

EVANS, MARY FUSWA

INTERVIEW

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Interviews with the following:

Mary Fuswa Evans-2 miles west of Sand Springs.
Paul Pinkerton-Atty. Sand Springs Home Interests.
Frank B. Long-Indian Agt. 1909-1912-V.Pres.Oklahoma Natural Gas Company, Tulsa, Oklahoma (1937).
B. F. Breeding-Supt. Sand Springs Home, Sand Springs.
Lilah D. Lindsey-D. A. R. representative, 516 North Frisco, Tulsa.
Field Worker, Effie S. Jackson
August 5, 1937.

Located south of the Sand Springs Greenhouses (U.S.Hwy. 64) on the Thomas Adams allotment, more particularly described as a tract of land containing about one and a half acres of ground in the NE corner of the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of the SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of the SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 12, Township 19 N, Range 11 East; Tulsa County, is an abandoned Indian cemetery. This allotment was purchased by Charles Page in 1908 to become the basis of the Sand Springs Home Interests. This bit of a cemetery with its few marked graves and shelter houses is all that is left of what was once a flourishing Indian settlement along the trail of springs. Legend has it 100 years old, fact seemingly cannot establish its age.

According to Mary Martin Fuswa (now Mrs. Newt Evans) the Adams family settlement of Creek Indians along the springs and on the land adjoining now held by the Page interests was the Anglicised name of the

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Harjo and Emarthla families who lived in that vicinity before the war. Mary Martin Fuswa (53) daughter of Fuswa-thlocco (Big Bird) and Selma Harjo says she is the only remaining heir to the Adams' land and records at the Sand Springs office of the Page Interests bear her out.

Mr. B. F. Breeding--superintendent of the Sand Springs Home--said that thirty years ago he employed an old squaw man named Wright who told him, "Thirty-five years ago I hunted deer and elk and bear up and down the valley here. There was an Indian settlement here at that time called the Adams' community." Mr. Breeding recalls that thirty years ago when he first saw this Indian cemetery there were possibly 100 graves--about 50 of them covered with cedar shelter-houses. (They look like small shingled houses about $2\frac{1}{2}$ ft. high--running the length of the grave). Grass fires has destroyed all of them but two. As for the Adams community most of them fell victims to tuberculosis.

In an interview Frank B. Long--now vice-president of the Oklahoma Natural Gas Company, Tulsa--

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formerly District Indian (Oil) Agent--said that his information was that the springs area (now Sand Springs) appeared in early times to these full-blood Creeks as a desirable place to live. That they were there before the war--possibly from the time of the removal (though no record). They were Loyalist Creeks--one of them captain of the light-horse. They had no christian names--just Colonel Adams, Lieutenant Adams, etc.

I talked with Mary Fuswa Evans--she lives west of Sand Springs two miles--south $\frac{1}{2}$ mile. Her husband, Newt Evans, a half-blood Creek, acted as interpreter.

Mary said, "I am the last of my people--the Big Birds and Harjos (she has a son, Woodrow--14). It seems to me I have heard my people say that before the Big War (Civil War) there was a Cherokee cemetery where this Creek cemetery is today. The Cherokees gave an area of the ground to their neighbors,

the Creeks, with the understanding that the Creek cemetery should be separated by a few feet from their own. After the Civil War small-pox invaded the camp of the Cherokees--the few who were left moved to the Tahlequah country of the Cherokees. (This statement of Mary's seems to be legendary). S. R. Lewis, who is considered an authority on Cherokee history, says there is no record to bear this out, that the Cherokee Nation was six miles away and had their own burial grounds. Frank B. Long, District Indian (Oil) Agent (1909-12) says that he has found no proof of Cherokee settlement in that district. A similar statement was made by Paul Pinkerton, present Attorney for the Sand Springs Home Interests).

To go on with Mary's story as interpreted by her husband, Newt Evans, she said that this group, Adams family community, of Creek Indians continued to bury their departed ones in the "este hopelpuer" of their forefathers. (Dave Beavers, a full-blood Creek, former interpreter for Frank B. Long, says

that this Creek group of Indians was always called the "Elepetas" group. That name appears frequently in the attached list of the dead buried in this cemetery). Shelters of cedar, used to protect the dead, were in time destroyed by fire; mounds became leveled and finally only a field of high grass marked the place. Industrial activity had crowded in with its approaching factory sites.

Then it was in 1918 or thereabouts that Mary went to Charles Page or "Uncle Charlie" as she called him and through an interpreter asked to buy the land. She told him that her father--Fuswa-thlocco (Big Bird), her mother, Selma Harjo, her only brother, Seeba Harjo, as well as all her kinsfolk were buried there. She wanted the land so she could care for it. Mary said that "Uncle Charlie" told her, "No, Mary, I will not sell you the land, but I will see that it is always taken care of."

The cemetery was cleaned up--an iron fence was put around it. An old log cabin that had been the

home of Mollayar (Harjo) Adams, who moved when the cotton mill was put up--was placed on a knoll on the southeast corner of this Indian cemetery. Mary said that Page also promised that when she died he would place her in a vault under this cabin--the cabin to be a sort of a memorial to the Indians buried there. In a glass case in this cabin was to be placed an inscription in Creek with a translation in English to accompany it. Also, a list of Indians buried there was to be placed in the case. According to Mary, Page had her write out the inscription in Creek which she wished to have placed in the case. He also had a list of the names of the Indians buried in the cemetery compiled. (List attached was given to field-worker by Mrs. Josephine Hughes--secretary to President Monsell, of the Sand Springs Home Interests. Mrs. Hughes copied the list from the original which is in the files of the Sand Springs Home Interests--Page Bldg., Sand Springs).

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Charles Page died in 1926. Then the Daughters of the American Revolution assumed some responsibility. They put up a sand stone monument (boulder) about three feet high topped with a bronze plaque about 12 x 18 inches--with the following inscription:

OLD INDIAN

CEMETERY

MARKED BY

TULSA CHAPTER DAUGHTERS OF

THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

COMMENTS

By Field Worker.

I visited the Creek Indian cemetery on the Sand Springs road, United States Highway 64 - six miles west of Tulsa--July 26, 1937.

After stepping from the pavement of the highway, and crossing a small ditch I crawled under a barbed wire fence and walked about 50 feet across a plowed

field to a triangular bit of ground enclosed by an iron fence. It was sort of an oasis of green in a large plowed area. This triangular space--an old abandoned Creek cemetery--covered about one and a half acres. It had been overgrown with weeds--just recently cut. Here and there a head stone, some fallen, some falling; all told, I found but eleven graves that could be identified as such. Of these but four bore any inscription.

The two graves under protection of fast decaying cedar shelters bore marble markers at the foot with the single letter -- E --; at the head of each, neat tombstones--marked simply--EMARTHALA--. The only other markers with inscriptions were:

EMARTHALA---1856-1910
SEEBA RAKKO---1911--66 years of age.
LIEUTENANT ADAMS---1886-65 years.
(G.A.R. emblem)

The little old log cabin, falling into ruins, rests without a foundation on a knoll, the rest of the plot sloping to the northwest. Large walnut and pecan trees lend protecting shade. A huge up-rooted stump--ancient in appearance--lends a primitive

touch. Near the gate lay a symbol of man's possessions--an old boundary marker--its rusty two foot iron pipe imbedded firmly in its heavy concrete base--but as if in derision of man-made rule--it lay unearthed, though firm and intact.