

TRIP WITH THE "INDIAN WARRIOR TROUPE"

By Frank F. Finney*

In the fall of 1879, T. M. Finney and his brother Ed, with the permission of the Agent, took a party of Osage Indians for a trip through southeastern Kansas and across the state of Missouri, ending at the fairs being held at Paris and Hannibal.

At that time, T. M. Finney was employed in the commissary and his brother was employed as a special officer for the Government at the Osage Indian Agency in the Indian Territory.

The group of Indians was billed as the "Indian Warrior Troupe" and put on performances at the towns visited.

One member of the party, Se-gro-tsa, the "Trailer", had gained fame in his tribe as an undefeated foot racer, which distinction he maintained throughout the trip and no white man appeared to challenge it. Running against a member of the group, he broke the one half mile record for the Paris track. The Indians ran bared to the skin wearing only their breech cloths. The strange treatment they received from other members of the party is revealed by T. M. Finney who kept a diary during the entire trip.

The Finney brothers left the Osage Agency, August 30, 1879 with their Indians. After passing through and giving dances in the small towns in Kansas, of Sedan, Elk City, Neodesha, Thayer and Chanute, they arrived at Nevada, Missouri, September 11.

After showing at Nevada, Appleton City, Butler and Windsor, the troupe arrived at Booneville, September 17.

Excerpts from the diary follow:

Wed. Sept. 17

Arrived at Booneville, 55 miles from Windsor. Beautiful city. Stopped at City Hotel. Had street parade in the afternoon. We took the Indians down on the banks of the Missouri river and went aboard the "Birdie Brent".

* Frank F. Finney was with the Indian Territory Illuminating Oil Company at Bartlesville in 1904. Retired in 1954 from the Cities Service Gas Company and makes his home in Oklahoma City. The Cities Service Company took over the Indian Territory Oil Company. A feature story by Mr. Finney on the founding of Ralston in 1894 by his father T. M. Finney, early Indian trader among the Osages, Kaws and Pawnees (1873-1880-1896) appeared in the *Tulsa World* for October 17, 1954, Sunday magazine Section, pp. 20-21.—Ed.

This was the first steamboat they had ever seen and brought forth from them many exclamations of "O-ho-hos".¹

Thurs. Sept. 18

Arrived at Moberly, 38 miles from Booneville. Billed the town well. Drove all over the city in carriages, everybody turning out to see us.

Expense \$56.25. Includes cough medicine for Wah-nah-she and eye-water for Coon, advertising in the "Headlight", casting bills, livery, hall, city license, hotel and carriages.²

Sun. Sept. 21

Arrived at Paris from Moberly by freight train. Took the Indians out to the fair grounds and put up tent.³

Mon. Sept. 22

Completed arrangements with the fair managers to show on the grounds and go halves on the receipts.

Tues. Sept. 23

The band came to our tent and played two pieces. Commenced showing and had good attendance.

Wed. Sept. 24

Took the Indians to the photo gallery and had a group picture taken.

Fri. Sept. 26

The "Trailer" easily beat Mink-che-kah in a foot race making the half-mile in the best time ever made on the Paris track.

Sun. Sept. 28

Arrived at Hannibal 4:10 P.M. and went directly to the fair grounds. This is a lovely place. The scenery is beautiful. Gathered some leaves to take home. The frost has fallen and you see all the colors of the rainbow in looking at the trees on the hills.

Mon. Sept. 29

President Hayes and party stopped here on their western tour. A reception was held which was largely attended.

We received a letter from one of the Burgess boys with whom we are acquainted. The two brothers are with Buffalo Bill's show now at Cincinnati and want us to join the show with our party.

¹ *The Booneville Weekly Advertiser*, September 19, 1879: "The Indians: The troupe of Indians gave an interesting performance at the hall, on Wednesday night, going through their war whoop, war dance gambling games, &c., &c. After the performance they requested permission and went up to the armory of the Waddill Guards and saw them drill and go through the manual of arms, after which they gave the Guards a benefit, which was much enjoyed by the boys. After the drill the Indians shook hands with the officers and then shook hands with every man in the company and left."

² *Moberly Daily Monitor*, September 18, 1879: "Seven full blooded Indians will be on exhibition at the Williams Academy of Music, Friday night, 19th, and those who attend will be highly entertained."

³ *The Paris Mercury*, September 23, 1879: "Whoop! Me Big Ingin. A troupe of wild Indians, fresh from their mountain fastnesses, will be on the fair grounds during the week. Go and see them. They are real Indians, not painted "white trash."

Wed. Oct. 1

There are some interesting things to be seen at the fair. Saw the Elias Howe sewing machine which is inlaid in gold. It took a first medal at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition. Also saw a live chicken without a head.

Cash receipts today, \$145.00. Very good.

Sat. Oct. 4

A keen desire of all of the Indians to see the "Great Father of Waters" was gratified when we took them down to see the Mississippi river. Eagle Feather, (one of Custer's scouts at the battle of the Washita) said, "Our fathers told us many stories about this big river. Our hearts are made glad to see it with our own eyes." The "Minneapolis" the largest steamboat they had ever seen was tied up at the dock.

Had a foot race at the fair grounds this afternoon. The fame of Se-gro-sta had preceded him and there was no professional who cared to enter against him. He ran against Red Eagle, another fleet footed member of the band but as usual the "Trailer" won the race. A curious thing occurred after the race was over. As the dusty and sweating Indian runners appeared at the end of the track, clothed only with breech cloths, they were met by fellow members of the party with knives in their hands which they used on the racers, hacking up and down the limbs of each until the blood ran freely. This was followed by dashing a bucket of water over each one, after which they were covered with blankets and conducted to their lodge.

Sun. Oct. 5

Left Hannibal at 10 A.M. Arrived at Sedalia for supper.

Mon. Oct. 6

Arrived at Coffeerville by train via Parsons and Chanute. Paid the Indians in full. Jessie Morgan, stage driver met us at the depot.

Tues. Oct. 7

Arrived at the Osage Agency and glad to get home.

Thurs. Oct. 9

Went back to work in the commissary.