

THE CHRONICLES OF OKLAHOMA

☆ NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

AN ACT MAKING THE KILLING A PERSON FOR A WITCH A CAPITAL OFFENCE

Sec. 3—Be it enacted by the General Council of the Choctaw Nation assembled, that any person or persons who shall kill another for a witch or wizard, shall suffer death.

And any person who shall publicly state that he himself or she herself is a witch or wizard, or shall say that such a person or persons are witches or wizards, and he or she knows it to be so, shall receive sixty lashes on the bare back.

Approved November 6, 1834

Laws of the Choctaw Nation



ALBUQUERQUE, SITE OF EIGHTH NIEA CONVENTION

The Eighth Annual National Indian Education Association (NIEA) Convention will be held during September 27-30, 1976 at the Albuquerque Convention Center in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The NIEA Board of Directors made the announcement on January 24, 1976 after a month of deliberations with representatives from Minneapolis, Los Angeles, Las Vegas, Denver and Albuquerque.

Albuquerque was the site of the Third NIEA Conference in 1971. It is a city rich in the heritage of the Southwest American Indian, located amidst the splendor of Pueblo, Apache and Navajo life. The American Indians of New Mexico have characterized the essence of Indian education today by nurturing educational programs and innovations that are unequaled anywhere in the nation.

Delegates to the Eighth Annual NIEA Convention are urged to begin planning early, prior to the close of school for the summer, since this year's meeting will fall in September.

For further information, please contact:

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NEW MEMBER ELECTED TO BOARD



Jack T. Conn

A native of Ada, Oklahoma, Jack T. Conn was a graduate of the University of Oklahoma and a long-time associate in the legal firm headed by the late Senator Robert Kerr. Now residing in Oklahoma City where he is Chairman of the Board of the Fidelity Bank, he is active in historic and preservation affairs, a prime interest of his. He is presently serving as Chairman of the Oklahoma City Bicentennial Commission and is engaged in many Bicentennial efforts in the central Oklahoma area.



AUTOMATIC TORNADO DESTROYER INVENTED

Derived from the Latin word *tornare*, which means to turn or twist, this most violent of atmospheric phenomena seems to be almost a North American specialty. Tornadoes occur more often in the United States than anywhere else in the world; however, they are the special scourge of the Plains States, particularly of central Oklahoma—more tornado-prone than any other area of comparable size in the world. Longtime residents of tornado country quickly recognize "tornado weather" when the air seems oppressive, sultry, uncomfortably warm and humid.

The earliest account of a tornado in America was given by a colonist who described a whirlwind striking a meetinghouse in Massachusetts in 1643, killing an Indian. At that time the wind was looked upon as more a curiosity than a significant event, but later, when the early pioneers journeyed into the Central Plains and saw the violent behavior of these tornadoes, they began to regard the storms with awe.

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Today, the National Severe Storms Laboratory located in Norman, Oklahoma seeks to learn what makes tornadoes tick and the National Severe Storms Forecast Center in Kansas City, Missouri maintains a ceaseless vigil, constantly analyzing atmospheric conditions across the country and coordinating the reports of hundreds of local Skywarn networks. But at the turn of the century, when the only forecast was a "sticky" or "threatening" feeling and the vigil was from one's kitchen door, citizens must have read with considerable interest the following article which appeared in *The El Reno News* on May 24, 1900:

An Oklahoman has invented an automatic destroyer of funnel shaped clouds. His theory is that an explosion near a tornado will dissipate it. He would place explosive torpedoes on poles surrounding houses, the explosion of the torpedoes to be done by the tornado.



COLONEL ZACK MILLER ONCE SOLD MEXICAN WAGONS BY THE ACRE

Ponca City, Oklahoma (AP)—Wagons are still sold in Oklahoma, but not at \$500 an acre, as Colonel Zack Miller sold them after he bought the equipment of an entire Mexican army back in 1916, when the Miller brothers did things in a big way.

That was in the days when Colonel George Miller was handling the financial reins of the ranch, and buying on a large scale and making his sales even larger. Colonel Zack likes to tell of his buying the entire Mexican federal army, though, he says, it was really just the wagons, harness, livestock, saddles, rifles, side arms, ammunition, uniforms, and a few other items of equipment, for 5,000 men.

The Colonel, then a traveling representative of the ranch in Texas markets, was buying mules from Mexican traders who "sneaked" them, as it was called, across the international boundary, and sold them to American ranchers.

Colonel Zack was visiting the general in command of the United States army detachment which was at the scene of military operations on the American side of the river, and was sitting with him during the afternoon, watching the battle from the shade of ordnance pieces drawn up in readiness should either army retreat across the river, when the rebels launched a flank attack and cut off the wagon train of the federal army, running it into the river and to the American side.

United States soldiers surrounded the troops as they landed on the American side, capturing the horses, dogs, chickens and women and children who were with the wagon train and placing them under guard. The Mexican

consul was consulted, and was on his way to the camp when his car overturned, killing him and leaving the affairs in the hands of a very youthful secretary.

Noticing the youth's perplexity, Colonel Zack offered \$40,000 in gold for the entire outfit, knowing it to be worth more than that intrinsically, and wanting the equipment for the 101 Ranch Show, then at the height of its fame. A wire to Mexico City arranged the sale, and confirmation was obtained from Colonel George at the home ranch.

With the completion of the purchases, the Colonel was the owner of the complete equipment, except the uniforms which the soldiers wore as they marched off to San Antonio for future release. The nondescript collection ranged from frying pans to machine guns, and from ox carts to Conestoga wagons of pre-Oregon trail days.

But with an eye for quick sale and small profits easily realized, Miller was quick to take an offer of another ranchman to buy the entire caravan of rolling stock, which filled a small valley near the river. Being offered so much for each wagon, Miller objected, naming as his price for the lot, \$500 an acre, for approximately five acres. This novel offer appealed to the other, and he accepted.

The more valuable part of the purchase, the livestock, were delivered to Miller in San Antonio by the military force, but were delayed while the Texas Ranchers' association cut out stock stolen from them by raiders from Mexico.

The rest of the cargo was dispatched by freight, including arms and ammunition, and other equipment, and a crew of hard-riding Oklahoma cowboys arrived from the home ranch to handle the mules and horses.

McAlester News-Capital, Wednesday, October 26, 1932.



SHOOTING MATCHES

Shooting matches were frequently held in the Tahlequah district in Indian Territory times. The marksmen who made the best scores were rewarded with portions of beef.

A man who owned a fat steer or cow, or a well-grown yearling or two year old, desiring to obtain the worth of the animal in money, made announcement that a shooting match would be held on a given date. A good-sized crowd of men usually assembled at the designated place. Each man who desired to enter the contest paid a specified sum for each shot he wished to fire at a mark. When the sum desired by the owner of the animal had been subscribed the competitors made ready for the match.

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Each man furnished his own target, which was usually a clapboard made of oak or yellow pine. These boards were slightly charred in fire, so as to become uniformly black. A cross mark was then made upon a small piece of white paper which was placed in the center of the board. The board was then attached to the trunk of a tree at whatever distance had been agreed upon, and soon the match was under way.

After each shot the boards were carefully and closely examined by men who acted as judges, and who noted how near the bullet came to the center of the cross-mark. In some matches there were skilled marksmen who sent their bullets exactly to the center, but in other instances the center was not reached. Several hours were usually devoted to firing at the marks, and upon conclusion the judges carefully compared the bullet holes in the various boards and announced the winners.

In some contests one man alone outshot all competitors and won the entire animal. In such instances the winner did not slay the steer or cow but drove it to his home. Such successful marksmen were said to be "driving home the beef." But rather often there were several winners in a shooting match, and after the animal was slain portions were awarded to various persons. One man had won a hindquarter, another a shoulder, yet another a portion of the ribs. Another had not won a choice portion of beef but had succeeded in winning the hide and tallow. Everyone could not expect to win and consequently there were some who received nothing in return for the money expended in buying chances to fire winning bullets.

A favorite season for holding shooting matches was in the mid-autumn time, when the days were clear, bright and cool. Not only did young men participate in shooting matches, but middle-aged and elderly men entered the contests in some instances.

Turkey shooting matches were also indulged in the favorite season for the event was just before Thanksgiving or Christmas. The procedure was the same as in the shooting matches for animals with the exception that the sum agreed upon for firing bullets was much smaller and the winner received the whole fowl.

Muzzle-loading rifles were the favorite firearms used in the matches of many years ago. The majority of the marksmen declared that the old-style weapons were more accurate than were the more modern rifles which were beginning to be used by some people.

Indian Pioneer History
Grant Foreman Collection
Oklahoma Historical Society