

ROSS, ELIZABETH

MEDICINE SPRINGS.

#6188

232

Medicinal Springs,
of
Northeast Oklahoma.
by
Elizabeth Ross, Field Worker

Older people related in bygone years some interesting stories concerning medicinal springs.

Before the beginning of the Civil War period, a number of persons visited some of the springs during the summer season, camping in the vicinity. Much benefit was said to have been derived from using the water. Among the springs, which were to be found in several of the Cherokee districts, those frequently mentioned in the Tahlequah district were the Oil Spring, the Elk Creek Spring, the Chalybeate Spring, and the Tahlequah Spring.

The Oil Spring, with a thin film of oil on its surface, was discovered in early days and during many years wonderful cures were alleged to have resulted from use of its waters. There were times when persons who visited the spring with intention of drinking the water for some days found it impossible to take their contemplated treatments, because there were so many others on hand for similar purpose that there was not sufficient water to supply the demand.

-2-

The spring, rather small, sent forth a comparatively small flow of water and many were disappointed. In these days very little is heard of the Oil Spring, which is usually erroneously referred to as the Oil Springs. This Spring is northeast of Tahlequah in the hills.

The Elk Creek Spring, in the southeastern section of Cherokee county, is situated in the center of the stream and in time of normal current is not to be reached. When the creek is low or partly dried in the midsummer time, the spring is accessible. The water is impregnated with sulphur, and in past years was visited by numbers of people seeking relief from various maladies. The hill country in which the spring is situated is rugged and was long isolated.

The Chalybeate Spring, southwest of the Sequoyah Training School at a distance of several miles, was often visited in bygone years. Some of the people spent days and weeks at the Spring, realizing, they

-3-

said, great benefit. Weak and sore eyes were often cured, it has been said, and stomach ailments relieved. This Spring is now seldom mentioned.

Near the base of the rocky bluff overlooking Tahlequah from the east, and nearly on a level with the nearby stream that flows from the large springs here and there below the bluff, there was some years ago a small spring which was reputed to be highly medicinal. Wonderful cures of inflamed eyes were said to have resulted from use of its waters, besides other ailments. Mention of the spring was made in the columns of the old "Cherokee Advocate", and possibly in the "Telephone", (another newspaper of Tahlequah) and the fame of the spring was spread abroad by people from various sections. But in course of time high waters in the Tahlequah branch filled the spring with gravel, and it has been completely buried for a number of years. It could be restored, but no action in that direction has ever been taken. The waters of this spring contained sulphur to a large extent.