

ROSS, ELIZABETH

CHESTER HUNTING SLIP

7597

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THE CHEROKEE HUNTING SHIRT.

September 17, 1937

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## THE CHEROKEE HUNTING SHIRT.

The Cherokee hunting shirt, so-called, was not a shirt, but really a loose sack coat. Those worn in mild weather were sometimes longer than others and their resemblance to a shirt may have been responsible for the erroneous term.

The fullblood Cherokees, and some of the half-breeds, wore the hunting shirts during a number of decades. Cherokee women learned how to spin and weave in the original Cherokee country beyond the Mississippi river, long before the removal to Indian Territory. In the new nation the number of spinners and weavers was increased. Sheep were raised in considerable numbers and most of the household clothing was made in the homes.

The woolen hunting shirts were usually a rather bright color, dyed by the women, who also were the cutters, fitters and makers of apparel worn by the men. Often the hunting shirts were striped in two colors. Some

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were equipped with wide collars of black velvet, while the outer edges of others were ornamented with small beads. Many were trimmed with a fringe made of yarn, usually of the colors used in the coat. These bright colored hunting shirts and the homespun trousers of the men, which were almost invariably dyed a deep blue, constituted the national costume in periods before the outbreak of the Civil War and to some extent thereafter for several years.

Many members of the National Council arrived at Tahlequah, during the legislative sessions, dressed in their best hunting shirts and trousers. Many of their countrymen visited the capital when the council was in session. At such times the streets and the square surrounding the capital were colorful, the costumes of the natives standing out in striking contrast to the somber black suits worn by a number of the officials of the nation, some of whom were of more white than Indian blood.

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The only portrait ever painted of Sequoyah, the Cherokee letter giver, shows him wearing a hunting shirt, likewise a turban on his head. There were many in the early days, who wore large, bright hued handkerchiefs as turbans in the summer time and small shawls for the same purpose in the winter season.

When George Catlin, painter of western characters and scenes, was at Fort Gibson in 1834 he completed a portrait of Tah-chee, or William Dutch, a noted character of that period. Dutch was depicted as wearing a gorgeously colored hunting shirt and turban, in which was thrust a plume.

Until recent years, a few aged women were still living in the hill country; who it was said were capable makers of hunting shirts; but the looms had been practically forsaken and very little of the cloth from which the garments were once fashioned was to be found. In these days (1937) a few old and long unused hunting

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shirts could possibly be found.

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