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### The Cherokees

Ok . . . I will quote a little to start with this morning from a text called American Political Social History by Faulkner [Harold Underwood], published Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1948, 5<sup>th</sup> edition. Very interesting point of view here for what we will [say or see?] “. . . a good drama? of history may be played by human beings, that the stage on which it is set is the world of geography as we know. To no small extent, man is a creature of his environment, which we also know. He had rather been a free agent, but, says the great historian Buckle [Henry Thomas], he had man modifying nature, and nature modifying man. By all of this reciprocal modification, all events must [necessarily stem?]. The history of civilization is largely the story of how man has conquered nature and how nature in turn has reacted upon man. Physical environment, as science has often asserted, ranked the biological variations as an essential determinant in placing the evolution of human capacity, occupations, and general progress.”

In other words, if we are to trace the course of any region, we must look beyond to consider such factors as climate, rainfall, soil, land, contour, natural transportation [?], and other geographic factors. So, in the case of the Cherokee Indians, which we wanted to talk about, briefly, we find that most authorities agree that there were something like twenty thousand, probably more or less, Cherokees in the mountains of Western North Carolina and in the entire United States putting all the tribes together there were probably not more than a million Indians. [end of Tape 2 - Lincoln/Cherokees]

[beginning of Tape 3 The Cherokees; voice in background not identified and not audible]

That, of course, went clear back to the policy of Thomas Jefferson as brought out in various writings of Jefferson and also other Presidents who succeeded him. It was generally understood as we developed in this country and took charge of the land and

began to build our towns and cities, it was understood that it was a matter of time that we would have to move the Indians into an area of the United States where they could be less unmolested and have their own government. We came to that conclusion. We decided that it would be impossible to educate them to the extent that we hoped we might and to amalgamate with them and to communicate with them to the extent that they could take our education and absorb our institutions and we could get along with them. We had come to the conclusion that it would be impossible to get along with them the way we should if we were to make progress, and the philosophy of government was developed by a number of Presidents, and you'll find it in various references. I have the complete story of it from Jefferson on down.

The philosophy was that we would have to put these people into a region or set off a section of the country. The British evidently had that idea, too, where they could have their own institutions and be free to carry on the kind of life as hunters and as farmers and as weavers and as artisans [?] making progress all the time they learned a great deal from us and they were doing rather well but they were still in a stage which was incompatible with the Whites' attitude. So all the Presidents and the Congress and the Senate, all down through, have passed laws and have set forth principles that we would have to allow these people an area of land or areas of land where they could hunt and where they could be as free and as primitive as they wanted to be at the same time be under the supervision of the United States in case they went to war with each other as tribes to keep that from happening.

We began to look at them then as incapable of really managing their, of getting along with each other, and managing their affairs, because the Indians had a philosophy that it was absolutely necessary to go to war to show your manhood. You had to show that you could fight. There have been those (I think there is a new book out on that) where there have been people who would tell you, or there was an article in a magazine only recently setting forth the idea that fighting and going to war is an elemental character of people, yet there have been people who did not go to war, who were peaceful, but they were small in number, I mean the group size. But the idea was, and certainly was among the

Cherokees, and other Indian tribes, that they had to have, that they had to go to war to show their manhood, and they scalped [their?] prisoners. That was just as essential as our games today. And going to war that was only one way to, of course, they didn't have great wars the way we would have. The way we have after we came here and got them organized the way we organized it. It was on a small scale always because they had nothing of stake to fight for. It was purely a matter of who could capture somebody else. And they captured wives that way. That was one way to court, to go and slip into the camp at night and steal the girls and take them back to Cherokee villages, and they got along very well that way.

[ . . . the Cherokees refused to move until Jackson sent the army . . . ]

Oh, yes, I was going to mention that. In 1819, the pressure began to be on to move them to the west of the Mississippi where they could have large areas of land and where there was still plenty of game. And Congress passed any number of resolutions and offered them all kinds of compensation, that is, the Indians, to remove, and a great many did. It's astonishing that more than half of the Cherokees had already removed by the time Jackson came on the scene. We had had wars with the Creeks, and they helped us with those wars. We'd already settled our grievances with the Cherokees by that time, but there was something like eighteen thousand Cherokees still living, and a good many of the other tribes, the Southern tribes, had already gone Westward. Tribes in the North had also gone. It's an interesting story in that regard. Without any compulsion, they also realized that in order to live their lives and live at peace there was no other way but to get away from the Whites. And when Jackson came on the scene, he had fought the Creeks and other elements. He stood for the rights of the States to govern themselves, and we still had that philosophy up until the Civil War. Up until the Civil War, any state was supreme in its integrity and organization and so that is why the South felt justified in breaking away from the Union, was one notable instance, because it was in the Constitution of the United States that any State had a right to withdraw. It was understood. An unwritten law, so to speak, and Jackson was of that school, and he stood for State's Rights. Now it so happens that the Cherokees were occupying a great region

of Georgia at that time and North Carolina and Tennessee and [other?] parts of Alabama. And, they the Cherokees refused to show allegiance to any State and [that told? Very recent to?] the United States. [inaudible] They refused to kow-tow, to bow down to any State. The Cherokees are a very proud people, and the other Indians are, too, for that matter. But, we offered them, Jackson and Congress, and other governing agencies at that time, that if you will pledge allegiance to Georgia and become citizens of Georgia and North Carolina and take up land and pay taxes and become citizens of the United States, we will permit you to stay right where you are. They said we will not do it this is our country we were here first when you came, and we're not going to take a pledge of allegiance to any power in this country. And they never have. Oh, I suppose they have by this time, of course, they've become citizens but the Cherokee are yet under the supervision of the government of the United States. They cannot sell their land and they don't have they only have tribal government.

[I want to ask you about [?] and about [?] saving Andrew Jackson's life]

Oh, yes, that was at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend when the Cherokee were helping Andrew Jackson. They were in companies, and he was leading a company, they had their own officers. Even there they didn't like to take orders from supreme commanders they wanted to have their own technique in warfare which they felt was superior to the Whites' and in many ways it was because they didn't get shot so often you had to hide behind the trees we had to learn that too and dodge behind boulders the British with their gaudy beautiful uniforms got right out in the open, and they soon learned not to do that too, get down behind the breastworks and behind the barricades, so Jackson had these Indians there and on one occasion he was hard pressed, they were about to overcome, overrun the headquarters, and the Indians there were on guard, they were the main guard of Jackson's headquarters. He regarded them as such bloody and noble fighters you couldn't possibly get through them they [were really hard to fight?] and so that he, Sequoia, and all these others, Sequoia was the man who was most prominent on that occasion.

[inaudible]

[inaudible] I mean. He was a mixed breed though. By the time that these thirty or forty years or a hundred years contact with these people soon began to mix them out they began to intermarry. The Whites were rather quick to amalgamate with the Indians. The Indians are an attractive people. They are noble in their bearing, and the women are beautiful. They are not, they are bronze, they had beautiful color, they had beautiful hair, and they dressed, they decorated themselves, they wore beautiful rings, earrings, armbands, and gold and silver. And they could dance marvelously, in their ways, and they were quick, they were quick to learn. And they were good cooks, the women were, and so what happened was that the Whites, the White Scotch traders were the first ones to come in to buy furs and to buy other artifacts that the Indians could produce. And, of course, they could supply the Indians with guns and equipment and hatchets and decorations and clothing. They took to clothing very quickly and they were neat dressers. They learned, as I said, they learned decoration. They were a very proud people, and in no time at all, the traders and the men who came in contact with the Indians, and there were a lot of the pioneers who deserted their own people and went to live with the Indians. They liked it, they liked the food they had, they liked the kind of lives that the Indians had. They had their big round house, the community house where they had their dramas and put on their plays, and where they would have their meetings for town councils. We might think we speak of them as aborigines, but the Cherokees and other Indians had developed many skills. They were on their way to civilization there's no question of that and they still are. They've developed greatly. They're skilled workers. You know the people who build the skyscrapers, the men who construct the great skyscrapers in New York and other cities, they got the Indians in the North to go there and work on these high elevations because they have exceeding skill and balance and coordination.

[interviewer's question inaudible]

Yes, it came to the place though, that these Cherokees, as I pointed out, would not take the oath, would not become citizens of these States where they were located, and the matter came to a crisis when gold was discovered in Georgia, and the Whites wanted to

take over all this very desirable land, and [other?] Whites petitioned Jackson who had promised long ago that he would remove the Indians that they wouldn't take they wouldn't become citizens. But I want to point out that a good many of them did become citizens and retained their land. They could keep 600 acres of land and their homes if they agreed to pay taxes and allegiance to the State and a good many did do that, especially the mixed breeds, but it came to the point where they would not go that was a great controversy the Indians would never since they were such individuals and such individualistic lives they could not cooperate and they could never get the Indians all to agree on anything . One group would agree on something but the others would not. And so that went on for several years and Jackson finally got disgusted with it and he said I'll have to move them by force. He offered them a year's compensation and salary, he offered to supply them with food for a whole year, in Oklahoma or out in the West where they were going, in this new country where they were supposed to occupy. And they did, as a matter of fact, they furnished them equipment, tools of all kinds, and weaving machines, printing presses and all the equipment necessary for setting up a new, the same kind of, habitation they'd had in the South because they had gone a long way they were now publishing a newspaper in Phoenix and they had their own government modeled after the United States government had their constitution, they had their own schools and churches, they had all the makings all the equipment for civilization and they would have gone very far but they occupied this land that was so desirable and they were still at war with the Whites that is there were border crises all the time, and it was impossible to keep order where they were.

[Most of the Cherokees moved out. Some of them escaped and went up into the mountains, didn't they?]

Oh, yes, there was an element, something like 1200 who hid in the Great Smokies when Rutherford, General Rutherford, who had been deputized to round these people up, went in there with his soldiers. These people hid in the mountains, and it's impossible and still is for soldiers to get in there and get anyone out. Many people had a stake into those mountains. They escaped there during the Civil war if they didn't want to go to war, any

number of draft dodgers went into that region with great cliffs and [?] rocks and gorges and caves where they can hide and where they did hide and so they hid something like 1200 and it's from that group that we now have the Cherokee Indian reservation here in the mountains and where we have something like fifty thousand acre reservation now and they have a large population I don't recall that number but it's increasing and we have a good many of full blood Indians in that region and there are Indians back in those mountains yet who will not harmonize their lives with the United States. There are people there who speak Cherokee yet, plenty of them, and who are not, who have not accepted all the institutions that we accept and who don't have our standards of citizenship [as such?] and yet they are interesting people I met a good many when I was in a play there I played the part of Andrew Jackson.

But Jackson, going back to him a moment, did not want to mistreat these Indians he went down to he came down to the Cherokee country there and held a meeting with the Chiefs and with their representatives and tried to work it out so they could remain that was impossible because they could not get together and they could not agree and then of course they didn't agree after they arrived in the West they continued this war and bitterness, and a good many of the leaders were killed, assassinated, and that went on for several years.

Now, let me see. You might have another question somewhere there that I haven't cleared up. Jackson was not a harsh man he has a bad reputation in regard to his treatment of the Cherokee, but I've read into the history I've especially studied his character in acting the part in the play. I did research on that in the Library there at Cherokee, which is quite a place. They have a Federal library there, a United States government library, and have all the records of the Indians, the removal, and everything, and so I've spent considerable time studying his character so I could play it and understand his attitude, and I think I understood his mind perfectly and his attitude on that. A lot of the actors would come to me [as I played it?] I really tried to steal the show on that score but Jackson was supposed to be the villain in the play, you understand, they had other heroes, but I so dominated, understood his attitude so, that I came very near to

carrying off playing the leading part, and there was good deal of jealousy I had to not steal the show, had to play it down a little [time?], and they would say they would say, "Moser just what is your attitude toward these Indians? How do you think Jackson felt about this?" and I said, I'm doing my best to play it just exactly as he felt, and his attitude, and so I did it, and I played that all summer, but it was understood that I was playing the villain's part and therefore I withstood criticism, my friend [Juan Parrish?] . . [went?] public for the play at that time and he would either neglect mentioning me at all or [printing?] some derogatory thing about it which is the same thing and actors of course love to have some publicity you know the only recognition they get any little line of praise or commendation is very much appreciated.

[I gather the play is written by Hunter was [in favor of?] the Cherokee people]

Oh, yes, Hunter was a sentimentalist as regard to Cherokees. He could put some of the most [puerile?] sentences into this play that I have ever read and I told him so. And we tried to put more stamina into it you know. It was supposed to be a rugged play, a good Indian [called it?] Indian medicine show, but it was much more than that. It had literary qualities, the play did, and we put a lot into it, we really wrote it, and Mr. Davis who was the director of the play, Harry Davis, he was a great director, he would revise it and he'd say these are weasel words and you would have to cut it you know and put some stamina in the sentences and actually by the time we were through with it Hunter said I don't think I can even claim to be the author of this play.

[How did you come to play the part of Jackson?]

They announced, that was the first season of the play, and it was announced in the newspapers and on the radio that tryouts would be held in Asheville in the City Auditorium for people in this vicinity who were asked to take part in the play. And I had been in plays, high school plays and in other plays, at the university, so when the time was announced I went over there and Mr. Davis and some other his assistants were in charge, and there were other people there to try out. He said, what we need now is a



character for Andrew Jackson and he mentioned several other pioneer men who appeared in this play, others from other, and some main men who represented characters, generals and so forth, so it was a good opportunity to get into it and it offered a chance to really be in a major show. So I went out in a big way and after I got through he had me read and recite passages and he went to the back of the auditorium to see if my voice would carry. And, of course, I had no trouble projecting my voice out there. I'd been singing and yelling up here in these mountains and it was no problem at all to make myself heard at almost any distance.

[How long did you play?]

I played just one season. Everyone signed up for only one season. I didn't like their policy that you had to go try out again the next season for the same part. I shouldn't have been perhaps like that, but I didn't try out, I said if I have to try out again after I played a whole season and had done it without any severe criticism we had a great season, we had a lot of applause you know, we had huge audiences, great theater out there, thousands come in there, I don't know how many thousand, I think it holds eighteen thousand, something like that

[Cherokee]

Yes, the Cherokee Reservation. It's a marvelous sight to be in that theater, an outdoor theater, of course. It's a great stage there, and we changed the stage for each [?] scene, and of course the scenes shift from one side to another, and in the center, and we had groups of soldiers, I played soldier parts, I played two or three other parts, minor parts, to fill in you see. Change costumes and you're all right. Well, I didn't play but one season. I went out and visited them a time or two and he said come out and try out for us we think we'd like to have you again but I didn't go I just thought, I decided I'd, it was kind of an ordeal actually it was hard work

[did you?]

No, I stayed there. I would come home about every two weeks. They had rehearsals in the afternoon very often, and a thing like that requires [change?] and rehearsals readjust certain scenes and put it together we could be [?] by standing in the back of the theater and listening to the audience and talking to members of the audience you learned a lot so we would change the costumes and some of the acting and [put?] constant rehearsal so that was a hard job and there was not too much pay in it, but it was a lot of fun.

[How many Cherokees were on the set?]

Yes, there were not as many as there are now. Must have been altogether there were over a hundred actors in the play, including, well, of course some of them played groups of soldiers and so forth. I would say that nearly half of them were Cherokee. The idea was to make them, was to have at least half Cherokee as possible, and even more, and some of the Cherokees did as time went on play leading roles in the plays and, in fact, some of them did that first season and they did it all right

[You mentioned the fact the Reservation about fifty thousand acres. What is on that Reservation today? What is it like?]

They have built up community and cooperative businesses of various kinds. They have public buildings there put up by the government, they have large farms, they have especially a large collection, large groups, of tourist cabins and tourist hotels, tourist places. They have large gatherings for fairs every year. They had plenty of room for arts and crafts. They have arts and crafts buildings, they have schools. They are well provided for, there's no reason why the Cherokee shouldn't get a fine education if they want it.

[Do the Cherokees own land?]

No, they cannot own their land, they cannot sell their land; otherwise it belongs to them until they can deed it to someone else on this reservation. They can sell it to each other, they can trade it, but they cannot sell it to outsiders to White people. That makes it safe for them because some of them might be tempted by large offers of payment to part with their fine land. It is beautiful land. There is no question that it is choice mountain land, pure water, pure air, no factories there to pollute the air, although they do have various industries there but they're of such nature they run by electricity most part.

[I want to ask you about [inaudible] ?]

Most of those names are just names given by the Indians after, maybe after a Chief or because it represents a certain idea to them. They will have 6 or 7 different communities, and each one is given a name, and they are beautiful names, I don't have a list of them right at present, I can't recall many of them . . .

[ . . . ? . . . ]

Oh, yes, the Ocona Lefta River is one of the most beautiful rivers I have ever seen. You can stand up on the bridge there and look into the clear streams and they vary as much as 6 to 8 feet in depth and then there will be rocks, beautiful rocks in there and channels and depth and you can see the cows in there in groups at these rocks and deep places.

[...?...]

No, we don't know what it means. They have their names for these various streams beautiful names and we have a lot of Indian names still used in the mountains like [Tuckaseegee?], Ocona Lefty, Swannanoa, they're beautiful, musical names, and they were made by the Indians for certain reasons we don't know some things may have happened that caused them to give a name to a special stream or river some event some person may have been named for some man some woman although they don't seem to have had too much respect for women generally speaking but on the contrary they had

what they called the Neighbor Woman who would give advice and that happened among the Cherokee and also in Tennessee where some of the Whites, a White woman, in one instance, was to be burned at the stake, and this Neighbor Woman came in and took charge of the lady, released her, and rescued her. And so they gave advice but generally speaking the men were dominant as far as managing affairs were concerned they had a war chief they had a feast chief they had their medicine men they were old, wise men, and they had very good organization to be in a primitive a condition as they were. They still had very much the same organizations in Cherokee that they had at the beginning. They still had a chief, he was elected at different intervals and he'd hold office I think indefinitely and they have their council as they did anciently and they the government has sought to retain as much of the Indian culture as they could [but frontiersmen?] they did not teach the English language which we regretted, which I regretted, but now they teach the Cherokee language and they [?] in the schools as well as English and other language and they but a good many of the Cherokee still speak the native language. I used to hear it, it's very musical and beautiful. It's charming. It would be worth anyone's time to go out and mix with those people for awhile. They have, of course, abandoned their ancient, primitive religion, if they ever had very much. They were nature worshipers as you know. They found the divine in every thing, which is a very beautiful religion.

[...I read somewhere where the Cherokees were the only ones .... Is that true?]

Yes. They were the first. Sequoia of course invented the syllabus, the syllabai, and he was part German, father was German. As I say, the Whites intermarried and fell in love with these Cherokee women very quickly and so [they're practically all?] mixed up but as I say there are still some full-blooded ones there and when they play their ballgames I wanted to mention that that is not strictly a sportsman game. It is actually a substitute for war.

[You're talking about stick ball?]

A stick ball, we call it Indian ball, Indian ballgame and of course from that came the game of lacrosse that's played in some colleges and other places. But all the tribes played that, had that game, and it took the place of going to war. They would meet a certain group, a representative from another tribe and they would go through this game. But, it was a rough game and many things could happen and did happen they would use their clubs in anyway they saw fit. It was up to the other team to avoid the clubs and to hit the ball and carry it to the goal posts any way they could and they would often hit the ball but they could not touch the ball with their hands but they could pick it up with this little metal net on this stick and they could throw it in their mouths and could carry it that way and a good many of them do that would catch it or not and become very skillful at that then they could run for the goal line with the ball in their stick START HERE throw their arms around them or pick them up on them and hit them and damage them seriously. I've seen games Cherokee out there and they're always rough and you give them plenty of room because they get excited and gets their blood stirred again and ancient aborigines for awhile

[after that ?]

They would. It was very unusual for the Indians to have to carry each other off they had a medicine man or a man in charge who was very strict carried a whip and as soon as they began to get too close together or began to pile in or to one another this man come in with his whip or stick and They are obedient into their officers and chiefs. They're very obedient into people to those they respect that they owe allegiance to but to nobody else.

The Cherokee and other tribes for that matter in North Carolina and in the West and in the North were very excellent craftsmen in many ways. Around the Great Lakes you'll recall they built what was called the long houses and they were able to split these big trees so they could produce plank that was build houses and when the French and the other explorers and saw these houses they thought they had run into a genuine civilization. They were surprised to see these long houses built out of fine lumber and these Indians had trees 3 feet in diameter and more and had used their wedges to split

these lo in such a manner that they could produce plank maybe 2 to 3 inches thick 3 feet long and they made and they developed houses and of course in their arts and crafts they had developed techniques for tanning these skins the deer hides and the buffalo skins so these skins had a fragrant pleasant odor they would put different bark spice wood and berries and all kinds of twigs into the in which they used to tan these things. And so they were expert tanners and so they produced beautiful colors beautiful furs and wore these skins around them and they sold they developed technique of sewing with needles and decorating these skins with feathers and they had the ability to use feathers of all kinds from turkeys and from the other birds eagles

[ . . . weaving baskets? . . . ]

Still weaving baskets carving and making bows and arrows they took pleasure in dwelling on these things and taking plenty of time to carve and allow these objects to season so they would last and could be carved they learned what woods to use they could carve masks fine masks they used these in the dances of various kinds like the green corn dance and the buffalo dance and the other they had many kinds of dances pleasing to different regions and they were good at carving and yet their tools were very inadequate as we would look upon it they would use deer horn and of course it was amazing what they could do with rock making flint arrows and spears and polishing these things it's clearly amazing they had become expert rock workers and they had no metal tools that we have any record of they had found copper they knew how to melt gold and silver and copper and to mold these things into fine objects they made beautiful rings and they knew how to use the bones and the toenails and the teeth of a lot of the creatures that they killed and to redo them into ornaments of various kinds and polish them They knew how to use bear claws to make a beautiful necklace and other objects from the different animals they used the bone. And in the West the Indians there could develop a bow out of buffalo horns there were not many trees there that were desirable for bows and arrows or bows at least and so they were able to develop or horns together in such a manner that they would fit and remain in place and to make wonderful bows that they could shoot buffalo with and they were strong took a strong man to bend those bows. Some of the

first settlers, the first pioneers out in the West, tried to bend them, and couldn't do it not very well. But the Indians could, they were used to them how to handle it. So all these primitive tribes these people, that we call primitive, all went through of these people in our past in our civilization in Europe you know they find arrowheads and spear heads some period in our own history we also have community evident?