

Chief Big Tree Dies at Anadarko.

The following article from The Daily Oklahoman, regarding the death of Chief Big Tree, one of the first Indians to be tried in civil courts is reprinted herewith:

The death of Chief Big Tree on November 13 marked the passing of the last of the old Indian warriors, and recalls one of the most thrilling incidents in Indian history of western Oklahoma.

Having been made a war chief of the Kiowa tribe while a young man, Big Tree participated in many plundering expeditions and massacres before the warlike tribes of the plains were finally suppressed and induced to live peaceably on reservations. For his part as one of the leaders in the capture of a government wagon train near Fort Richardson, Texas, in which the train-master and six teamsters were killed, Big Tree was arrested together with Satanta and Satank, two of the most merciless war chiefs in the entire Indian country. Satank was shot by soldiers who were escorting the prisoners to Texas when he attacked them with a large knife. Satanta and Big Tree were convicted in Texas courts and sentenced to be hung, which was later commuted to life imprisonment.

In November, 1871, however, President Grant presented their case to the Texas governor who released them on parole in 1873. Satanta broke his parole and was returned to the penitentiary where he committed suicide. Since Big Tree was only a young man, it was believed that he could be saved by keeping him busy in worthwhile peaceful duties. He was put in charge of the supply train from Wichita and other Kansas points to the Indian agency, which is now located at Anadarko, and never broke his parole. Later he was a leader in asking for a missionary to his people and assisted in the establishment of the first mission, now known as Rainy Mountain Indian mission. Big Tree became a member of the church in 1897 and for the past 30 years has been a deacon. He remained an active leader in his tribe until a few years ago when age and ill health prevented active participation in tribal business.

Big Tree was buried in the Rainy Mountain cemetery near his home. He is survived by two daughters, Mrs. Alma Ahote and Mrs. Marietta Haag, who live in the Rainy Mountain community, about three miles southwest of Mountain View in Kiowa County. Unlike most of the older Indians, Big Tree was married only once. His wife died about ten years ago.

The historical events in which Big Tree played a part make an interesting narrative as told by G. W. Conover of Anadarko, who has lived in the Indian country more than 60 years. As a soldier he was sent here in 1876 and was in charge of the commissary at Fort Sill during much of the Indian warfare.

"Early in the year of 1871," Conover says, "the Kiowas held their big medicine dance."

"It was their custom at the close of the dance for them to decide their course for the summer—whether for peace or war, which was almost always for plundering expeditions down into Texas or Mexico.

"This was a time when the grass was good and their ponies were in good condition, and when the broad prairies afforded ample food for both man and beasts, for

there was plenty of grass and wild game.

"Early in the summer, Satanta, Satank, and Big Tree with a considerable band of warriors went into Texas and not far from Fort Richardson captured a government train and killed the train master and six of the teamsters, and it was reported that they tied the train master to a wagon wheel and burned him.

"According to Satanta, Eagle Heart, Big Bow, and Fast Bear were with this expedition.

"At this time General Sherman was out west visiting all the military posts, and he came along soon after this tragedy, on his way to Fort Sill. It was the custom with the Indians when they made a raid of this kind to come into their camps by the time of the issuing of rations, which was every two weeks, and tell and boast of what they had done.

"When Sherman reached Fort Sill he made inquiry as to what Indians had been off the reservation, and who committed this depredation. Laurie Tatum, the Quaker Indian agent, thought he could find out. He and General Sherman and Colonel Grierson, commandant of Fort Sill, decided that morning to visit the Indian school and left word with me if the Indians came in during their absence, which they probably would do, to close the commissary, and let them know at once.

"Very soon after, they did come in and camped, with women and children and dogs, about 30 yards from the commissary.

"They had already heard that the big war chief from Washington was here and they wanted to see him and see how they could measure up with him. Very soon they had the opportunity, but Satanta got a very cool reception from Gen. Sherman. Sherman was walking back and forth upon the porch of the commissary with his hands behind him in meditative attitude, when Satanta with Horace P. Jones, the post interpreter, approached, and Jones introduced Satanta, but the general paid but scant attention, did not offer to shake hands, but merely remarked, "Yes, I have heard of him," and continued his meditative walk. The Indian were anxious to hold a council, and when they got together in the commissary council room an inquiry was made concerning the raid in Texas, and the murder of the teamsters, Satanta arose and said, "Yes, I led the raid, I have made many requests of you, but you do not listen to my talk and you refuse to grant me what I ask. The white people are repairing to build a railroad throughout the country, which will not be allowed. Some years ago they took us by the hair of the head and placed us here near the Texas people, where we have to fight them. More recently I was arrested by the soldiers and kept in prison several days, but that is played out now. I want you to remember that no more Kiowas are to be arrested. On account of these wrongs, a short time ago I took about 100 of my warriors to Texas, whom I wished to teach how to fight. I also took Satank, Eagle Heart, Big Bow, Big Tree and Fast Bear. We found a mule train which we captured, and killed seven men, and three of our men were killed, but we are willing to call it even. It is all over now, and it is not necessary to say much about it. We don't expect to do any raiding around here this summer, but we expect to raid on Texas. If any other Indians claim the honor of leading that raid they are lying. I led it myself." When he ended his speech, Eagle Heart, Big Tree and Satank, who were present, sanctioned what he said.

"Big Tree and Satanta later were taken to Jacksboro, Texas, and tried for murder, found guilty and sentenced to be hanged on the first day of September, 1871. Their sentence was later commuted to life imprisonment and after several years of confinement in the Texas penitentiary they were paroled upon good behavior. But later Satanta violated his parole and was sent back to the penitentiary, where one day in despair he committed suicide by jumping

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Chief Big Tree. (Concluded from First Page)

from the second story of his prison to the pavement below.

"Big Tree was the last of all the old warriors. For years he had been a very peaceable citizen and manifested some excellent qualities in his latter days. He was a leading member of the Baptist Church at Elk Creek and held a creditable place in the esteem of his people."

An amusing incident occurred in connection with the organization of the mission of which Big Tree was one of the first members. A barrel of clothing from the east was distributed among the Indians a week before the founding of the church. So Sunday morning Big Tree appeared for the organization of the mission all dressed up in a stove-pipe hat, a Prince Albert coat and Indian breeches made of sheeting.

According to the records at the Kiowa Agency, Big Tree was 49 years old at the allotment in 1900, which would make his age at the time of his death 78 or 79 years. His Indian name was Ahdoete, which means "big tree" in the Kiowa dialect.

How merciless Big Tree and his band of warriors were upon their frequent raids, is shown by an incident occasionally related by Big Tree. While leading a plundering expedition into Texas, a sparsely populated settlement was attacked and the men were slaughtered. A young mother with a small baby in her arms was pleading for her child's life. Big Tree rode up, grabbed the infant by one leg, tore it from the mother's arms and hurled it against a tree. But Big Tree did

not tell of the atrocity in a boasting way, always using it as an example of the power of God to forgive. "God has forgiven me—and I did that hideous thing," he would conclude and his face would light up with a kindly smile of satisfaction, the sincerity of which could hardly be doubted.

Satank's son, Frank Givens (Aukaunt), a Kiowa medicine man living near Carnegie, is the only direct male descendant of the old Indian war chiefs of the Kiowa tribe. Givens is about 60 years old and is said to greatly resemble his warlike father.

Woman, Indian Captive For 66 Years, Visits Here.

An unusual program was rendered here Tuesday morning by Mrs. Sain-toh-oodie Goombi, of Mountain View, Oklahoma, who, as little Millie Durgan, was captured by Indians when 18 months of age, sixty-six years ago, and and Indians of her family.

The former captive was accompanied by H. A. Stroud, manager of the Lawton, Okla., Chamber of Commerce, through whom her identity was established, and who is acting as manager on this trip. Other members of the party were her daughter and son-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. George Hunt, Mr. Hunt acting as interpreter, as Mrs. Goombi does not speak English; a son of Mr. and Mrs. Hunt; Charles Tsoodle, a Kiowa war dancer, who performed here; two Indian maidens, one a granddaughter of Mrs. Goombi, the other a Comanche, who sung in the Indian sign language; and a small grandchild.

They gave a very impressive program at the school building, following which the entire party visited Fort Richardson where they were greatly interested due to the fact that these Indians were related to the late Satanta and Lone Wolf and Big Tree, Indian chiefs, who were tried in Jacksboro in 1867 for murder, this being the first Indian civil trial ever held in the United States.

The story of the capture of this woman was recently told in an associated press article and is reprinted herewith:

Lawton, Okla., Oct. 5.—Stolen by Indians when an 18 months old child, Millie Durgan has been found living among the Kiowa Indians near Mountain Park Oklahoma, in southern Kiowa County, after nearly 66 years search, Harry A. Stroud, secretary of the Comanche County Historical Society, states.

Millie Durgan, taken captive by raiding Kiowa and Comanche Indians in an attack on a settlement on the Brazos River in Texas in 1864, was discovered recently, unable to speak English and married into one of the tribe's leading families.

Ten women and children, four of them Negroes, were abducted by the Comanche war chief, Little Buffalo, and his followers, on Oct. 13, 1864, H. C. Williams, Sr., of Newcastle, Texas, then a small boy, says. The sparsely settled communities of north Texas were virtually defenseless with the abandonment of forts Belknap and Griffin and the Indians had been enjoying unusual success in their depredations.

Britt Johnson, Negro, followed the trail of the war party in search of his family and found them encamped near Rainey Mountain in the Wichita range of southwestern Oklahoma. One of the principal objects in taking captives was to exchange them for needed supplies and so Johnson was able to make terms for the release of five of the captives. He was told Millie had died—the other four had been slain. His family told him Millie was alive but fearful of the safety of those given him, Johnson returned to Texas leaving Millie behind.

Agency officials made every effort possible to find some trace of the missing girl but after several years the Indian story of her death was accepted and she was forgotten.

Aparian Crow, a lesser war chief who took Millie as his foster child, warned his followers never to reveal anything concerning his captive foster daughter. She was kept hidden whenever agency officials visited the camp.

In a final effort to check the story, the Kiowa picture history of George Poolaw, Kiowa historian and custodian of records dating back to 1832, was consulted. The records told of the raid, of the capture of six prisoners, three of them black, and of the return of all but one, and many other details corroborating previous versions.

Mrs. Sain-toh-oodie Goombi, as the woman believed to have been Millie Durgan is known among the Indians, is convinced she is

indeed the missing Millie Durgan.

Married three times, each time to a Goombi, according to the tribal custom that a widow usually married a relative of her former husband, the theory being that a relative would be kinder to the children, Mrs. Goombi lists as her direct descendants nine children, 32 grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren.

Her last husband served as a scout with the United States Army and as a result of his work for the Government, Mrs. Goombi receives \$30 a month pension.

Convinced of her identity as Millie Durgan, Mrs. Goombi has appealed for aid in locating her people.