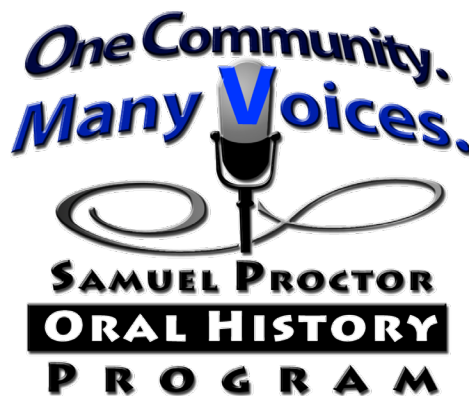


Carl G. Lambert and Unknown

**Southeastern Indian Oral History Project
CHER-011**

Speech by:

**Carl G. Lambert
July 75**



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**CHER 011 Carl G. Lambert and Unknown
Southeastern Indian Oral History Project (SIOHP)
Speech by Carl G. Lambert July 1975 & Recording Featuring Cherokee Boy's Club
27 minutes | 13 pages**

Abstract: The recording consists of two parts; in the first part Carl Lambert gives a monologue about his life and his work in the Cherokee Nation and in the second part a speech about the Cherokee Boys Club is given by an unknown speaker. Carl Lambert tells some of his memories of life in Cherokee when he was younger and tells stories of interesting events that happened. He talks about his position as the official historian and discusses some of the history of the Cherokee Tribe. Additionally, Lambert also gives some information about a certain toxic plant that is common to the area. The second speaker discusses the various projects and achievements of the Cherokee Boys Club. He talks about the ways that the club supports itself and the jobs it has created, as well as the services it provides for the Tribe, such as the school bus program. The speaker discusses the training opportunities that are available to club members and talks about the homes that have been built to house youth members of the Tribe.

Keywords: [Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians; North Carolina--Cherokee; Tribal History; Child Welfare]

ORAL HISTORY
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CHER 011

Interviewee: Carl G. Lambert and Unknown

Date of Interview: July 1975

L: [inaudible 0:02] North Carolina [inaudible 0:04] I was born June 11, 1911. I was raised at Cherokee, North Carolina. Many changes have going on in the area since I was a boy, many of the old buildings and people are gone, but stories and memories linger on. One of my fond memories is the old Appalachian railroad that ran up and down the valley and the old depot at Cherokee. The late Roy **Bowen** had a barber shop in the old depot and in the late [19]20s a law was passed to prohibit barbers from barbering without a barber's license. Roy moved his operation to the riverbank on a stump down their which had been cut off about the height of a barber chair and a board was nailed on top of it with a hinge so that if a person wanted to shave they would lean the board back and prop it up with a stick and Roy would go down to the riverbank and dip the shaving mug in the river and make up a lather and shave the customer. The customer couldn't complain much about the cold water because he wasn't paying much for it, a shave cost fifteen cents and a haircut cost twenty-five and if you took the combination, you got them for thirty-five cents. Every once in a while, a prankster would come down and announce that the law was coming and Roy and the customer both would hit the bushes until the all clear was sounded. There was some advantages to have an outdoor barber shop, because you didn't have to sweep the hair up off the floor, the hair had accumulated around this stump several inches deep. It was like walking on a thick carpet. And poor old Roy's gone now, but these stories still continue to be told.

[Break in recording]

L: Across from the depot, there in Cherokee, there used to be a huge pile of telephone poles awaiting shipment. One summer day a group of fellows were out drinking moonshine on this pile of poles and a heavy thunderstorm came up. Everybody scrambled for the depot, all of them made it up the steps into the depot, but one character who was too loked to get up the steps, so he crawled underneath the depot. Back in those days there wasn't any storm drains in Cherokee, so when the heavy rain came, a lot of the runoff ran under the depot. Well, this character that crawled under the depot, when he collapsed under there, his head lay in a low place, some of the fellows who had taken shelter out of the rain across the road over on John Bridges, the store porch looked over there and they saw what they thought was a leak in the water pipe, or a small geyser and upon investigation they found this drunkard over there nearly drowned under the depot there and had they not gotten him out I guess he would have drowned.

[Break in recording]

L: The character who didn't make it up the steps and nearly drowned under the depot was the late Willis Inlow. On another occasion, Willis went with some fellow bear hunters up on Black Rock Creek on a bear hunting expedition. Willis wasn't much of a hunter, so he was leading the dogs, leaving the bear killing to some of his partners. They had one lead dog turned loose who finally struck a track and Willis turned the other dogs loose. Willis wandered around a logging road there and the dogs finally treed the bear under a overhanging rock so Willis made his way down the mountain to see where the dogs were and coming down on this moss-covered rock, he crawls out to the edge of it to see if he couldn't

see what the dogs were doing. Well, he could see the dogs jumping back, once in a while the bear running out after them. All at once the moss on the rock turned loose and Willis fell right square down on top bear's back and Willis told me this story himself. He said that had the dogs not thought that they were getting some help from him, and they really attacked the bear in all earnest, the bear might've killed him. He said he disengaged himself from the bear's back as quickly as possible and made tracks as fast as possible and leave the scene to the dog.

[Break in recording]

L: Stories about people and their exploits here, a lot of them about honey, are endless. The once Monty Young many years ago went up in the Soco mountains on a bear hunt with some companions and Monty was put in the stand to wait the arrival of a bear coming through. It was a real cold windy day, and nothing didn't come through so Monty got impatient and not knowing much about the terrain, he kind of surveyed the situation and decided that the main highway was off in a certain direction, and he thought that he would take a shortcut to go through the mountains and try to intercept the main highway and catch a ride back to town. Well, he was armed with a double barrel shotgun with double aught buckshot. Suddenly he heard a noise in a laurel thicket, and he approached with caution with his gun drawn and he saw something black through the laurel and without seeing what it was he just cut down on it with both barrels and whatever it was. He saw it fall and start kicking and he threw a couple more shells into the gun and approached a few steps farther and banged away and didn't see any more

movement and he approached the thing and saw that it had shoes on. So, he ran down the hill some distance and he thought that his mind was playing tricks on him, so he came back up to where it was and sure enough, there lay a dead horse in the thicket. Of course, he knew that his mind wasn't playing tricks on him so he'd be a hasty retreat as fast as he could, and he never told anybody this story for several years and one time some years after that he asked me if I ever heard of anybody losing a horse up on the hill Soco Creek.

[Break in recording]

L: I will stop these honey stories here and go on with a little history. I am the official historian of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. Cherokees were tilling the soil and hunting and fishing along the Oconaluftee, Kentucky [inaudible 07:12] and Little Tennessee Rivers long before White men came to America. No true history of the county could be complete without showing how Cherokee Indians participated leading up to the formation of Swain County and the part they played as citizens of the county. The first White settlers in Swain County settled on the head of the Oconaluftee River. The first grist mill was at the falls on Mingo Creek. The creek was first called **Angus Mill Creek** it was later changed to Mingo when a group of men from Mingo County, West Virginia came to work in the timber on this creek. The oldest tombstones are White settlers dated back to 1860 and are located opposite the mouth of Mingo Creek. The reason for White settlers settling on the head of the Oconaluftee river was that the treaty line of 1802 ran from a point on top of the Smoky Mountains about three miles east of Newfound Gap near the top of Mount Kephart. This line was known as the Meigs Line running

fifty-two degrees and thirty minutes east passing there [inaudible 08:20] was North Carolina to the southeastern boundary of the Indian land in Henderson County, North Carolina. Huge local spokes were used in those days to mark corners. Someone moved the post marking the Meigs Line to a point several miles west of Newfound Gap. This incident given rise to the name of a prong of little river in Tennessee as the Meigs spokes prong. It wasn't until 1819 that another treaty was negotiated with the Cherokees. By the terms of this treaty the line ran near watershed ridge between the **Mannahaley** and the Little Tennessee River following down the Little Tennessee to the state line. **Sadly**, the Cherokee Indian border lived just across the treaty line in **the Uchella Coal**. This accounted for his involvement in the removal. The Indians living in Swain County north of the treaty line weren't involved in the removal of 1838. Swain County came into being during the hectic years of reconstruction following the Civil War. This was a time when carpetbaggers and Ku Klux Klan ran rampant over the state. President Andrew Johnson appointed William W. Holden as governor of North Carolina following the closing of the Civil War. Holden had previously run twice for governor against Zeb Vance being defeated both times. Things got so bad that the state university was closed, martial law was declared in some counties and many influential people were thrown into jail. Holden appointed the notorious George W. Kirk head of the state militia. Kirk being from Tennessee brought along a bunch of his carpetbaggers as part of the militia. This [inaudible 9:52] how protesting the tar heels. Kirk and his militia plundered, robbed, and burned. There was more unrest during this period than there was during the Civil

War. This period was known as the Kirk-Holden wars. Things seemed to climax on December 14, 1870, when the North Carolina House of Representatives met to charge Governor Holden with eight counts of malfeasance. They set a time for an impeachment hearing; the trial commenced February 2, 1871. Holden was convicted of six of the eight charges on February 22, 1871; Holden was dismissed from office.

[Break in recording]

L: Swain County was formed from parts of Jackson and Macon County. The county was named for a former governor D. L. Swain. Governor Swain had visited this area in 1833. At this time, it was Haywood County and, on his business, here in 1833 he met with Chief **Yonagusta** on an island in the [inaudible 10:50] River about three miles upstream from Bryson City. This incident gave the area its name today, Governors Island. **Chief Yonagusta** moved from Governors Island to Soco Creek. He died there in April of 1839, **Yonagusta** is buried in the cemetery near Ezra Hornbuckle's house on Old Mission Road. Governors Island is the site of the ancient Cherokee town of [Cherokee name 11:14] Bryson City is built where the ancient Cherokee town of [Cherokee name 11:19] once stood. There were two towns on the Oconaluftee River, [Cherokee name 11:23] located at Birdtown in Swain County and [Cherokee name 11:30] located in the old **Holland field** near Cherokee that remains a mountain these days near Richard Crow's house.

[Break in recording]

L: The Cherokees have lost about half their land in North Carolina to the colonial government of the British. Following the Revolutionary War pioneers started really pouring across the Blue Ridge. Treaty lines were usually imaginary most of the time and of course gone far beyond the boundary before [inaudible 11:57] ever set foot on the spot mentioned in the treaty. The Indians always got the short end of the deal. Out of all this turmoil, something wonderful happened; Sequoyah invented the Cherokee alphabet. The timing of this event was of great significance; at least three-fourths of the Cherokees learned to read and write before the removal in 1838. The first known printing of the Sequoyah alphabet was the first five verses of Genesis as they appeared in the *Missionary Herald*, volume 23 page 382, dated December 1827. The first issue of the *Cherokee Phoenix* was published at New Echota, Georgia on February 21, 1828. At the time of his death, more than several million pages had been printed in Sequoyah's alphabet. On June 6, 1917, the state of Oklahoma placed a statue of Sequoyah in the statuary hall capitol of the United States, a tribute to a great genius. On June 26, 1829, three Chiefs and fifty-six other Cherokees put their mark on a document declaring that they were separating themselves from the Cherokee Nation and becoming citizens of the United States in the county of Haywood, North Carolina, also giving power of attorney to one John L. Dillard. The three Chiefs were [Cherokee names 13:25]. This document is recorded in the registered deeds office in Waynesville, North Carolina, book B page 547. [Cherokee name 13:32] lived at Governor's Island and [Cherokee name 13:34] lived at Cherokee near the present elementary school. Records at the Cherokee

council house show that [Cherokee name 13:43] was still living in 1851, age one hundred. [Cherokee 13:44] name lived on Soco near the mouth of Wrights Creek.

[Break in recording]

L: I am a person of many interests. While driving along the Blue Ridge Parkway **right before** to Soco Gap, I noticed a white flowering plant growing in abundance along the road bank on the edge of the road. This interesting little plant was white snake root, eupatorium or tryptofolium; and it's deadly poison. The plant grows to three feet, with compound [inaudible 14:16] and plume-like white flowers that resemble ageratums. Another distinguishing feature about this plant is the opposite serrate leaves. My late father J.B. Lambert collected data on this plant and its effects for many years; this is the plant that causes milk sickness. The Department of Agriculture says that the plant contains tremetol, a yellow oily stuff and it would kill cattle, sheep, and men. When eaten by a cow giving milk, the poison just passes into the milk stream and the cow suffers no ill effects but the person or animal drinking the milk being subject to poison. If the cow is dry and not giving milk, the cow will be poisoned. Since White men started colonizing America, people have died of this mysterious disease, and it wasn't until recent years that the cause was known. Many old-timers thought it was some substance in the ground that cattle ate, others thought that the dew deposits some kind of fungus or mold on the fodder of hay. Cattle or horses will seldom eat this plant when its green; they will eat it when it's cut and cured out and then mixed with other hay. This makes milk sickness nearly always a fall and winter disease. The

symptoms are nausea and vomiting with the stomach throwing off everything that enters it thus causing vomiting and dehydration. The breath—

[Break in recording]

L: The breath of a person afflicted with the disease smells like acetone. One of the remedies used in the old days were whiskey poured down the person even to the point of getting them completely stoned. Following this was [inaudible 15:58] as restrained hunting. Nancy Hanks, the mother of Abraham Lincoln, died in the fall of 1818 from this disease. On November 8, 1946 a boy died from this disease in Avery County, North Carolina. Dr. B.B. McGuire, M.D. of Burnsville, North Carolina, wrote in the paper following the death of this boy stating that he knew of no antitoxin or antidote for this boy; anyone suspecting milk sickness should see a doctor immediately. Many other stories about milk sickness and its causes some people became quite adept at spotting the poison globules in the cream. These globules would tend to fluoresce when the light was brought in contact with them. The housewives would proceed to skim off these with a spoon and serve the milk to the family, sometimes just drink skim milk only. The cream skimmed off poison milk would kill a dog but not a hog. If the milk is churned, the poison would be in the butter and not in the buttermilk. Many farmers were [inaudible 16:59] in the old days because of milk sickness. Many thrifty find he had rang his own death knell when he picked up his scythe and mowed a little extra hay around the edges of the field and fence corners. This is where white snakeroot likes to grow. I am reluctant to buy local hay. This plant grows in abundance around the edges of most fields; farmers are taking a big risk when

they cut the back swathe along the edge of the hay fields. It is said that white snakeroot has killed more people and animals than any other plant in America.

This plant grows in abundance from the Southern Appalachians into Canada.

[End of monologue by Carl Lambert]

U1: One of the many outstanding projects of the Tribe is the Cherokee Boys'

Club. The club was originally started at the old Cherokee boarding school in 1932 and was incorporated under the Tribe as a non-profit corporation in 1964. The club provides training, employment, and recreation for Cherokee youth. During the ten years that the club has been in operation, it has had to borrow over two million dollars for buildings and equipment. Half of this amount has already been repaid. The club supports itself by providing valuable and much needed services for the Tribe, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the US public health service, the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, and the public. These jobs provide full time employment for club employees who are all Tribal members and part time employment and training for club members. Any young man who is a student or former student of Cherokee High School may join the club. The members elect from their membership a board of directors who govern the club. Club officers work closely with the Tribal council and Tribal officials. Former principal Chief Jack Blythe who served as Chief for twenty-four years, has helped the club from its beginning. Noah Powell who was principal Chief until his death in April of 1973 was a former employee of the club and he helped the club in many ways. The present principal Chief John Crow is also a former club employee and has helped the club a great deal. The club contracts the school bus system for the Cherokee

Indian schools. We now have thirty-four buses all in excellent condition. Club drivers recently received awards from the national safety council for driving school buses a total of three hundred fifteen years without an accident. These drivers transport over fourteen hundred students daily. Altogether club buses last year operated over one million miles. The club provides charter service for Cherokee and many other schools. The club also provides bus service for *Unto These Hills*. The club operates a garage which maintains all club vehicles, government vehicles, and vehicles for the public. The garage has a front end and brake shop, and a general shop, and a paint and body shop. Each mechanic has been trained in school and has a great deal of experience. The club provides many other services such as lawn-mowing. The club contracts the garbage collection for the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The club contracts the lunchroom for the Cherokee school. The club also contracts the laundry for the school, hospital, and several motels. The club has contracted the operation of a youth conservation program for the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Tribe for the past four summers. The club has built almost a million dollars' worth of modern buildings for itself. The club makes every effort to keep all of its facilities neat and clean. The club operates a building contracting business. Boys and men have received training in carpentry, masonry, painting, plumbing, and electrical work. Club members receive training in the operation of vehicles and equipment. The club has provided training and supervision for hundreds of neighborhood youth corps enrollees and on the job training for many Cherokee youth. Detailed records are kept and audited by certified public accountants. Records are

available to anyone upon request. The club provides many educational opportunities for Cherokee youth. The club has an office building which they lease to organizations needing office space. Some club employees live on club grounds and are available for full time duty. The newest project is the development and operation of a home for youth. The youth live in modern homes with a set of house parents in each cottage. This project is giving many young people with unfortunate home conditions a new chance at life. The John Burgess cottage for boys was named for Sergeant John Burgess, a member of the Cherokee Boys Club who gave his life for his country heroically in Vietnam. The **Ponting** cottage is operated for girls; the Ponting Foundation operated by **Maisie L. Ponting** in memory of her husband, has helped our club tremendously. The third cottage, the Jackson cottage for boys, was named in memory of Chief Walter Jackson. Chief Jackson who is shown at right here, helped to organize the Cherokee Boys Club. Each cottage cost over one hundred thousand dollars to complete, with furnishings. The club has raised over half the cost of the cottages; however, we still need donations to pay off indebtedness on the cottages and to help operate the homes. The club is very proud of the youth living in the homes and of those who are working with the youth. Many activities are planned for the youth both recreational and educational. The club has completed and operates a recreation park for Cherokee and other youth groups. The park includes a large swimming pool and a lake for the enjoyment of all. Cherokee Enterprises, a separate corporation, is now operating a cafeteria for the public located on club grounds. Chapel services held for the children's home

have now grown into a church with a full-time pastor. The church services are held in the [inaudible 25:09] memorial chapel building which is located on club grounds. The chapel operation and finance is completely separate from the club and the children's home operations. As the Cherokee Boys Club provides jobs for its members and employees, as it trains young people and helps Cherokee young people to remain in school and continue their education, as it provides services for the public, as it supports itself through hard work and community cooperation, it is proving its faith in our young people and its faith in our Cherokee people and its proving its faith in our American system, and most of all its faith in God. It is proving that today's young people with the help of today's adults are very interested in improving themselves and are therefore interested in improving America for a better tomorrow.

[End of interview]

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