleas Porter, Moty Tiger, and Lojo Harjo.

RAILROADS.

The following railroads were built through the Territory: The M. K. & T. in 1871-2-3- The Sante Fe through the Oklahoma County in 1886. The Midland Valley Railroad in 1904, and the K. O. & G. from Miami, Indian Territory, to Dennison, Texas, on 1906-7-8.

CREEK COUNCIL HOUSES

Before the Civil War the High Spring Court House was located at what is known as Council Hill, Oklahoma. The Council House was built of logs and was a double log house.

After the War, the Creek Council House was built at the present town of Okmulgee, Oklahoma, and it was of stone construction and is still standing today.

MISSIONS

The Wealaka Mission was located near the present town of Leonard, Oklahoma, and was of brick construction.

The Pecan Mission was located on Pecan Creek about seven miles west of the present town of Muskogee, Oklahoma.

The Creek School was located at the present town of Sapulpa, Oklahoma.

The Creek Orphanage was located and is still standing at the Northeastern city limits of the present town of Okmulgee, Oklahoma.

The Asberry Mission was located at the present town of Eufaula, Oklahoma.

The Boy's Seminary in the Cherokee Nation was located one and one-half miles south of the present town of Tahlequah, Oklahoma.

The Female Seminary in the Cherokee Nation

now the North Eastern Teacher's College, is located at the north end of Main street, in Tahlequah, Oklahoma.

The Park Hill Mission was located at about the present location of the village of Park Hill, Oklahoma.

COMMENTS

John Harrison is a character all within himself. He is very supple, being a man of his age, and he does not seem to be any the worse for his laboring and striving to make the country in which we live today the country that it is, with its towering churches and magnificent schools.

He enjoys meeting his old friends and relatives and talking of the happy days as well as those of lean times with his friends, and really gets more pleasure out of it than most any one you can meet and talk to.

John is an Uncle of Jake Simmons and they have lived the greater part of their lives together, and he feels a hesitancy in giving informa-

tion and date unless he has his nephew Jake
Simmons to corroborate his saying and acts.

In order to get the results of this
interview it will become necessary to handle
in connection therewith the interview of Jake
Simmons.