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MEKKO HUTKI

An interview with Lucy Dunson,
age 62, Creek, Thlopthlocco
Tribe (tulwa), 10 miles south-
west of Okemah, Oklahoma

Billie Byrd, Field Worker
Indian-pioneer History
6-14-37

When the settlements were being established, there were such leaders as Mekko Hutki of Eufaula town (tulwa) and he was well-known as Eufaula Mekko (chief) among the Indians of the Eufaula vicinity. Mekko Hutki was a spokesman and interpreter and had been since the first days of removal of Muskogee-Creeks from Alabama. Another well-known Indian of that time was Timaya Cornell, a close relation of Mekko Hutki. Mekko Hutki was my great grandfather.

The promise that was spoken by the white man to the Muskogee-Creek Indians was engraved on a silver disc of about four inches in diameter. This promise was regarding the lands of the Indian Territory-- "as long as the grass grows and the waters flow-- with other promises, this new land was to forever

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to the Indians. This silver symbol was given to Opotheleyahola, then a great leader of the Muskogee Indians.

Opotheleyahola in his old age had become a feeble man. He gave my father, Thomas Canard, the silver symbol and also five dollars, perhaps payment for the trust. On the death of my father and mother, Jeff Canard, my brother now deceased, became the holder of the symbol. This symbol was in the family for a long time but was stolen from the home of my brother. He knew who had taken the symbol but he never took steps to recover it until he was too ill to try to do anything. From my brother, I learned who had it, but to this day I would not tell the name of the person.

Lucy Dunson is a sister of the present principal chief of the Muskogee-Creek Nation, Holey Canard of Wetumka, Oklahoma

REMOVAL

Melissa Bird, an old woman of the Eufaula town (tulwa), has often talked of the life and incidents occurring in the Muskogee-Creek Indian removal from the old country of Alabama to the Indian Territory.

Prior to the beginning of the move, the Indians had already begun the holding of religious services at night. They were told of old Jerusalem.

When the move was finally begun a group of the Muskogee-Creek Indians arrived at the Mississippi River. There was a log building on the banks of the river wherein some Indians were holding religious meetings. The inside of the log house was covered with red clay and the Indians of the vicinity wore kerchiefs around their heads, long shirts and leggings.

It was in the Mississippi river, known as the Wewogufkee Thakko (Big muddy Waters) in the Muskogee Creek language, that one of the ships with a load of the Muskogee-Creek Indians was wrecked. Although many perished, a few were saved or swam to shore. Many of the dead bodies were taken from the river and given burial on the west banks of the great river. Search was carried on for several days for other lost bodies yet a number were never found or recovered.

Even after the mishap on the waters, the religious meetings at night were still carried on. The Indians were given food as if they were catted. Rations were given out according to the number in a family as only families were allowed to eat together.

Often a person became too weak and too ill to go any further but they were shoved on, kicked and commanded to proceed on. Even the expectant mothers were shown no mercy and received the same kind of treatment as the others.

It became known that Samuel Checotah was the first Indian to become a Christian--He was the first man, probably, then to be sprinkled with water on this side of the Mississippi river. (This Samuel Checotah is probably the same man that served as principal chief of the Muskogee-Creek Nation one time) The name of the minister conducting the ceremony was never learned.