

THOMPSON, WILBURN

INTERVIEW

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Interview with Wilburn Thompson
Bruno, Oklahoma
An aged Choctaw Indian.

Interviewer - Pete W. Cole
Indian-Pioneer History, S-149
October 12, 1937

There was no settlement in Atoka County, then Indian Territory, in 1894. The country was in its wild. Wild games was plentiful and there was nothing to disturb them of their range; tall trees abundant, the land rich in soil, and hungry for improvement, now and then a small settlement of Indians pitched their tepees on some river or creek banks where they made this their home.

It is to be assumed that before the migration of Choctaws from Mississippi to this country, they would wander away from home and proceed west not knowing their destination on a big hunt. They would journey on until they came this far and farther west to see the country and its games. They would see the country and looks and outlay and this was nothing new to them when the United States Government undertook to have them move to this country under treaty and agreements

when they came to this country.

It is to be understood and it is a matter of history that these tribes of Indians are natural born hunters. This was their chief source of making a living. While the Mother and children would remain at their tepees and plant and raise corn, sweet potatoes, pumpkins and other garden vegetables as this was their chief source of food. It is to be assumed that the women alone did not do all of the work as we hear and read about but that the men helped cultivate the soil and grew small crops, chief of which was corn, though they also grew tobacco, beans, melons, while some of the men and women knew the medicinal value of herbs which they used in curing the sick.

In their daily life, work was divided between the men and the women. The men hunted and brought in the large game, were ever ready to protect the women and children, and to make war upon their enemies. These pursuits generally took all of their time and were

hardly seen at home and it was at these times that the women had to do the work when it was thought and classed as the Indian women had to do all the work while the men spent their time at leisure in hunting and fishing. Men helped erect the lodges and dwellings, and also assisted the women in other works, although he thought that the seeds and plants would grow better if the women tended them, this work ^{was} usually left the women to do. ~~They also took care of the food made the~~
clothing, and looked after the tasks of the household.

They usually pitched their tents or built a log house on some running stream where there is plenty of water, and that this would be their home as long as they care to live there. In this county where they used to live and had a large colony there is one location that a man by the name of "Betepa" who lived near a live stream that was afterward named Potapo Creek. This creek was named after Betepa, a man who used to live on this creek. While there is another creek named Buck Creek. The Indian name is Lapita, a

Choctaw word for buck or Buck Creek (Lapita Bok) which of course was named after wild deer that ranged on this creek.

There is McGee Creek which is in this county named after Charles McGee who lived at one time on the bank of this creek where it derived its name. He was a farmer and had a large farm where he worked every spring on this rich bottom land that he had several hundred bushels of corn, Irish and sweet potatoes that he raised every year off this place. And there is Campbell Creek also named after a man who once lived on the bank of this little stream. He was a great hunter as there was plenty of deer roaming throughout the country that he enjoyed killing them although he did not kill them for sport.

These are some of the creeks and live streams of this county that was at one time a handy place for one to live and enjoyed his freedom by hunting and fishing or make a small patch of tomfulla field and raised sweet potatoes, Indian corn, beans and other vegetables that was necessary to life.

(Note: Pete W. Cole's manuscripts are not edited, being typically Indian. Ed.)