

TIGER, REUBEN

INTERVIEW

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A BALL GAME FIGHT

An interview of Reuben Tiger, age 50,
Hillabee town (tulwa), Creek and Cherokee,
Oklahoma, Oklahoma, Oklahoma

Billie Byrd, Field Worker
Indian-Pioneer History
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As a small boy I remembered a little of and have often heard talk of the ball game fight that occurred between Eufaula and Arbeka tribes (tulwas) along in 1889 or 1890. The game was explained to me later and I came to understand it, but I was told that this was the second biggest game and fight that had ever been staged in the Muskogee-Creek nation.

The scene of the ball game was about twelve miles northeast of Hanna, Oklahoma, and about two miles north of where old David Cummings lived, a Civil War veteran who served in the Union Army, but the exact spot is not known.

Usually the ball is tossed up between the opposing sides at a designated center of the ball game field which is usually a distance of about fifty yards from each goal. Eufaula and Arbeka at this time were

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not on friendly terms with one another as they were not brother or close towns (tulwas).

It was the established rule that if a fight resulted in the course of the game and one side or town was pushed beyond the goal, the town so forced beyond the field was classed as being the losers. The ones inside the field were the declared winners.

Arbeka town, in this instance, was forced to retreat behind the game field lines and were forced to flee. Only one man out of the Arbeka-town chose to stand at his post and shouted, "Arbeka is not whipped yet." This man was Dunny McIntosh, now deceased, who in his lifetime in the later years was a well-known religious worker in the Baptist churches among the Musto-see-Creeks.

The Eufaula town members on the field knocked the ball sticks out of McIntosh's hands and began to beat upon him. Even during this treatment McIntosh remarked, "You might kill me but you can't eat me."

When the Eufaula tribe saw that this particular man would not accept defeat, they ceased beating on him and began to shake hands with him saying, "We

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have had many fights on the ball field, but we have never met a braver Indian or a more fighting Indian before."

It was at this time, that the members of the Arbera town, who had been forced to flee, returned to the ball game field and began to shake hands with the members of the opposing Eufaula town.

The two towns (tulwas) declared to one another, "As long as we exist as towns we shall always be friends." More handshakes followed.

Each town used sixty men on their sides and two men were killed in the fight that resulted.