

CARNES, LYMON.

INTERVIEW

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INTERVIEW.

13010. 20  
67

Pete W. Cole,  
Investigator,  
Feb. 23, 1938.

An Interview With Lymon Carnes,  
Aged 65, Bentley, Oklahoma.

PECULIAR CUSTOMS OF  
ANCIENT CHOCTAWS.

Lymon Carnes, a full-blood Choctaw of near Bentley, Oklahoma, is 65 years of age, born and raised in Indian Territory, now Oklahoma, and not an immigrant of the State of Mississippi, of his experience in the days of his youth among his own tribe of people and of what he has seen and been told says:

One of the peculiar customs among the ancient Choctaws which dates as far back that year is unknown, which according to tradition, in this case is as follows. When a daughter is married, the mother-in-law was forbidden to look upon her son-in-law. They may converse together but the mother-in-law would be hidden behind some screen, hold a wide handkerchief or cloth over her face or if nothing else can be used, she covered her eyes with her hands. Thus the mother-in-law was put to infinite trouble and vexation least she should make an infraction upon the strange custom. Often when traveling or in camp without tents, they were necessarily

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afraid to raise their heads, or open their eyes through fear of seeing each other. Often when the son-in-law be away from home, the mother-in-law and the rest of the family would be in the house, and if the son-in-law would approach the house the mother-in-law would run out of the house with her face covered or into another room and remain. The son-in-law would not go into the room where she is, or she where the man is. If nothing can be used or offered she would shut her eyes while talking to the son-in-law. Another peculiarity they possessed in common with other tribes was that a wife never called her husband by name, son-in-law or daughter-in-law. In addressing her husband she would say, "My son or daughter's father", or more commonly using the child's name, or if no children in the family she addresses him as "Is to be father" or Shak-bi-chin. Another oddity about these Choctaws in regard to their names was that they would not tell their names. The ancient warriors seemed to have a strange aversion to telling their own names and it was impossible to get it unless he had an acquaintance present whom he requested to tell it for him. Usually the prefix of their name was Abi (to kill) with some suitable

name affixed of surname, viz; Nowabi (walker or walk to death), Nak-shobin (name of a river meaning offensive odor), Mississippi River, the great river, is supposed to be a Choctaw word for Bok chito or Huchcha. Chitoh or Huchcha Misha Sipokni (a river whose age is beyond computation). Arkansas River (bow on smoky water) in Choctaw language. Sho-bo-ta Chass-a-la (smoking water bow i.e. bow on foggy lake). The Chickasaw name for Mississippi River, the traditional name, was O-ka-chash-po-hosh (the ancient waters).

Nearly every river, creek, lake, rock, hill and vale was endeared to them by a name given to it from some peculiarity, some adventure of the past. Many of those names are now corrupted by the whites and only a few if any has retained their original purity.