

PAYNE COUNTY

Historical Review

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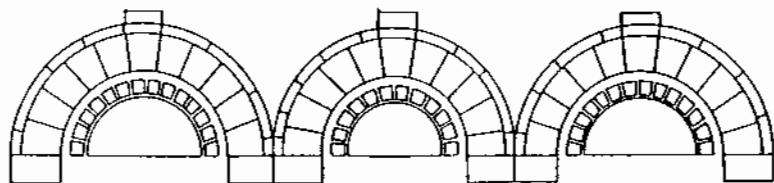
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PAYNE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Charles Bahos' article published in the last Payne County Historical Review mentioned many articles and disputes that have evolved around the question of where was the actual site of the Battle of Round Mountain. In this and subsequent issues of the Review, many articles and other events surrounding the dispute will be presented. Please keep the dates of the original publications in mind.

by Angie Debo

The Site of the Battle of Round Mountain, 1861

Through most of the South the traveler is always aware of the storied sites where Americans matched Americans in the most calamitous of all our wars. But Oklahoma was in that conflict, too; and while the great decisive battles were not fought on its soil, no other area felt the war so much in terms of human tragedy. Why then are its sites so largely unmarked and unregarded?

The events are familiar enough. As soon as the war started the United States abandoned the Indian Territory and the Confederacy took over. The Five Civilized Tribes made alliances with the new government, sent their representatives to its Congress, and enlisted their citizens in its armies. But a considerable body of conservative fullbloods refused to make

Angie Debo authored the following article that was published in the summer of 1949 in *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, volume XXVII, number 2, beginning on page 187. Copyright 1949. Reprinted from *The Chronicles of Oklahoma* (Oklahoma City: Oklahoma Historical Society, 1949).

the shift. They gathered up their property and their families and assembled in a great camp under the Creek leader, Opothle Yahola. Then, as they attempted to move out, they were attacked by a Confederate force of Texans and Indians. Two battles were undecisive, but in a third the Union Indians were completely routed. They fled through a blizzard to the protection of Union forces in Kansas, where they remained in refugee camps, suffering indescribable privations until Federal troops—including their own men—finally recaptured the Indian Territory.

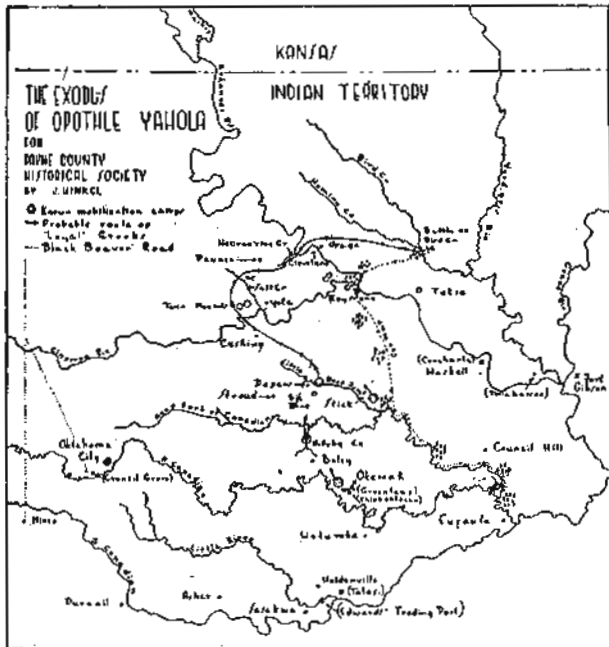
In contemporary records the first of these three battles—fought on November 19, 1861—is designated as the Battle of Round Mountains or the Battle of Red Fork. Twenty-two years later when the War Department published the reports of the Confederate officers, the editor grouped them under the title, “The Engagement at Round Mountain.” (1) One would like to establish the site; for it was the first Civil War battle fought within the present state of Oklahoma.

The white settlers that came to the present Yale vicinity in the land rush of 1893 soon developed a tradition that it had been fought on their soil. The “Twin Mounds” west of Yale in Payne County formed a conspicuous landmark, and at a place on Salt Creek just north of the Pawnee County line the plow turned over objects that could have been the debris of a battlefield and an abandoned Indian camp. This evidence was sufficient to influence Joseph B. Thoburn, the State’s first historian. In his first history of Oklahoma, a small volume prepared as a school text at statehood, he located the battlefield as “Probably within the present limits of Pawnee or Payne counties.”(2)

Then in 1915 Annie Heloise Abel, drawing entirely on documents in Government archives, published the first of her

three great volumes on the Civil War in the Indian Territory. Here(3) she reproduced a map drawn by Special Indian Agent John T. Cox and enclosed in a report he sent from Fort Gibson under date of March 18, 1864. It was an excellent map, showing much more familiarity with the Indian Territory and military movements there than the crude sketches that accompanied the War Department publications.(4) And it showed a careful tracing of Opothie Yahola's route: a camp at the junction of the Deep Fork and the North Canadian north of the present Eufaula; a trail, with camping places marked, up the Deep Fork and then across the country to the mouth of the Red Fork (Cimarron); and the "Battle of Red Fork" (erroneously dated November 15) in the angle formed by the confluence of the Cimarron and the Arkansas, north of the present Keystone. This seemed to settle the location. Thoburn accepted it,(5) and so did later historians: Muriel H. Wright (6) Grant Foreman,(7) and the present writer.(8) No doubt it would have remained there except for the researches of a young real estate agent in Stillwater.(9)

As a dealer in farms John H. Melton had learned of the battlefield tradition, and as a leader of boy scouts he had tramped over the terrain. Fortunately he was unfamiliar with the Cox map and the conclusions of historians. He began to collect affidavits from old settlers, and to present his findings to the Payne County Historical Society. He was encouraged by the President, Berlin Chapman of the history faculty of the Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College, who felt that all possibilities should be explored before the case was closed. The historians were incredulous, but Melton's persistence forced them to re-examine their evidence. Then they realized that except for the Cox map the Yale site was as reasonable as the Keystone. Finally at the request of the present writer and



Map showing probable route followed by Loyal Creeks
on the way to Kansas in 1861.

through the agency of Dr. Chapman, the Research Foundation of the college procured a photostat of a statement made by the Confederate Creek leaders in 1868.(10) This document had lain in the files at Washington, and had never before been examined by Oklahoma historians. And strangely enough it built up a strong case for the Yale site.

At a meeting of the Payne County Historical Society on March 6, 1949 Dr. Chapman presided over a panel discussion in which Dean Trickett and James H. Gardner, Tulsa historians, Miss Wright, Mr. Melton, and the present writer presented their findings. No conclusion was reached; but Ola J. Rogers, longtime resident of Cleveland, presented the first evidence of an exact location of the Keystone site. The Society, therefore, adopted a resolution advocating the most extensive publicity in an attempt to uncover additional data. As part of this policy the writer was requested to sum up the evidence so far amassed.(11) The present paper is the result of this request.

The first question is: What did the Union Indians want? This may have a bearing on their subsequent movements. Fortunately this is easy to answer. The evidence is complete and overwhelming that they were determined to remain neutral. James Scott, an aged Creek who had been ten years old at the time of the exodus explained it thus in 1937:(12)

“Opuihli Yahola’s heart was sad at all the war talk. He visited homes of his followers or any of the Indians and gave them encouragement to face all these things, but above all things to stay out of the war. It was no affair of the Indians.”

The Shawnee, Thomas Wildcat Alford, who heard the Civil War story and retold in his childhood, wrote of the

decision made by the Shawnees, Delawares, Kickapoos, Piankashaws, and others living in the western part of Creek country.(13)

“This is no fight of ours. It is between the whites—no good comes to us from war—let them fight their own fight.”

This is the way it appeared in 1862 to Baptiste Peoria, who was sent from the Osage agency in Kansas to investigate the situation.(14)

“A good many Indians complainedthat they were compelled to pick up the hatchet and fight their Great Father, after they had agreed to remain neutral Opothleyoholo said he would have nothing to do with it[He] warned them over and over again that bad white men were getting them into trouble.”

A stronghold of this “Loyal” faction was on the southwestern Creek frontier near the present Holdenville. Here the Creek town of Talasi formed an agricultural community at the mouth of the Little River; and James Edwards, a white man married to a Creek woman, kept an important trading post there. The famous mixed-blood Cherokee scout, Jesse Chisholm, had married Edwards’ daughter, and from this place and a post he had established farther up the South Canadian near the present Asher, he carried on his trading ventures with the wild tribes of the Southwest. A few miles above Edwards’ trading post, near the present Sasakwa, was a Shawnee settlement. Far up the river near the present Purcell, a band of Delawares had settled under the leadership of the great scout, Black Beaver.(15)

Here in the West away from the pressure of their Confederate dominated governments the “Loyal” leaders met and called an inter-tribal council of their faction. Micco Hutke

of Talasi and Bob Deer and Joe Ellis, Shawnees, then made a perilous journey to Kansas in September, 1861, where for the first time they managed to make contact with Federal officials. They carried an oral message(14) from the council and a letter—dated August 15, 1861—from Opothle Yahola and Oktarharsars Harjo (usually known as Sands), second chief of the Creeks in the Canadian River District, who had refused to join the South with his tribe. The letter carried a desperate appeal for the protection promised the Indians in their treaties with the United States:(17)

“Now I write to the President our Great Father who removed us to our present homes & made a treaty, and you said that in our new homes we should be defended . . . and should we be injured by any body you would come with your soldiers & punish them, but now the wolf has come, men who are strangers tread our soil, our children are frightened & the mothers cannot sleep for fear . . . We . . . want you to send us word what to do. We do not hear from you & we send a letter, & we pray you to answer it.”

The answer they carried back was written by E. H. Carruth, a former educator among the Seminoles, who had been commissioned by Senator Lane of Kansas to negotiate with the Indian tribes. It stated: “I am authorized to inform you that the President will not forget you. Our armies will soon go South and those of your people who are true and loyal to the Government will be treated as friends.”(18) Sands, Micco Hutke, Bob Deer, and some Seminoles and Chickasaws—also from the western frontier—then managed to make their way again through that faction-torn border with a second appeal for help. This time they were willing to join a Federal expedition to drive out the Confederates. As Sands expressed it

through his interpreter:(19)

“Wants to get with U. S. Army so that I can get back to my people....Wants the Great Father to send the Union Red people and Troops down the Black Beaver road and he will guide them to his country and then all his people will be for the Union—That he cannot get back to his people any other way—.... At the time I left my Union people I told them to look to the Beaver Road until I come. Promised his own people that the U. S. Army would come back the Beaver Road and wants to go that way—The way he left his country his people was in an elbow surrounded by secessions and his people is not strong enough against them for Union and that is the reason he has come up for help.”

All these actions have an important bearing on your problem. Sands' reference to the “Black Beaver Road” is clear. When the Union garrisons had abandoned the military posts in the Indian Territory at the beginning of the war, they had called on that intrepid Delaware to guide them to Kansas. They started from a place near the present Minco and cut north across the prairie on the approximate route of the present U. S. Highway 81. This apparently was the trail followed by the “Loyal” delegates to avoid interception.

In the 1930's Thomas Ulvan Taylor of the University of Texas engaged in the most careful research on the life of Jesse Chisholm. From surviving members of the family he learned that in 1861 the famous scout conducted a company of Union Indians from the area between the two Canadians in the present Pottawatomie, Seminole, and adjoining counties. Word was sent out through all the settlements and the Indians flocked to the meeting place near his store at the old Chisholm

Spring, two miles east of Asher. They loaded their possessions on pack horses or on travois made by attaching a platform on trailing poles fastened to each side of the pony. At least seven members of Chisholm's own family were in the exodus. They stopped at the present site of Wichita, Kansas where a creek still bears the name of Chisholm.(20)

Taylor talked with a few survivors of the journey in 1939, but unfortunately he did not learn what route they took. Did they cut straight north toward the Arkansas? There is some slight indication on Cox's map that they did. In that case they should have passed close to the Twin Mounds. Or did they turn west to the "Black Beaver Road"? This seems the more probable. Jesse Chisholm had a third trading post at Council Grove, on the North Canadian about six miles west of the present Oklahoma City;(21) and it is known that a group of Shawnee and other Indians who fled to the north early in 1863 made their rendezvous there.(22) And when Chisholm returned to the Indian Territory at the close of the war with a stock of goods for the Council Grove trading post, he followed the faint trace of the "Black Beaver" route.(23)

But whichever track they traveled, it is clear that the Confederate occupation had driven the "Loyal" faction to the extreme western edge of civilized Indian settlement. One cannot tell from the story of Taylor's informants whether their flight preceded or followed the greater exodus under Opothle Yahola. The latter was already in motion when Sands was pleading for reinforcements down the "Beaver Road." And there is evidence that this party, too, was driven far to the west.

In the council with United States officials at Fort Smith at the close of the war, Sanford Perryman was the spokesman of the "Loyal" Creeks. In summing up their case he said, "we commenced moving out west for our safety,

trusting in the Great Spirit for protection, and hoping also that He would send us aid through the means of our Great Father at Washington.”(24) Eight years later John B. Jones, United States agent to the Cherokees informed the Commissioner of Indian Affairs: “They tried to avoid a fight, to make their way peaceably to the union army in Kansas, by a far western route”.(25) Neither of these men would have been likely to refer to a journey from the mouth of the Deep Fork to the mouth of the Cimarron through the heart of the Creek settlements as a movement “out west” or “a far western route.” Perryman in fact had grown up in Tulsa.

There is little doubt, however, that one large group did gather at the mouth of the Deep Fork. Opothle Yahola’s home was in the vicinity, north of the present Brush Hill community, and a dense settlement of his compatriots lay between the North and the South Canadian. James Scott and other elderly Creeks interviewed in the late 1930’s distinctly stated that there was a mobilization camp there.(26) But Scott himself belonged to Greenleaf Town, a settlement south and southwest of the present Okemah,(27) and his people made their rendezvous farther up the rivers. He remembered the events very clearly: (28)

“I did not fully realize or understand why I was given orders to round up the cattle. I wondered at the vast amount of cattle being killed and the meat being dried, the pork being cooked down At all the homes of the neighbors, I saw all sorts of preparations As time passed, the neighboring Indians gathered and joined with the other Indians at Helluby[sic.] Creek, northwest of what is now Boley.

Scott then went on to tell how the two camps merged:
“We were joined by other groups and we in turn

joined other larger groups. These were the Indians that Opuithli Yahola had mobilized near the junction of the North Fork and the Deep Fork of the Canadian River, near the present town of Eufaula..... I was given the task to help drive the cattle, but I relinquished my job over to the older boys when we joined the main body.”

Where was the union effected? Historians relying on the Cox map have assumed that the party from the west moved down to join the great camp at the mouth of the Deep Fork. But exactly the opposite could have occurred. The lower Deep Fork was unsafe. On August 1 or 2, Albert Pike, who had negotiated the Confederate treaties with the Indians, had authorized the Creek citizen, James M. C. Smith, to raise and command a company of Creek volunteers to be stationed at North Fork Village, at the present Eufaula “to act as a police force, watch and apprehend disaffected persons, intercept improper communications, and prevent the driving of cattle to Kansas.”(29) This company was raised soon after, and apparently for some time it remained in the vicinity. No wonder the “Loyal” Creeks had been driven to the far west for the forwarding of their “improper communications” with the Federal officials in Kansas. It would seem to have been even more essential to move their herds and their families north by the same circuitous route. And now the Payne County Historical Society’s “new” document from the Government archives supports the view that the lower camp moved up the Deep Fork, or at least that the two groups met each other half way.

This is a sworn statement made at Washington by Smith, D. N. McIntosh, who commanded a regiment of Creek volunteers, and Tim Barnett, a prominent mixed blood, who operated a trading house near the present Wetumka.(30) One cannot accept all their arguments, for their statement was

prepared to defeat certain claims of the “Loyal” faction; but they were participants in the events they related, and certainly familiar with the locations involved.(31) Their account begins:

“About the first of August, A. D. 1861, Ho-poith-la-yo-hola commenced gathering his people into Camp on North Fork of Canadian, a few miles above Thlobthlocco or Greenleaf Town in the Creek Nation. The ‘Talk,’ put out among the people was, that the Country would soon be over-run by a great army from the North, which would sweep over it like a besom of destruction: that the ‘Old Chief’ would lead his people, with their flocks and herds, into the Wilderness, westward, out of the track of the army; where they could remain in peace and safety until the storm of war should be over.”

The statement goes on to tell how Colonel Douglas H. Cooper, the Confederate commander, went to the Creek council ground, near the present Council Hill, and that messages passed back and forth between him and the “Loyal” party in a futile effort to make peace.(32) “This was about the 1st of October 1861.” An attempt was made to hold “a friendly council” at Thlobthlocco, neighbor town to Greenleaf; but when the Southern delegates arrived there, “It was ascertained that Ho-poith-la-yo-hola had moved his Camp to some point above the ‘Big Pond,’ near the head of Deep Fork of Canadian.”

This certainly refers to the Little Deep Fork rather than the Deep Fork, for the “Big Pond” was about six or seven miles southeast of the present Depew.(33) Opothle Yahola’s route in cutting across the country to this new location can only be conjectured; so far as the writer knows, there is no record of

an established trail in that direction.(34) Apparently for part of the distance he followed up the Little Deep Fork, for a Euchee named Willie Tiger quoted his grandfather as saying that the Eucheas joined him at a mobilization camp near the present Slick.(35)

Cooper then moved up to “Brown’s Creek near Sells’ Store, on the North side of Deep Fork”—a location that has not yet been determined—and attempted again to negotiate. Then he moved up the stream to Opothle Yahola’s camp, “but found it deserted and a large trail leading in a Northwestward direction toward the Red Fork of the Arkansas, apparently a week or more old. This trail was followed, and finally on the 19th day of November 1861, Hopoith-lo-yo-hola’s Camp was discovered a few miles North of Red for near a place called ‘Round Mountains’ in the Cherokee Country”

This certainly makes the Twin Mounds a most probable site. True, they were not in the Cherokee country. The boundary, which had been fully surveyed in 1849-50 and apparently was well known to the Indians, followed the present Payne-Pawnee County line. But the meaning seems to be that the camp near the Round Mountains was in the Cherokee country—which is in complete accord with Yale neighborhood tradition.

When Cooper made his official report of the campaign in January, 1862, he made no attempt at exact location.(36) He said that on November 15 his forces,

“.... in all about 1,400 men, were moved up the Deep Fork of the Canadian of Hopoeithleyahola’s forces. The camp, which had been abandoned, was found, and the trail from it followed.... until the 19th of the month named on which day some of the disaffected party were seen and a few prisoners taken.

From those prisoners information was obtained that a portion of Hopoeithleyahola's party were near the Red Fork of the Arkansas River, on their route towards Walnut Creek, where a fort was being erected, and which had for some time been their intended destination in the event of not receiving promised aid from Kansas before being menaced or attacked."

One should not strain a point here, but it can be noticed that Walnut Creek in Southern Kansas is almost straight north of Yale. Probably Cooper was mistaken about Opothle Yahola's intended destination—the "Loyal" Indians actually moved east into the Cherokee settlements—but he naturally judged it from the location in which he found them.

In 1923 the reminiscences of Captain June Peak of Dallas were published in the *Dallas Morning News*. A white man who fought with the Texas troops, he knew very little about the Indian Territory background, but he seemed to remember some of the circumstances of the campaign: Peak said that Cooper moved his command to "Dwight Mission southwest of Fort Gibson"—probably a reference to Tullahassee Mission, northwest of Fort Gibson.⁽³⁷⁾ Here rumors came in of large concentrations of "Osages" in the northwest; and Cooper sent Peak and nineteen other picked men out that way on a scouting trip. They left camp about September 1, and marched up the Arkansas "several hundred miles as far as the Big Bend."

One would like to establish a positive location of this "Big Bend" or "Horseshoe Bend" of the Arkansas. It is often mentioned in contemporary accounts. There was a Cherokee community there at least as early as 1852, which was usually referred to as "Skiatooka's settlement."⁽³⁸⁾ Later in the campaign Cooper made "a forced march" from this settlement

to Tulsa in one day. There was an important Osage trail leading to it from Bird Creek.(39) These references indicate the bend near the present Cleveland; and this inference is supported by the testimony of Mr. Rogers and of Judge Redmond S. Cole of Tulsa. When Mr. Rogers came to the vicinity in 1895 there were a few old apple trees in the narrow valley east of the river at the present Osage, and old settlers said they had been planted before the Civil War. This seems to establish a pre-war Cherokee settlement; for those Indians had to surrender that portion of their land immediately after the war, and the Osages, who succeeded them, would not have planted orchards. Judge Cole, who is associated with the Gulf Oil Company, states that when he came to Tulsa in 1923, oil men generally referred to the field in the loop of the river west of Cleveland as the Big Bend.(40)

From this well known place on the Arkansas, the scouting party turned south. They learned of a large force being organized several days' ride to the southwest by Opothle Yahola, "an Osage." They accordingly marched into the "Osage" country, under pretense of searching for Kickapoos and Lipans. There they were "very courteously received and pleasantly entertained, though we were not fooling Opothyola." They then returned and reported to Cooper, who immediately started in pursuit of the Union leader.

In spite of its geographical and ethnological impossibilities this account does place Opothle Yahola in approximately the same location as the Smith-McIntosh-Barnett statement. When Cooper learned that the Union Indians were concentrating at some distance to the southwest of a "Big Bend" in the Arkansas River above Tulsa, he certainly would not have sought them at the mouth of the Deep Fork.

One should be able to deduce the probabilities of

Opothle Yahola's route and the place of the Red Fork crossing from the recognized trails of the area; for the blackjack-postoak jungle that covered it must have made difficult going for a large company of men, women, and children with their loaded wagons and herds of cattle. Washington Irving found it even for men on horseback like traveling "through forest of cast iron." But unfortunately our knowledge of pre-Civil War trails is incomplete.

Opothle Yahola could have followed a known trail to the Keystone site. There was an old Osage hunting and war trail leading south from the mouth of the Cimarron River; and in 1834 the United States had blazed a military route—which was never used—in the same approximate direction to the mouth of Little River.(41) On the other hand the present writer has found no direct evidence of any pre-Civil War trail passing the Yale site. There was a favorite buffalo hunting ground on the prairie west of the present Cushing, but the trails leading to it have not been traced.

There is, however, some slight indication that the Twin Mounds were accepted in those early days as a recognized landmark. In 1848 Lieutenant Abraham Buford with a company of dragoons had explored a wagon route to Santa Fe along the north side of the Cimarron, following in the Yale vicinity the approximate route of Highway 51. This road was never used; but it was shown on the Government map of the Creek-Cherokee survey. Here west of a creek and just south of the trail is *one* conspicuous round hill in the exact location of the Twin Mounds on Salt Creek.(42)

In the years immediately following the Civil War the important Shawnee Cattle Trail from the Texas ranges to the Kansas railheads passed through the vicinity. It derived its name and its approximate route from an earlier trail to a

Shawnee settlement south of the Canadian. Contemporary maps show it passing about six miles west of the mounds and three or four miles west of the supposed battle site.(43) By 1883 the maps showed another trail from the Sac and Fox agency in the vicinity of the present Stroud to the Pawnee agency at Pawnee and on to Kansas; it followed up Salt Creek east of the mounds, and passed about two miles east of the supposed battlefield.(44) Homesteaders who came a few years later remember a trail crossing the Cimarron almost directly south of the mounds skirting them on the west, and veering slightly west of north to cross Salt Creek by an old ford at the exact traditional battle site.(45) A completely grassed-over trace is still visible over the bank north of the ford. Thus with all these north-south routes crossing the area, it is at least probable that a pre-Civil War trail lay in the vicinity.

The various accounts of how the two forces met seem hopelessly confused. The first known report of the fight is found in a letter to Chief John Ross of the Cherokees by Moty Canard and Echo Harjo, the legally constituted chiefs of the Creeks. These men, of course, headed the government that had made the Confederate alliance, and from which Opothle Yahola's faction had withdrawn its support.(46) It is fairly certain that both had been with Cooper during the engagement. The letter was written from Concharty—north of the present Haskell—to which Cooper's forces had retired immediately after the battle; and the date is November 25, the day after they arrived.

This letter states that Echo Harjo went into the camps of his estranged tribesmen the evening before the battle and talked with them in an effort to make peace; but they repelled his overtures (more probably this threats) and stated that they were relying on help promised by the Cherokees. As for the

fight itself we are told only that it took place “at Red fork,” and that the chiefs were very unhappy over the fratricidal strife.(47)

James Scott remembers that Opothle Yahola’s moving column was first ordered to halt by a McIntosh slave.(48)

“He rode the length of the wagon train issuing these orders. Many of our men answered, ‘We are not going to stop: we are on our way.’ The negro had accomplished his duty and returned to his comrades. Seeing that we could not be detained, our pursuers made the attack. The attack was made on a hill side and I would not know where this hill is now or about where it was. Our women, children, and some of the men were sent on with the wagons, teams, and cattle. The rest remained to check the attack. The men hid behind the bushes, trees, and large rocks. The enemy making the upgrade attack could not successfully accomplish anything. Our men gave the chase and returned with a captured flag. I have no knowledge of the results of obtaining the flag or what became of it.”

Captain Peak, whose errors of fact almost disqualify him as a witness, says that as Cooper was marching against Opothle Yahola, the latter, “who was by no means destitute of scouts, kept himself informed as to our movements and he came to meet us. We met early one morning in October at Round Mountain. The day was spent in skirmishing, without any losses or advantage to speak of on either side.”(49) The statement of the Southern Creek leaders after relating the discovery of the enemy camp near “Round Mountains.” goes on to say:

“Here a Company of Texans, without orders, rode after dark into Hopoith-lo-yo-ola’s Camp, and were

driven out by his men and followed to Col. Cooper's Camp, with the loss of their Captain and several others killed, several wounded and taken prisoners. The hostile Creeks and Seminoles were there repulsed and made their escape under cover of the darkness."

Cooper's official report states that "After crossing the Red Fork it became evident that the party was near and the command was pushed rapidly forward." Here the question occurs: If the crossing had been at a recognizable place on the river such as its mouth, would he not have stated that fact? He does describe the terrain, and strangely enough he does not mention mountains or even hills.

"About 4 o'clock p.m. some camp smokes were discovered in front a short distance and the enemy's scouts seen at various points. A charge was ordered to be made by the detachment of Texas cavalry... upon the camp, which, however, was found to have been recently deserted. Other scouts, being discovered beyond the camp, were pursued by the Texas troops about 4 miles, when they disappeared in the timber skirting a creek, upon which it was afterwards ascertained the forces of Hopoeithleyohola were then encamped. While searching for the fugitives the troops were fired upon by the concealed enemy, and 1 man was killed. The enemy immediately appeared in large force, and our troops, rallying and forming, succeeded in making a stand for a short time, when the efforts of the vastly superior force of the enemy to outflank and enclose them caused them to retire.... towards the main body of our forces."

Meanwhile, "So soon as the firing was heard at the position of the main body the Choctaw and Chickasaw regi-

ment was formed and advanced towards the enemy." By this time the "exceeding darkness of the night rendered the relative position of our foes and friends uncertain," and the two forces advanced within sixty yards of each other before they opened fire. A "short but sharp conflict" followed, during which the Choctaws and Chickasaws were reinforced by Texans and Confederate Creeks. They fought dismounted and thus suffered few casualties, but many horses were hit. Then "the firing of the enemy ceased, and under cover of the darkness he made good his retreat." Cooper then sent a detachment of Texans and Choctaws "to examine the ravine in front and on the flanks, when it was found that the enemy had left the field and retreated in the direction of their camps.... Soon after daylight on the 20th the main camp of the enemy was entered, and it was found that they had precipately abandoned it."(51)

Captain M. J. Brinson of the Texas detachment that first engaged Opothle Yahola's forces wrote his report six days after the battle, but it yields no additional details. Captain R. A. Young of the Choctaw-Chickasaw regiment—whose report is dated November 30—adds a "prairie," which "was on fire at my right" as he advanced from the Confederate camp to meet the Union Indians.(52) Captain Peak also remembers a prairie and a fire. After the day's skirmishing they "went into camp for the night on a level prairie, covered with sedge grass waist high, beginning to dry considerably." They made a coral with their wagons and placed their horses and mules inside; but about one o'clock they found themselves surrounded by fire, while the enemy was "raining bullets and arrows into our confused rout." They abandoned all their provisions, "a dozen or so wagons, scores of mules, and fifteen or twenty dead and wounded men" as they hastily retreated to "Dwight's Mission."(53)

Thus we have the terrain from eye witness accounts: "Round Mountains" marking the location but untouched by the fighting; a creek skirted with timber, where the Union Indians were camped, and where the Confederates were repulsed; a ravine "in front and on the flanks" and a prairie, where the two forces met in the darkness close to Cooper's camp; and—if a boy's memory can be trusted—a hillside with "bushes, trees, and large rocks." And since the identification must depend partially on the debris of the battlefield, the losses also must be noted.

Peak's "fifteen or twenty" Confederate casualties shrink to six men killed and four wounded in the chief's letter to John Ross; and the same number are listed by name and rank in Cooper's official report. The Southern Creek statement adds "several wounded and taken prisoners" by Opothle Yahola's warriors when they drove the Texans back from their camp. Their bodies were found when the abandoned camp was entered the next morning; "and from appearances, [they] had been tortured, and their skulls mashed by the squaws with their hominy pestles." Probably there is no truth in this atrocity story; certainly Cooper does not name these victims in this casualty list. As to the Union losses, the two Creek chiefs reported conservatively that "several" of the enemy had been killed. Cooper, anxious to claim the victory in an indecisive engagement, swelled this estimate to "about 110 killed and wounded." He also found in Opothle Yahola's "precipitately abandoned" camp "the chief's buggy, 12 wagons, flour, sugar, coffee, salt, &c., besides many cattle and ponies." Wiley Britton, whose Indian Territory military service in the Union army did not include this campaign, followed Cooper's report rather closely in *The Civil War on the Border*, but when he came to this incident he reduced the spoils to "a few old

ponies and broken wagons, which were worthless.”(54)

Both parties claimed the victory, but both withdrew immediately from the vicinity. Cooper arrived at Concharty on the 24th, a date that rules out neither the Keystone nor the Yale site. The march from the latter place seems difficult but not impossible. One can give him five days by assuming that he left in the morning and arrived at night. He believed Opothle Yahola was on his way to Kansas, but the old leader, apparently reluctant to leave the Indian country, sought refuge with his Cherokee friends. The route he took rules out the Keystone site if we are correct in locating the Big Bend at Cleveland; for according to the Southern statement he “crossed the Arkansas and moved down” to that settlement (55) As Sanford Perryman put it, “We.... resumed our journey north, and crossed the Arkansas, and camped in the Cherokee nation.”(56) He could have followed an established route; as early as 1843 there was a well known “Osage crossing” just above Cleveland, and an important hunting trail following up a creek—apparently Hellroaring Creek—to the west a few miles and then turning south.(57)

Cooper soon moved from Concharty up to Tulsa. Opothle Yahola moved from the Arkansas to “Shoal Creek” (Hominy Creek), the Confederates worked around to their north, and a second battle was fought at a known site on Bird Creek. The rest of the campaign has no relation to the place of the first engagement.

This disposes of all known accounts from those who were present at the battle. Other evidence comes from the traditions and relics found at the sites.

There are numerous “Round Mountains” and creeks in the vicinity of Keystone. Here Mr. Rogers’ location is based on the testimony of the late J. C. Byers, who came to the

present Osage County in the early 1870's, and who always showed a keen and intelligent interest in local history. In 1876, he said, he found remains of wagons near the high round hill in Section 13, Township 20 North, Range 8 East, and believed it to be the battlefield.(58) Another hill in the vicinity could account for the plural—"Round Mountains"—and a creek fits Cooper's description of the terrain. The location—three miles north and six miles west of Keystone, and northwest of the great loop of the Cimarron—is far enough up the river to account for the failure of contemporary writers to mention the mouth, and yet close enough to harmonize with the Cox map.

One cannot disregard Byers' testimony simply because it stands alone. And there is even the possibility that more may be obtained. But thanks to Mr. Melton's indefatigable efforts more evidence has been collected to support the Yale site. The most convincing comes from the Pawnees, who settled there when they acquired the land from the Creeks and Cherokees in 1876.

Thomas Pratt, now eighty-seven years old, remembers "that many years ago" his uncle, Little Chief, told him if he "would go to Salt Creek at the place of the ford" he "would find many things." He "did that" and found "various iron pieces," such as "parts of stoves, wagon irons, cooking things, lying near the creek," and "similar things for about 1/2 mile southward from the rocky ford along the north side of the creek." His uncle told him "that during the fight that had occurred there the people who had wagons and camp things had pushed their enemy back to the south—fighting all the way to the little branch located on the north side and at the base of the Twin Mounds and that they had fought among the rocks of this little creek." The old man knows nothing of the Civil War or of Opothle Yahola, only that his uncle had known

“some of the Indian Scouts who accompanied the soldiers at the time of the battle.”(59)

T. S. Kerby , an eighty-four-year-old white pioneer, who still lives on his farm near the Twin Mounds, came to the Pawnee reservation early in 1893 to assist the Indians in improving their farms. “Early one morning in about the last week of August just before the opening of the Pawnee lands for white settlement,” he and a well-known Pawnee named Nelson Rice stopped at the home of another Pawnee, John Brown, who lived near the Salt Creek ford. “During our brief visit . . . Rice pointed to the flat low-land bordering Salt Creek on the north just east of the ford, and made the statement that that was where the big fight was, to which John Brown agreed, and they told me then that an Indian fight had occurred there during the Civil War. I did not ask them what Indians were fighting.”(60)

Other white men connected this Indian tradition of a battle with the known fact of Opothle Yahola’s exodus. Andrew W. Little, a Cushing attorney, remembers the story told by his father, William R. (Billy) Little, who came to the vicinity in 1880 and worked as a cowboy on the Pawnee reservation. Part of the time he was employed by the United States agent, Major Edward Hale Bowman—whose daughter he eventually married—to take charge of the cattle issued to the Indians. He and his cowboys lived in a log cabin just north of the Twin Mounds. Here he said that he discovered:

“At a place on Salt Creek. . . about four miles Northwest of the . . . Mounds and near the border of Payne and Pawnee Counties, but is Pawnee County, many pieces of broken wagons, metal tires used on wagons, metal harness buckles, pieces of broken dishes and pottery, iron cooking utensils, Indian bows

and arrows, bones apparently of human beings, and numerous other articles, and between this place and the Twin Mounds a few of such articles were found.”

Little reported his discovery to Major Bowman. Bowman investigated for himself and then instructed Little to bury the bones and gather up a wagon load of the irons to be used in the Government blacksmith shop at the Agency. When his young employee asked for an explanation, Bowman told him a story very inaccurate in detail, but definitely linking the site with Opothle Yahola.

Years later Bowman told the same story to Andrew Little, his grandson.(61) A fight, he said, had occurred there

“ . . . during the early part of the Civil War, when a band of Creek Indians who were in Texas, and sympathetic to the Union Forces [had been] chased out of Texas by Texas Rangers and Rebel Indians; that this Band . . . under Chief Opothle Yahola . . . crossed the Cimarron River South of the . . . Twin Mounds and camped some few miles distant on Salt Creek. . . their pursuers being some miles behind; that during the night the Creek scouts posted on the Twin Mounds, and South, reported that their pursuers, Texas Rangers and Rebel Indians were getting close and that they expect a battle soon; . . . that during the battle which followed, commencing the next morning when the Creeks were attacked . . . that the Creeks were defeated . . . many being killed and wounded, and those who survived fled North to Kansas.”

When the white homesteaders came to the site in September, 1893, they found the same tradition, but so far it has been impossible to trace it to any firsthand knowledge. W. E. Hohimer, now deceased, attempted it in a letter he wrote in

1928 at the age of eighty-two to the Oklahoma Historical Society. He had talked with Billy Little, and his account of the battle is substantially the Bowman-Little story; but he located the battlefield on the authority of the Creek citizen, "Goob" Childers, whom he had known at Red Fork, now a part of Tulsa, in 1887.(62) It is probable that Childers was with Opothle Yahola's party, but he died in 1885,(63) and even disregarding this discrepancy in dates, it would have been difficult for Hohimer to identify the place from a conversation at Tulsa.

But when the settlers describe the relics they found at the site, they are on safer ground.(64) Even now one can find fragments of dishes, thick ironstone china highly colored with blue; pieces of cast iron cooking pots; crockery, sometimes showing the handle or neck of a jug; wrought-iron nails; perhaps a rusted lock from a chest or trunk, even the barrel of a musket.(65) These are on both sides of the old ford on Salt Creek. Here is an ideal location for the main camp of Opothle Yahola, the camp from which the Texans were driven back at the beginning of the battle, the camp which Cooper found abandoned the following morning. A few articles have been found on the mounds themselves, a few lying between; these, however, are probably no more numerous than one could discover in any rural area in Oklahoma. Several graves found by early settlers on the mounds are accounted for by the fact that the Pawnees had a burial place there after they settled in the vicinity.(66)

One would surmise that Cooper's camp was near the ravine that skirts the north side of the mounds; and the fighting that James Scott remembered could have taken place among the huge rocks along its sides. But if there were bones of horses on the prairie where the Confederates finally drove off their

pursuers, or if there is even a modicum of truth in Peak's report of abandoned wagons, the remains were not impressive enough to attract notice.

Most of the accounts of the early white settlers contain a tradition of buried treasure. According to the story told to Billy Little by Major Bowman, the Union Creeks "had been paid a large sum of money in gold coin by the Government while in Texas," which they hid before the battle. Andrew W. Little remembers that "back in about 1900 quite a party of men, my Father being one of them made quite a search to locate it." Another old resident recalled "that strange Indian would come here and go to the vicinity of the Twin Mounds and dig and search."(67)

Improbable as this legend seems, it does help to connect the site with the Creek exodus; for there is a persistent Creek tradition that Opothle Yahola did in fact start out with a large sum of money, which he buried somewhere along the route.(68) One can state positively that he had not received any recent payment from the United States. The regular annuities to his tribe had been cut off by the war; and in any case they would have been paid to the constitutional Creek government, not to an influential private citizen. He might have buried some money of his own for in happier days he had been a very rich Indian; or he might even have buried some money entrusted to him by humbler tribesmen. As to the place, that is lost in the mists of time.

The present writer does not feel the same uncertainty about the location of the battlefield. For the Keystone site we have only the Cox map and the supporting evidence of Mr. Rogers, but for Yale we have the eye-witness account of the Southern Creek leaders, a formidable list of probabilities and inferences, a somewhat confused tradition by Pawnee and

white settlers unfamiliar with the history, and impressive remains of an important camp ground. To this one historian at least, the evidence is conclusive.

ENDNOTES

1. *War of the Rebellion: Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington, 1883), First Series, Vol. VIII, p. 4.

2. Joseph B. Thoburn and Isaac M. Holcomb, *A History of Oklahoma* (San Francisco, 1908), p. 62 n. In a second edition of this text (Oklahoma City, 1914) a location "within the present limits of Osage County" is probably a slip.

3. Annie Heloise Abel, *The American Indian as Slaveholder and Secessionist* (Cleveland, 1915), p. 263.

4. *War of the Rebellion*, Atlas (Washington, 1891-95), Plates CXIX and CLX.

5. Joseph B. Thoburn, *A History of Oklahoma* (New York, Chicago, 1916), I, 290.

6. Joseph B. Thoburn and Muriel H. Wright, *Oklahoma: A History of the State and its People* (New York, 1929), I, p. 325.

7. Grant Foreman, *A History of Oklahoma* (Norman, 1945), pp. 105-6.

8. Angie Debo, *Tulsa: From Creek Town to Oil Capital* (Norman, 1943), pp. 25-26.

9. The site of the "Battle of Round Mountain" fought in 1861, the first engagement in the Indian Territory during the War between the States, is important in the marking of historic sites now under way through the Historical Society's Committee for Marking Historic Sites, of which Maj. Gen. Wm. S. Key is Chairman. The exact site of this battle, though settled

beyond supposed reasonable doubt with the publication of the map by John T. Cox, in 1915, has always been one in question. As mentioned above in footnote 2, by Doctor Debo, Joseph B. Thoburn was the first among Oklahoma historians to point to its probable location, in 1908. John B. Meserve in his biography of "Chief Opothleyahola" mentioned the "indecision as to the precise location of this battlefield, whether near Yale or at a place about a mile north of the present town of Keystone, in Pawnee County, Oklahoma," writing in 1931 (see *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. IX, No. 4, p. 447). In the Indian Archives of the Historical Society, the file of John B. Meserve's original correspondence contains letters from James H. Hale, a pioneer citizen of Pawnee, dated 1931, stating that he believed that Opothleyahola's route north to Kansas in 1861 followed the western trail known as the "Shawnee Trail," which would indicate the location of the "Battle of Round Mountain" farther west than the Keystone site.—Ed.

10. The National Archives (Washington), Records of the Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Received, Choctaw, C-676/1868 (Enclosure), Statement relative to the Exodus of Ho-poith-la-yo-ho-la and his followers from the Creek and Cherokee Country in the fall and winter of 1861 and '62. Cited here after as "Statement".

11. For copy of resolution see *Stillwater News-Press*, March 7, 1949.

12. Phillips Collection, University of Oklahoma (Norman), WPA Project S-149. Interview with James Scott, March 29, 1937. Cited hereafter as WPA Project S-149.

13. Thomas Wildcat Alford, *Civilization* (Norman, 1936), p. 6

14. Commissioner of Indian Affairs, *Annual Report*, 1862, p. 174.

15. Alford, *Civilization*, p. 1; T. U. Taylor, *Jesse Chisholm* (Bandera, Texas, (1929) pp. 26-29; W. B. Morrison, "Fort Arbuckle," *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, VI (1929), 27. For location of Talisi see Frank Gouldsmith Speck, "The Creek Indians of Taskigi Town," *Memoirs of the American Anthropological Association* (Lancaster, Pennsylvania, II (1907), Part 2, map.

16. National Archives, Indian Affairs, Creek 1861/B787.

17. *Ibid.*, 1861/B484.

18. *War of the Rebellion*, First Series, Vol. VIII, p. 25.

19. National Archives, Indian Affairs, Special Files, No. 201, Southern Superintendency, 1861/C1400.

20. Taylor, *Jesse Chisholm*, pp. 177-179, 184, 192.

21. *Ibid.*, pp. xviii, 25.

22. Alford, *Civilization*, pp. 608.

23. Taylor, *Jesse Chisholm*, pp. 193-94, statement by James R. Mead, the founder of Wichita, who was Chisholm's partner and accompanied him on the trip; Thoburn and Wright, *Oklahoma*, I, 311, on authority of George Chisholm, adopted son of Jesse, who also was in the caravan. These freighters' wagons left a scar on the prairie deep enough to guide the first cattle drives from Texas to the railhead at Abilene, Kansas; and the "Black Beaver Road" thus became the famous Chisholm Trail of the cow country. See *Jesse Chisholm*, pp. 83-84.

24. Commissioner of Indian Affairs, *Annual Report*, 1865, p. 328.

25. Quoted by Abel, *The American Indian as Slaveholder and Secessionist*, p. 268, note 545.

26. WPA Project S-149, James Scott; Joe M. Grayson, September 24, 1937. The writer has a similar statement made

by Robert Kelley.

27. *Ibid.*, Katie Williams, June 26, 1937. This informant stated that after the war "those Indians that had parted came together again" "on the very spot where the present Greenleaf Indian Baptist Church is located"—on Section 21, Township 11 North, Range 9 East. A less exact location is given in Speck, *Taskigi Town*, map.

28. Malucy Bear, an aged woman of Greenleaf Town, also stated in 1937 that the gathering took place on Hilluby Creek—*Ibid.*, Malucy Bear, October 25, 1937.

29. *War of the Rebellion*, First Series, Vol. VIII, 719-22, Pike to J. P. Benjamin, Secretary of War of the Confederate States, December 25, 1861.

30. At least that is implied in the Cox map; and it is known that he owned a trading house there immediately after the war—Angie Debo, *The Road to Disappearance* (Norman, 1941), p. 202.

31. Three prominent Cherokees also signed the statement, but their knowledge of the events was restricted to a later phase of the campaign—"Statement," p. 10.

32. This statement is supported by Cooper's official report, *War of the Rebellion*, First Series, Vol. VIII, p. 5; a letter from Chief John Ross of the Cherokees to Opothle Yahola and his associates, September 19, 1861, *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, II (1924), 170-172; and WPA Project S-149, Minda G. Hardin, March 25, 1937.

33. Muriel H. Wright has identified this location through her researches into the history of the Euchee Indians.

34. See for example the trains marked in *War of the Rebellion*, Atlas, Plates CXIX and CLX.

35. WPA Project S-149, Willie Tiger, February 24, 1937.

36. *War of the Rebellion*, First Series, Vol. VIII, p. 5.
38. Commissioner of Indian Affairs, *Annual Report*, 1852, p. 403.
39. *War of the Rebellion*, First Series, Vol VIII, pp. 12-13.
40. Ola J. Rogers and Redmond S. Cole to Angie Debo, Personal Interview, Stillwater, Oklahoma May 26, 1949. The white homesteaders designated the loop of the river west of Ralston as the "Big Bend," but this apparently had no reference to an early Cherokee settlement by that name—Paul V. Boone to Angie Debo, Personal Interview, Stillwater, May 26, 1949.
41. James H. Gardner, "One Hundred Years Ago in the Region of Tulsa," *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, XI (1933), p. 773.
42. *House of Executive Documents*, 35 Cong., 1 Sess., No. 104, map, "Boundary of the Creek Country."
43. Commissioner of the Land Office, *Annual Report*, 1876, map, "Indian Territory."
44. *Ibid.*, 1883.
45. Affidavits in possession of John H. Melton: Andrew Little, April 23, 1949; S. T. Kerby, May 1, 1949.
46. Debo, *The Road to Disappearance*, pp. 124, 143-47.
47. Unfortunately this document cannot be quoted; it belongs to an important collection not yet open the public.
48. WPA Project S-149, James Scott.
49. "Personal Reminiscences of Captain June Peak," *Oklahoma: A History of the State and its People.*, Vol. II, p. 836.
50. "Statement," p. 3.
51. *War of the Rebellion.*, First Series, Vol. VIII, pp. 5—
- 6.
52. *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15. The editor of this compilation (*War*

of the Rebellion, *Official Record*) erred in placing a second report of Young's here; the latter refers to the second battle.

53. "Personal Reminiscences of Captain June Peak," *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 836.

54. Willey Britton, *The Civil War on the Border* (New York and London, 1890), pp. 164-67. To compare with the account he wrote from his own knowledge, see *Memoirs of the Rebellion on the Border*, 1863 (Chicago, 1882), p. 440.

55. "Statement," p. 4.

56. Commissioner of Indian Affairs, *Annual Report*, 1865, p. 329.

57. W. Julian Fessler (editor), "Captain Nathan Boone's Journal," *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, vii (1929), p. 66.

58. Ola J. Rogers to Angie Debo, Personal Interview, Stillwater, Oklahoma, March 6, 1949.

59. Affidavit in possession of John H. Melton by Thomas Pratt, April 16, 1949.

60. *Ibid.*, by S. T. Kerby, May 1, 1949.

61. *Ibid.*, By Andrew W. Little, April 28, 1949.

62. A copy of this letter, dated May 29, 1928, is in the possession of John H. Melton.

63. *Indian Journal* (Muskogee, Indian Territory), August 27, 1885.

64. Affidavits in the possession of John H. Melton: R. H. Murphy, March 17, 1947; John Jackson Atteberry, December 27, 1948; Robert Z. Carlisle, December 29, 1948; Roxy Mae May, February 21, 1949; Harriett M. Bishop, March 19, 1949. The frequent mention of "pottery" in these accounts apparently refers to crockery, rather than Indian pottery.

65. The writer visited the site May 2, 1949 with Mr. Melton and Mr. Harold W. Straughn of Stillwater. The field west of the creek was freshly plowed, and many such frag-

ments were exposed.

66. Interview with S. T. Kerby by John H. Melton, Harold W. Straughn, and Angie Debo, May 2, 1949. Mr. Kerby was employed in digging the Pawnee graves.

67. Letter from Andrew W. Little to John H. Melton, November 8, 1948.

68. WPA Project S-149: Minda C. Hardin, March 25, 1937; Mary Grayson, July 22, 1937; Joe M. Grayson, September 24, 1937. It is possible that this tradition of a buried "treasure" arose from the fact that several of the Creek towns buried sacred objects used in their ceremonials, before they set out on their exile.

by Orpha Russell

EKVN-HV'LUUCE Site of Oklahoma's First Civil War Battle

Historians have been making special research trying to determine the exact location of the first battle fought during the Civil War in what is now the State of Oklahoma.

Chief S. W. Brown, of the Euchee tribe, says that Opothleyahola never entered present Payne County and has two affidavits from very old people who know and can verify the story told to him and the site pointed out to him by persons who made the tragic march north into Kansas with the aged Opothleyahola.

In his youth, Brown drove cattle over a part of the old trail and the spot was pointed out to him by older men who had participated in that first battle between the forces of Opothleyahola and the Confederates. He recalls that the 9,000 who

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made the march left quite a large strip of land barren and that much of it was still evident during the days he drove cattle over their trail. The better known Coyote Trail crosses Opotheyahola's trail within a stone's throw of the end of the mountain range overlooking Keystone, Oklahoma, approximately twenty-two miles west of the heart of the City of Tulsa.

Ejvk-hv'lwuce(1), as the Indians who made the march north in 1861 described the battle site, signifies "the round end of a mountain," and not "round mountain" nor "round mounds," as has been reported. This interpretation has kept local historians searching for years for natural round mounds, and the Payne County Historical Society has adopted the view that the battle site was determined when they located Twin Mounds west of Yale, in Payne County. The Payne County Historical Society claims that Special Agent John T. Cox's report from Ft. Gibson, dated March 18, 1864, is the sole piece of evidence against their selection of the Twin Mounds location.(2)

Dr. B. B. Chapman of the Oklahoma A. and M. History faculty and Miss Angie Debo offer a copy of a statement by Confederate Creek leaders (1868) as evidence,(3) but the old Indians say a fight between two hostile Indian tribes was fought at the Twin Mounds a few years after Opotheyahola had reached Kansas.

Pieces of broken wagons and metal rims for wheels, offered by the Payne County group, are not conclusive evidence because all first hand accounts of Opotheyahola's march, given to Brown by the participants, said that the group had no wagons; ponies packed what the Indians could not carry on their person. Reports of Indian Commissioners filed during the years 1862 and 1863 confirm these statements.

George W. Collamore's report (April 12, 1862) to

William P. Dole, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, in Washington, D. C., states in part:(4)

“Agreeably to your request I furnish herewith an account of my recent visit to the loyal Indians, who were obliged to flee from their pursuers (the rebel Indians and Texans) in the dead winter, and who are now encamped on the Neosho River in the southern part of Kansas.

“The battles in which they participated, and which eventuated in their expulsion from their own country, and forced them to seek shelter in Kansas, formed a part of the history of this war. The battle of December last was particularly unfortunate to these people, and the disasters of the defeat left them in the helpless condition I found them...

“Their march was undertaken with a scanty supply of clothing, subsistence, and cooking utensils, and entirely without tents, and during their progress they were reduced to such extremity as to be obliged to feed upon their ponies and their dogs, while their scanty clothing was reduced to threads, and in some cases absolute nakedness was their condition. Let it be remembered that this retreat was in the midst of a winter of unusual severity for that country, with snow upon the prairie. Many of their ponies died from starvation. The women and children suffered severely from frozen limbs, as did also the men. Women gave birth to their offspring upon the naked snow, without shelter or covering, and in some cases the new-born infants died for want of clothing, and those who survived to reach their present location with broken constitutions and utterly disprited.

“Thus I found them encamped upon the Neosho River bottom, in the timber extending a distance of some seven miles. Not a comfortable tent was to be seen. Such coverings as I saw were made in the rudest manner, being composed of pieces of cloth, old quilts, handkerchiefs, aprons, etc., stretched upon sticks, and so limited were many of them in size that they were scarcely sufficient to cover the emaciated and dying forms beneath them. Under such shelter I found, in the last stages of consumption, the daughter of Opothleyahola, one of the oldest, most influential, and wealthy chiefs of the Creek Nation.”

The writer accompanied Chief Brown and Willie Bruner, a fullblood Muskogee (or Creek), who is said to be over one hundred years old, to the site of the mounds where Opothleyahola's group had dug in for the winter, and remained only one month after the Battle of *Ekvn-'lwuce*. An affidavit was secured from Bruner in which he states in part:
(5)

“My father, George Bruner, was a Northern soldier. My mother, Annie Bruner, went north with Hopo-thle-yohola and a band of Creek or Uscelarnap-pee Indians. The Uscelarnap-pee Indians were allies with Hopo-thle-yohola as brother members of one fire. They had no wagons, and very few had ponies.

“Their first battle took place on the south side of the Arkansas River at the round end of the mountain. The *Ekvn-hv'lwuce* was the end of the range of mountains ending one-fourth mile south of the Cimarron River.

“They built four mounds two and one-half miles below where the Owa-Chartyogee or Cimarron River

emptied into the Arkansas River on the north side of the Arkansas, and the mounds were where Hopo-thle-yohola took his stand for a month, sending his women, old men, and children on east where they turned north to camp for some time.

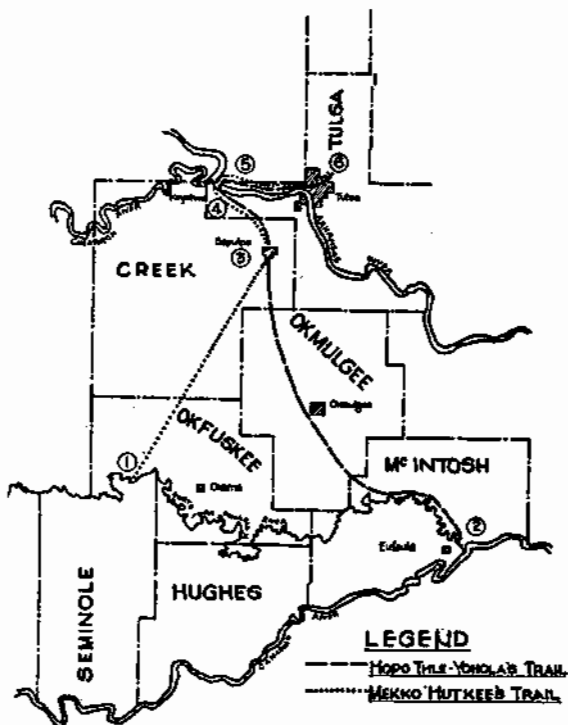
“I played in the round mound hide-outs when I was a boy, and killed four deer on one hunt north of these mounds. Two old full-blood Indians, members of my Locha Poka town lived near the mounds: one Stephen about one-half mile east, and another William Gooden about one mile east.

“Several of Hopo-thle-yohola’s men were out hunting when the southern Indian soldiers attacked them and killed several of the men. Later Hopo-thle-yohola followed up with his men and then the BIG BATTLE TOOK PLACE.(6)

“It was mid-winter, and it snowed and sleeted when they took their stand. My mother told me many times about their hardships on that trip.”

Elizabeth Sapulpa, founder of the Indian Methodist Church in Sapulpa, Oklahoma, gave an affidavit that reads in part as follows:(7)

“I, Elizabeth Sapulpa, heard my Aunt Mary Hutka talk about the hardships of the people going north in the time of the Civil War. She lived with me and I built a little home for her in my yard so she could be near me and I could care for her in her declining days until her death. She was grown woman (at the time of the Civil War) and all she had was the clothes she had on and a pair of Turtle Shells that she danced with and when they were removed back to their homes in the Indian Territory she brought the Turtle Shells back with her.



EUCHEE CHIEF S.W. BROWN'S VERSION

Drawing By C.L. Faith

Map Showing Route of the "Loyal Creeks" North in 1861: (1) Opothleyahota's Camp (Roro-Culka or "Fish Pond"); (2) Mekko-Hutkee's Camp; (3) Old Indian Marker; (4) Ekvu-Hv'iwuce, "The Round End of the Mountain"; (5) Mounds erected by Mekko-Hutkee's group; (6) Site of the "Battle of Caving Banks" on Bird Creek, in 1861.

“Some had ponies to ride and those that didn’t have ponies trudged along on foot and Aunt Mary Hutka was one of the many who didn’t have a pony.

“Hopo-thle-yahol was the leader of the many different Indian tribes that went north. When they got to what is now Keystone (the Indians call it Red Fork) there was a battle and some were killed. There was a man of the Ussellarnoppee Tribal Town by the name of Nokas-Ho-Lo-Thla that crossed the Arkansas River where Red Fork or Cimarron River empties into the Arkansas River, with women and old people and children for their protection. For shelter he and his men dug four big caves and rounded the earth up.(8) That was later called Round Mountain battle between the south and north.”

Brown says that Mekko-Hutkee’s camp was north of Eufaula and his group were allies of Opothleyahola. Mekko-Hutkee’s group started marching north toward Kansas earlier than the aged Opothleyahola, who was waiting for all loyal Indians from all tribes to assemble. Nokas-Ho-La-Tho, a soldier that led the Uscelarnapsee clan, was in Mekko-Hutkee’s group that followed the old Indian trail to a natural ford just below where the Cimarron empties into the Arkansas River. Threatening bad weather—sleet, snow and bitter cold—forced them to “dig in” for protection, and in the process of digging in, mounds of dirt were piled high near their caves or trenches.

Brown believes those mounds have confused historians too long, and that the “round mounds” for which Miss Debo and Dr. Chapman have been searching were not natural mounds, but mounds thrown up by Mekko-Hutkee and Nokas-Ho-La-Tho as they dug in for protection from the

element.

Chief Brown's father, So-Pathla, who was elected chief of the Euchees in 1867, had just returned from New Mexico late in 1861 when Opothleyahola sent a messenger asking him to come to Roro-Culka, meaning "Fish Pond", about ten miles northwest and five miles south of what is now Okemah, Oklahoma, on North Fork of Canadian River, to interpret a letter. Roro-Culka (Hluhlo-Kulka) was one of the forty-four tribal towns that constituted the Muskogee (or Creek) Nation. The older Chief Brown, an orphan son of a fullblood Euche mother and a young lieutenant in the United States Army, had been reared and educated by a missionary who gave the boy his own name, Brown. The youth was well known throughout the various tribal towns and often acted as an interpreter.

When the youth reached Opothleyahola's camp he found a letter from President Abraham Lincoln, soiled from much handling. He twice read the letter to Opothleyahola's group of 3,000 Indians. President Lincoln asked Opothleyahola to remain neutral. He explained that the war in which his people were engaged was not an Indian war, but one between the northern states and the southern states.

The now aged Opothleyahola had pledged his allegiance to the United States after the battle of Tohopeka or the "Horse Shoe" on Tallapoosa River in Alabama in 1814, a pledge he kept until death. He told his people he would remain neutral in the war between the northern and southern states. A skirmish with Colonel McIntosh's group followed and all Opothleyahola's town arbors were burned. (Daniel N. McIntosh, of the Creek tribe, had been made a Colonel in the Confederate Army.)

Opothleyahola with around 9,000 followers, includ-

Brown's father) recovered from illness in time to join them in their most decisive battle, near Turley on Bird Creek, known as Chusto Talasah or "Battle of Caving Banks" December 9, 1861. This site and fifteen Confederate graves have been marked by the Tulsa Historical Society of Tulsa's Central High School, under the leadership of Mrs. Louise M. Witham. The inscription on the marker reads:

"The Battle of Caving Banks' was fought December 9, 1861 between 1,500 Texas and Indian cavalymen under Confederate Col. D. H. Cooper and 2,500 Loyal Creeks and Cherokees enroute to Kansas with Chief Opothleyahola.

"The struggle centered around a log house near the tip of the Horse Shoe Bend in Bird Creek west of this point. 15 Confederate dead are burried on this battle field; many others lie in unknown graves.

"—Marked by the Historical Society of Central High School and the Tulsa Indian Women's Club, April 15, 1945."

After the engagement at Caving Banks, So-Pathla went to Mayesville to enlist in the First Indian Home Guards in the Federal Army, and was pensioned as acting captain, retired. Chief Brown has an old tin-type of So-Pathla made the day he was discharged from active duty. So-Pathla's group, known as Company K, was composed entirely of Euchees. He wrote all discharges for the remaining members, May 31, 1865, and was the last of that group to die, February 21, 1935.

Other testimony regarding Keystone as the site of the first Civil War battle in what is now Oklahoma was given to Brown years ago by the following persons no longer living: Sak-Ka-Senney (Little Bear), Ko-Ka-Lathloney, Co-Pat-Cheney, Checo-Tet-Ho-Ney (Pulling in the water), and Se-

ber-Talocco. All told Brown that their first skirmish and the Confederates did not amount to much and that Opothleyahola only lost three men at the round end of the mountain."

Sin-Co-Hah, a great-uncle of Chief Brown's died later during the march, but not before he had an opportunity to discuss the battle with Brown's father, So-Pathla, who joined the group before their battle near Tulsa.

Seber-Talocco, also known as Nocus or Nokos Harjo, was buried in 1911 in the old Indian cemetery at the southeastern edge of Sand Springs in a small plot fenced for preservation by the late Charles Page.

Chief Brown and Elizabeth Sapulpa would like to see a marker placed at *Ekvn-hv'lwuce*, the "round end of the mountain" overlooking Keystone, Oklahoma, because they are positive that is the place the first battle of the Civil War in the Indian Territory occurred.

ENDNOTES

1. *Ekvnhvlwuce* is pronounced nearly "ekun-hulth" wuche," and literally means "a hillock" or "a mound" (R. M. Loughridge, D.D., *English and Muskokee Dictionary* [Philadelphia, 1914]).—Ed.

2. This map by John T. Cox indicates the site of the "Battle of Red Fork" (i.e., Round Mountain) north of the Cimarron River in the vicinity of present Keystone, in Pawnee County. Chief Brown's map accompanying this article shows the site of the battle south of the Cimarron about "a 1/4 of a mile." This skirmish between Opothleyahola's forces and the Confederates in 1861 was not in regular battle formation, the fighting having undoubtedly taken place at different points within a radius of two, or even three miles, some south and

others north of the Cimarron wherever the Creek allies were encamped in friendly groups. The reports of the skirmish would depend upon the location of the informant and his friends within the radius of the fighting, the general reference of these reports, however, among the Creeks being “*Eknvhlwuce*,” or the “mound” or “round end of the mountain.” This general designation referring to the “battle” with Opothleyahola seems to have been used after the period of the Civil War. The original map by John T. Cox, entitled “Retreat of the Loyal Indians from the Indian Country under A-pothleyahola in the winter of 1861,” is in the records of the U. S. Office of Indian Affairs, Washington, D. C. A facsimile of this map appears in Annie Heloise Abel’s *The American Indian as Salveholder and Secessionist* (Cleveland, 1915), p. 254. See also notes on the life of John T. Cox by Dean Trickett, of Tulsa, appearing in Notes and Documents “Ad Interim Report on Site of the Battle of Round Mountain,” *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. XXVIII, No 4 (Winter 1950-51), pp. 492-4.—ED.

3. Angie Debo, “The Site of the Battle of Round Mountain, 1861,” *ibid.*, Vol XXVII, NO. 2 (Summer, 1949), p. 190.

4. Commissioner of Indian Affairs, *Report* 1862, pp. 155-58. (Opothleyahola was never in the line of recognized chiefs though he is referred to here as “one of the oldest, most influential, and wealthy chiefs of the Creek Nation.” He served as Speaker for the Upper Creek Towns, and was one of the great leaders in the history of the Creek people.—Ed.)

5. Affidavit signed by William G. Bruner, and witnessed on March 17, 1951.

6. This “Big Battle” was the Battle of Chusto Talasah or “Caving Banks” that took place on December 9, 1861.

7. Affidavit signed by Elizabeth Sapulpa, and witnessed

by Joseph J. McCombs and Susanna Sapulpa, July 24, 1951.

8. Colonel Cooper's report, as Commander of Indian Department, First Choctaw and Chickasaw Regiment, C.S.A., states that his forces found Opothleyahola's camp near the North Fork abandoned but followed the retreating Creeks until November 19th, when some of the latter were seen, and a few prisoners taken. "From those prisoners information was obtained that a portion of Hopoethleyahola's party were near the Red Fork [i.e., Cimarron] of the Arkansas River, on their route towards Walnut Creek, *where a fort was being erected* [italics added here], and which had for some time been their intended destination in the event of not receiving promised aid from Kansas before being menaced and attacked." (Report of Douglas H. Cooper, Colonel, C. S. Army, Commanding Indian Department, dated from Fort Gibson on January 20, 1862, in *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Series I, Vol. VIII, p. 5). It seems that the phrase "on their route towards Walnut Creek" was used by Cooper parenthetically, and his statement "a fort was being erected" apparently referred to the "four big caves" and the mounds of earth built up by "Mekko-Hutkee's" men. The reader should bear in mind that the prisoners were reporting to Cooper's forces what was being done by the Creeks "near the Red Fork of the Arkansas River." These are important data since they indicate that Opothleyahola's forces had primarily planned to concentrate within the Indian Territory near the Kansas line but were precipitately routed and took flight to Kansas following the Battle of Caving Banks on December 9th, and their still later defeat at Chustenalah on December 26th.—Ed.

1988 Annual Meeting

The 1988 Annual Meeting of the Payne County Historical Society met June 4, 1988, 4:00 p.m. at Yost Lake.

Carol Bormann reported a balance of \$1,622.28 in CD's and \$1,721.38 in savings account, and that membership has grown from 107 to 135 paid members.

President John Gardiner gave the following annual report:

The 1987 Annual Meeting was held on June 6th in Yale, Oklahoma. The meeting followed a tour of the Jim Thorpe home conducted by curator Meredith Prough. Dinner was catered by Red's.

Outgoing president Lawrence Erwin presented the Historian of the Year Award to George Carney of Oklahoma State University's Geography Department. Dr. LeRoy Fischer presented the following slate of officers, which was approved by the general membership of the Society.

1987-88 Officers

President	John Gardiner
Co-Vice Presidents	Bill and Virginia Thomas
Secretary	Doris Dellinger

Treasurer	Carol Bormann
Director	David Baird
Director	Frank Eckhart
Director	Winfrey Houston
Director	Heather Lloyd
Director	Ralph McCalmont

The first Quarterly Meeting was held in Kingfisher on September 19th and featured a tour of the Chisholm Trail Museum and Territorial Governor A. J. Seay's mansion. Cowboy and Indian artifacts, a restored log cabin, territorial school house, church, bank, and agricultural equipment were featured at the museum. Seay's mansion, built in 1892, displayed period furniture of Oklahoma Territory's second governor.

The second quarterly meeting was held November 14 in Perkins and focused on the restoration efforts of David Sasser at the 1892 Church Center Museum. Bob Evans of Evans Publishing Company reviewed current publications of his press featuring Payne County.

Special thanks are noted to program chair Lawrence Erwin for his arrangements of these first two fine programs.

On January 16, 1988, the Society sponsored a "Rags and Riches" costume dance at the Stillwater Country Club to benefit the restoration of Pleasant Valley School. Eskimo Joe's Road Crew provided the music. Stillwater Mayor Calvin Anthony, Jodi Deer, and Steve Hull entertained the group. With donations from Bates Brothers, Leonard's Jewelry, Consumers IGA Floral, and Et Cetra Hallmark Store, costs were kept to a minimum, door prizes to a maximum, and an additional \$352 was raised for the restoration project, raising the Society's 1987-88 contribution to \$1,352 and fun was had

by all!

The third quarterly meeting was held on January 23rd in the Payne County Court House. Judge Don Worthington and June Gilliam of Gilliam Designs Associates described the research and efforts that went into the beautiful restoration of the Court House. Winfrey Houston made a presentation on the buildings' early history. The Society recognized the restoration efforts of Judge Worthington and June Gilliam with the purchase of a book on Oklahoma Courthouses which was donated to the Stillwater Public Library in their honor

The fourth quarterly meeting was held on March 27 at the Bartlett Center on the Oklahoma State University campus. The Payne County Historical Society joined other area organizations in sponsoring a wonderful photography exhibition by OSU's Nick and Carol Bormann, showing the houses and the life styles of pioneer families that settled Stillwater in the Oklahoma Territory. The exhibition which will be on display throughout the State during these next three years is the Society's first centennial project to be successfully completed. Carol Bormann is a past president of the PCHS.

On April 17 the Society sponsored a special trip to Cushing to the Cimarron Valley Railroad Museum. Bob Read, Jr., owner and curator, presented a fascinating look at the history by the Cimarron Valley Historical Society.

Throughout the year board meetings were held monthly, typically on the first Thursday at 11:45 am in the First National Bank Board Room. The business of the Society ranged from involvement in task forces of the City Commission on historical preservation to discussions with the Museum Associates regarding possible merger with the Historical Society, from locating lost safety deposit keys (one has been located) to the discovering the need to get out articles of

incorporation, from supporting all Payne County Historical efforts initiated by other groups to initiating new projects to celebrating Stillwater's upcoming centennial year (like the upcoming volume on *Centennial Selections* being edited by Joanna Gardiner and Peggy McCormick, which will feature recipes from Payne County past and present--proceeds of which will go toward marking streets of Stillwater's original Settlement).

The Society has taken special pride in the work of Ralph McCalmont, David Baird, and LeRoy Fischer at the national and state levels. Their efforts have served the cause of historical preservation most effectively. We will sorely miss David Baird as he moves on to an endowed chair in history at Pepperdine University.

Among behind-the-scenes accomplishments have been a good increase in memberships from 107 total paid members in 1987 to a total paid membership of 135 in 1988. Keep those checks coming in and consider the long term values of \$100 life membership in the Society.

Consider attending the Centennial's Pioneer Ball on January 21, 1989, at Student Union Ballroom on the OSU Campus to be sponsored by the Payne County Historical Society along with a number of other Stillwater organizations. (Also please volunteer to serve as committee members in the area of your choice.)

Thanks for helping to make 1987-88 a special year for the Payne County Historical Society.

PROGRAM OF THE
Payne County Historical Society
AND THE DAVIS-LEE CHAPTER, NO. 2080,
United Daughters of the Confederacy

SUNDAY, JUNE 4 AT 2:30 P. M.

At the Twin Mounds Battlefield,*
Payne County, Oklahoma

Invocation

Martial Music, members of Stillwater High School Band,
directed by Harry Wheeler

Flags that have flown over present Oklahoma, an exhibition
by the Framspin Society

Why it is Correct to Say—War between the States, by
Roger Spencer, Oklahoma Division President, Children of the Confederacy

The Confederate Flags, an exhibition by the Pages of the
Oklahoma Division, United Daughters of the Confederacy.

The Quest for Truth, by Mrs. A. L. Fisher, Oklahoma Division
President, United Daughters of the Confederacy.

This Battlefield, by John H. Melton, Member of Board of
Directors, Payne County Historical Society.

Indian Participation in the War between the States, by Dr.
J. Stanley Clark, Director of Research of the Oklahoma
Planning and Resources Board.

Color Guard and Taps, by Troop 18, Boy Scouts of America.

*In case of rain the meeting will be in the Stillwater Public Library.

Payne County Historical Society

Officers

John Gardiner, President
Bill and Virginia Thomas, Vice President
Helen Matoy, Secretary
Carol Bormann, Treasurer

Board of Directors

Winfrey Houston, term expiring 1991
Bill Bryans, term expiring 1991
Ralph McCalmont, term expiring 1990
Akos Kovach, term expiring 1989
Heather Lloyd, term expiring 1989

Payne County Historical Society is organized in order to bring together people interested in history and especially the history of Payne County, Oklahoma. The Society's major function is to discover and collect any materials that may help to establish or illustrate the history of the area.

Membership in the Payne County Historical Society is open to anyone interested in the collection and preservation of Payne County history. Membership dues are: annual individual, \$10.00; annual family, \$15.00; annual contributing, \$25.00; institutional, \$20.00; sustaining, \$50.00; life, \$100.00 paid in one year. Membership applications and dues should be sent to the treasurer.

All members receive copies of the *Review* free. In addition, the Society sponsors informative meetings and historical outings several times during the year.

Payne County Historical Society

P.O. Box 194

Stillwater, OK 74076