

ROSS, ELIZABETH CONVENTION GROUND

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Convention Ground.

During a number of years the Annual Convention of the National Party of the Cherokee Nation was held some seven miles north of Tahlequah, in the vicinity of the present hamlet of Moody, (incorrectly spelled in these days "Moody's"). One William Moody once lived in the section; hence the name.

The scene of the convention was in a beautiful grove of oaks, near the center of which a fine spring welled up from the depths of the earth. This spring was widely known as the "Bug Tucker Spring", as Bug Tucker, once of some degree of influence among the native Cherokee Indians, lived a short distance from the spring.

"The Rituwa", said Johnson Simons, a prominent Cherokee years ago, "is the National Party". That is, the party was originally composed of members of the noted Kee-too-wah society. Adherents to the Union in the Civil War period, more than three thousand Cherokees serving in the Union Indian Brigade. The members of this historic organization were to be seen in considerable numbers during some years following the close of the Civil conflict.

The organizers of the Kee-too-wah society, in 1857, through the first Head Captain, Budd Gritts, (later a

Captain of one of the Cherokee Companies in the Civil War), decreed that an Annual Convention be held somewhere at a convenient distance from Tahlequah, the Capital.

Such conventions were always held early in August, and because of the deep and abundant shade and the cold and clear waters the site chosen near Bug Tucker's home was long utilized.

Matters of importance relating to the welfare of the Cherokee Nation, and to the interests of the native people were thoroughly discussed during the several days the Convention was held. A speaker's stand was provided, above which floated on a tall pole the flag of the United States.

In the afternoons there was usually preaching and singing in the Cherokee language. The mornings were devoted to consultations and there were speeches by leaders of the period.

Several thousand people were usually present at the conventions in the period of the early and mid-seventies of the last century. The largest number is said to have been seven thousand, including men, women and children.

Barbecued meats were provided in abundance, with fish and fowls, together with a variety of edibles and big

kettles full of black coffee. Wild game was plentiful;

there were fat steers and hogs in large numbers, and fruits and vegetables were brought by the wagon load.

"A good time was had by all", and good order was maintained. But with the passage of time and changing conditions, the number of persons attending the conventions dwindled. Members of older generations vanished from life, and finally not more than two days were devoted to affairs of the people and nation.

In August, 1896, serious trouble arose while the convention was in progress. In an altercation two men were shot and killed and another badly wounded. Old

Bug Tucker, Civil War veteran, died after a period of severe illness and finally the place of holding the convention was changed. The later site was in a woodland near a spring.

Authority: Johnson Simmons, once Speaker of the National Council, and a member of the National Party; recollections of various oldtime citizens.
