

NOTES ON SAMUEL WILLIAM BROWN, JR.,  
YUCHI CHIEF

*By Orpha B. Russell*

Yuchi Chief Samuel William Brown, Jr., was told by specialists that he had "the heart of a 43-year-old," after a thorough physical checkup on December 30, 1957. His mind was keen, his memory phenomenal, and because he had scheduled a series of lectures for the month of January, in the state of Georgia, his daughter, Dorothy, had insisted that his physical condition be thoroughly checked. His fatal heart attack the following night was a great shock to his family and friends.

Chief Brown was a man of small stature, five feet, five inches and weighed around 175 pounds, but he was large in thought and deed. His life was devoted to showing the world that the Yuchi Tribe of Red Men was a distinct tribe with its own identity, culture and religion. Indian Ball Players coached by the Yuchi Chief, aroused international curiosity, and when the Honorable Richard Wood, son of Lord and Lady Halifax, spent a day in Sapulpa one of his major items of interest was learning something about the kind of ball game played by the young Indians. One of Chief Brown's creations, a large float for the first Oil Exposition Parade held in Tulsa in 1923, took high honors.

Born June 9, 1879 near the Old Creek Agency, four miles west of Muskogee, Chief Brown reached the climax of his lifelong ambition during the summer of 1957, when he returned to Georgia and fulfilled the prophecy of Yuchi leaders made in 1832. They prophesied that their Chief would one day return.

Pondering all the facts his father had related about Yuchi lands in Alabama and Georgia, Chief Brown, Jr., persuaded his daughters, Dorothy and Jewel, to drive him into that land so that he could look for the horseshoe shaped falls and old fish traps on rivers fished by his forefathers more than one hundred and thirty years ago. They hacked their way through thick jungle growth to reach the falls and found remains of Yuchi fish traps, just as the elder Chief Brown has described to his son. In October, 1957, with daughter Dorothy and nephew Samuel H. Brown, Jr., the Chief returned to that area to perform the ancient ceremonial "busk" dance on the banks of the Chattahoochee.

Prior to the death of his mother, Samuel Brown, Jr., attended the Creek boarding school at Eufaula. The Creeks and Yuchis just did not get along, and this included the children.

His short stay at Eufaula ended with a fight with three Creek boys, who teased him about being a Yuchi. Brown whipped all three and ran away before he could be punished. Despite the fact that the ground was covered with deep snow he walked to Muskogee, where he found friends who kept him until his father, who had been notified by the school authorities, found him.

After the death of his mother, in 1897, he lived with two great-uncles, brothers of his father's mother, Suttah, who was a granddaughter of Cosena Barnard (Cussine Barnett) of Euchee fame, who was part Scot. One of these great-uncles was *Sakasenney* (Little Bear) also known as Nocosogee. The other was *Sincohah* (Fus Hudge). They operated large cattle ranches near Kelleyville and Brown worked for them as a cowboy.

Chief Brown often stated that he was a graduate of the "School of Hard Knocks" on the prairies of what is now Oklahoma and along cattle trails to shipping points in the north. It was on a cattle drive that he met the girl destined to become the mother of his five children. During long cattle drives it was customary, when in the vicinity of a ranch known to be friendly to the cowboys, to stop for a big, hot meal. Brown was working with a large herd of cattle moving through the Territory. Mattie Mae Payne had gone to the home of her half-brother, Tom Payne, to help during the birth of his child, and was cooking the meal to be consumed by the Payne regular ranch hands plus the hungry cowboys enroute to a shipping point in Kansas.

The young Brown made three or four return visits during the following year, and on August 14, 1904, he and Mattie Mae Payne were married in Sapulpa. They established their first home near what is now Leonard, Oklahoma, near the site of old Wealaka Mission, where their first two children, Juanita and Sam, were born. Then they moved to Sapulpa where Alice, Jewell and Dorothy were born. All children, except Alice, survive.

Early in life Samuel W. Brown, Jr., assisted his father in tribal affairs and entered into the affairs of the Nation. His services as a representative of the Creek Nation, in problems concerning the Government, were soon in demand because he was an excellent interpreter and his integrity was respected. With a knowledge of several languages and dialects he interpreted in both local and federal courts. In 1894 he accompanied *Isparhechar* (*Katcha Emarthla* was his Square Ground name) and Cowee Harjo to Washington.

As one of meticulous nature, he kept letters, papers, documents and personal notes of occurrences throughout the years, not only pertaining to the Yuchi, but of all tribes.

On July 17, 1951, Chief S. W. Brown, Jr., filed a petition before the Indian Claims Commission of the United States of America: "The Yuchi (Euchee) Tribe of Indians, and S. W. Brown, Legus Brown, Jacob Rolland, Willie Tiger, Fred Skeeter, John James and Jesse James, all members of said Tribe, band or group of Indians, for themselves and for the use and benefit of all other members of said Yuchi (Euchee) Tribe, band or group of Indians, Claimants, the United States of America, Claimee." Page two of this petition in part: "In 1867 they commenced to keep, and still keep, an accurate written roll of the Yuchi Tribe, band or group of Indians. It was and is revised annually, to show births, deaths and marriages, since the last revision. The 1951 revised rolls show a membership of 1,365."

This Yuchi document states:

The lands taken from the predecessors of claimants by the Treaty of August 9, 1814, is described as follows, to-wit:

Commencing at a point on the Atlantic coast in the State of Georgia due east from the most southerly part of the Jackson line thence west across the States of Georgia and Alabama to the Tombigby River; thence down that River to the old line of the Spanish Domain; thence east, south and east along that line to the Atlantic Ocean thence northerly up the coast to the place of beginning, containing more than 11,200,000 acres.

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That the value of such lands August 9, 1814, was two dollars (\$2.00) per acre or twenty-two million four hundred thousand dollars (\$22,400,000.00).

On November 23, 1956, Samuel W. Brown, Jr., dictated and sealed a transfer of his chieftainship to his fourth child, Jewell Brown Caton, and asked that the transfer not be opened or recorded before six months time had elapsed after his death. He predicted that the six months waiting period would reveal any traitors to the tribe. Early in July 1958 the original document was carried from Mathis, Texas, where he had died, to Muskogee, Oklahoma and opened and recorded with the United States Indian Office:

Dictated this twenty-third day of November, 1956, at Mathis, Texas, San Patricio County.

On account of age and may be called by the Breath Master at any time, and while of sound mind and body, with custom of lineage of the Cho-yah-hah, known as Uchees of present day, I have herewith declared the following: This decision being made after lengthy deliberation, and with the protection of my tribe, the Uchee Tribe of Indians, their welfare, and future being my sole consideration, in this decision.

My heritage coming down, of the royal blood, from the rulers of this once Great Uchee Tribe, after seeing in action and having the interest of the Uchee People at heart; being hereditary blood, of the

king blood, to do the duties and carry on for my people, as I have done in the past many years, fight their battles, honestly and honorable, for the rights of each and every individual, of the Uchee tribe, I do hereby name;

My fourth child, Jewell Brown Caton, my daughter, *Whee-Lee-Tche*, my successor to the Uchee Queen, to act, as if I were present, for spiritually, I will be close beside her, and known by others as Chief of the Uchee Tribe.

This has been a study of many years for me, there also will be a council, with a chairman of this council, to meet, subject to call by the Queen or Chief, and Chairman, as often as need be, to attend to the affairs of our people. This Council, must be at all times, in full membership, of a quorum, in every meeting.

There will be many pains and conflicts, as I have met in the past, as your humble servant, but right will win for the the generation to come; *THEREFORE*: You will recognize the lineage of this blood that never ceases.

I do appoint, with the fullest confidence, Jewell Brown Caton, and with the cooperation of the Uchee people, the able Council, together, will meet every trial and obligation that might arise, concerning the Uchee tribe. This is the law followed traditionally, in carrying out the right and erasing the wrong.

Signed: This 23rd day of November, 1956 by Samuel W. Brown, Jr.  
Chief of Uchee Tribe

Witnessed: Lena G. Green,  
Ralph W. Caton  
L. J. McLish

Although Brown had friends everywhere and never met a stranger, he kept aloof and very few knew him well. He affiliated with no organizations or church. After services in the Little Cussetah Indian Church and graveside rituals, the last hereditary Chief of the Yuchi was buried in South Heights Cemetery near Sapulpa, among his relatives.

On June 7, 1958 the "Yuchi Council Fire" was rekindled on the site of the ancient Yuchi Town of Custifica on Yuchi Creek, seven miles south of Phenix City, Alabama, and large portraits of the two Chief Browns were unveiled in the Columbus, Georgia Museum by the late chief's surviving sister, Mrs. N. P. Maxey of Bixby, Oklahoma.\*

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*Note\**

The Yuchi return visit to Georgia in June, 1958, an outstanding event in that state, was given front page publicity from June 2 to 9, in the *The Columbus Enquirer*, and as special news elsewhere by the press throughout the country. Joseph B. Mahan, Jr., archeologist, University of Georgia Center history professor and curator of the Columbus Museum Indian Collection wrote a series of articles explaining and describing this event, as well as other writers in *The Enquirer*. Three bus-loads of Yuchi from Oklahoma made the journey to Phenix City, Georgia, from Oklahoma, in June, 1958, for the dedication of 100 acres of the site of the ancient Yuchi town in the Columbus-Phenix area, which was presented to members of the tribe by the people of Georgia, under the auspices of the Columbus Museum of Arts and Crafts. Plans were outlined to build an exact replica of the ancient Yuchi town on this site as a memorial to the tribe. This project as well as the gift of the

100 acres and the great interest in the history of the Yuchi was the result of the visit of Yuchi Chief S. W. Brown, Jr., in the summer of 1957, to "fulfill a lifelong desire" to see the ancient homeland of his people. He was delighted by the warm welcome that he received from the citizens in and around Seale and Columbus, and jokingly remarked, "Some of the old people I knew thought you people out here were pretty rough," recalling the days of 125 years before this time when the Yuchi were forced to leave Alabama and Georgia with the Creeks over the "Trail of Tears" to the Indian Territory. Chief Brown talked with historians and museum authorities in Georgia, and much of his vast store of the lore and history of the Yuchi, gathered through many years, fitted in and helped explain what they had discovered in their studies of this American Indian tribe.

Chief Brown, Jr., had looked forward to the 1958 event at Columbus, Georgia, but death had come for him six months before this time. His funeral services at the Little Cussetah Church three miles from Sapulpa carried on tradition and history of the Yuchi. This is significant when one reads Dr. Mahan's brief review of Yuchi history (*The Columbus Enquirer*, June 4, 1958), and notes this remark. "The Cussetas were the Muscogean group closest to the Yuchi and were always their friends. The two peoples had lived near each other ever since the Cussetas had come into the Southeast."

During the ceremonies of the last day at the Columbus Museum, Dr. A. R. Kelley, Head of the Department of Archaeology at the University of Georgia, appeared on the program, and described some of the "amazing" events of the past year. He said that new information which was available through the papers of the late Chief Samuel W. Brown, Jr., and his father, the late Chief Samuel W. Brown, Sr., along with new excavations might result in "new and rather startling interpretations." He pointed out that the Yuchi had been thought by students of American Indian culture to "have splintered, divided and scattered early in the 18th Century." However, they "appear to have retained, throughout their scattered existence, their religious and political leadership, and they have more knowledge of their medicine than is possessed by any other tribe." Dr. Kelley said, also, that many archaeological excavations which have been classed as Muscogean or Creek in the past may now be interpreted as Yuchi.—Notes compiled by the Editor of *The Chronicles*, from special data and the series of clippings from *The Columbus Enquirer* (June, 1958) sent by Mrs. Ella Burgess, of Oklahoma City, a Yuchi descendant of Cosena Barnard.