

Mysterious swamp land was death to many

By Margaret Bucholtz
Karen Krien

Every county has histories, mysteries, superstitions and folklore. Cheyenne County is no different with many stories that have been carried from generation to generation or found in the yellowed, crumbling volumes of newspapers.

In the 1891 volume of the *The Cheyenne County Rustler*, was found the "christened 'Devel's Swamp' by the dusky tribes who roamed over the plains in primitive times."

The newspaper does not give an exact date of happening, only mentioning "a few short years," when the noble red men roamed at will over the prairies. At that time, there was an undisputed possession of all that he could survey and tradition points out that there many historical points where fierce and bloody encounters took place between the various tribes.

The dusky warriors made periodical trips through northwest Kansas and in what is now known as Cheyenne County. They were in pursuit of game or they may have been satisfying the well-known roaming disposition that was born and bred in Indians.

The Cheyenne County Rustler tells that, perhaps, there was nothing that took the place of the thrilling events in the legends handed down from the tribes of the plains as "Devil's Swamp." The swamp was situated about 12 miles above Jaqua (or 12 miles southwest of St. Francis along the River Road). It was said that no living animal was ever ventured too far into it and escaped being swallowed up in its unknown depths.

Among the thrilling events that are related to this great swamp included the Cheyenne and Arapahoe tribes: the Arapahos being on the north side of the river and the Cheyenne's on the south.

By common consent, these two tribes entered into an arrangement whereby the Arapahos were to kill game upon the north side of the river, but were not to kill anything on the south. The Cheyennes were to kill game only on the south side and not on the north.

The tale is that the Arapahos were driving buffaloes on the north side. However, the beasts crossed to the south side of the river. In great pursuit, the tribe followed them over and chased behind them.

By this time, the Cheyennes had discovered that their country was being invaded by the Arapahos and donned their war paint. The Cheyennes outnumbered the Arapahos and nothing but flight could save the Arapahos from

fearful deaths for breaking their treaty.

There was no alternative. In their flight, they were pursued and hotly pressed by the Cheyennes, who were led on to their greatest efforts by a feeling of having been grievously wronged by their hated rivals.

It seems that the Arapahos possessed knowledge of the great swamp, which was unknown to the Cheyennes. In this direction, they led their unsuspecting pursuers.

Night came and darkness settled down over the land, but the great chase continued. The Arapahos passed just below the swamp and crossed the river, while the Cheyennes rushed madly on and on, emitting those unearthly yells so readily recognized by the experience frontiersman as the Indian war hoop.

On they came little dreaming of the awful dangers that lurked in their path.

The great swamp lay right in front of them, and with defiant yells they rushed into it, and hundreds of their warriors were swallowed up in its "fathomless depths."

From this awful experience the Indians came to regard this swamp with superstitious awe, and supposing that the evil spirit lurked about it. They gave it the name of "Devil's Swamp."

It is said that for years the Indians continued to visit this spot and offer up sacrifices in great numbers.

Love in the swamp

Another pathetic legend is told of one of the fairest young women in the Cheyenne tribe having a lover among the dusky warriors of the Arapahos. This lover went over to see his sweetheart, and while there, the Cheyenne's discovered his presence. The lover and his sweetheart sought to escape by flight and were pursued to this swamp.

Here further flight was impossible, and rather than submit to capture and be torn away from her lover, the dusky maiden threw herself into the swamp and was swallowed up beneath its calm surface.

As he told it

In the following week of *The Cheyenne County Rustler*, an article said "so much interest was manifested among our people and such an astonishing demand made for copies of last week's paper, we print in this issue some more traditions of this wonderful Devil's Swamp."

The writer met an old half breed in Colorado who said that his great-great-grandmother, who



was a full-blooded Arapahoe Indian woman, told him when he was a boy, of the tradition of her tribe.

At a very early date there was no surface water in Devil's Lake. After the tragedy occurred, where 150 Arapahoe braves were "engulfed in the quagmire," the constant watering it received from the weeping eyes of the tribe, in the course of time, caused running water to form which flowed into the river.

The half breed also told the writer that his old great-great-grandmother had in her possession a crude map of the South Fork valley traced on bark that he remembered seeing as a boy.

The map gradually crumbled to dust because of its great age, but he remembers distinctly that there was a wonderful mineral spring marked on this map and as near as he can remember it was about 25 or 30 miles below the swamp. That would place it somewhere near the location of St. Francis.

The Cheyenne County Rustler told that efforts were now being made to locate this marvelous spring. "Who know but what we may be able to proclaim to the world. 'Ho! Everyone that thirsteth. Come ye to water.'"

Irrigation ditch

If the mineral spring was found, there appears to be no record of it.

As for Devil's Swamp, the superstitious myth was told after it was learned that the swamp was to be drained to irrigate the crops in the county.

The Cheyenne County Rustler article said of the beautiful Cheyenne maiden who drowned in the swamp, "Could her spirit look down upon the waving fields of grain that are to be supplied with the life-giving water from this swamp, it would in a measure recompense her for the awful extremity to which she was killed by her kin people."

The irrigation ditches were built but was without success. Today, traces of the ditches can be seen if a person knows where to look.



LAYNE PETTIJOHN was one of the bowlers at the Big Brother/Big Sister fundraiser held at the Cheyenne Bowl.

Herald staff photo by Karen Krien

Organization is growing in Cheyenne County area

The Big Brothers Big Sisters organization is growing in Cheyenne County with six matches in the Bird City area. The program is one of the oldest and largest organization in the United States. Its mission is to help children reach their potential through professionally supported, one-to-one relationships with mentors.

Recently, a fund raiser was held in St. Francis to raise money for the Cheyenne County organization. There were 60 bowlers from both St. Francis and Bird City. Door prizes were awarded which added to the fun the kids had bowling at Cheyenne Bowl.

Adults and youth, or "Bigs and Littles" in the Big Brothers Big Sisters program, have fun together and create memories that last a lifetime.

Meghann Antholz, county coordinator, said there are several "Bigs" who have volunteered but youth who want to be in the program are needed. She noted that background checks are completed on all volunteers.

Some of the statistics found when Bigs and Littles work together are:

- 52 percent are less likely to skip school.
- 46 percent are less likely to be-

gin using illegal drugs.

- 27 percent are less likely to begin using alcohol.

- The Littles are more likely to get along with their families and peers.

Those participating in the Bowl For Kids Sake event were: Mindy Antholz, Blanca Ponce, Ana Ponce, Sydney Busse, Montana Rhymes, Naomi Reeh, Nick Els, Vance Churchwell, Jacob Diers, Erick Estrada, Nikki Johnson, Jacob White, Whitney Haller, Justin Miller, Amanda Walden, Kaedra Dixon, Colleen Shrader, Vanessa Antholz, Lincoln Pochop, Taylor Leibbrandt, Emily Holub, CJ Antholz, Reese Leonard, Becky Antholz, Hal Antholz, Kjade Smith, Shayla Hubbard, Cassie Rucker, Lakyn Pettijohn, Ian Schmid, Kati Schmid, Tristan Archer, Nicole Connell, Lamar Adams, Wetleigh Meisner, Jamie Adams, NevaLo Holub, Layne Pettijohn, Aimee Northrup, Ally Northrup, Caitlin Northrup, Dale Northrup, Sophie White, Debra Banister and Sylvia Hubbard.

For more information on the program, contact Ms. Antholz at Cheyenne County BBBS, PO Box 13, St. Francis, 67756, 785-626-6565 or email: mantholz@ksbbbs.org.



Kjade Smith picks out her bowling ball.

"I was going to the cardiologist in Wichita and was not too happy..."

John Strobel, Retired Professor of Music

A couple of episodes of afibrillation two years ago sent John Strobel to seek specialized cardiology services in Wichita. A heart catheterization and angiogram showed a major blockage on the right-hand side of his heart. Fortunately, the left-hand side of his heart had channeled over the right and was covering the problem. While the diagnosis was encouraging, the overall cardiology experience in Wichita was not.

"I was going to the cardiologist in Wichita and was not too happy with a number of things...the distance to get down there, one thing, and just the whole procedure was not up to my expectations," he said.

When it was time for him to go back for another treadmill, instead of returning to Wichita, Strobel requested a referral to Hays and the DeBakey Heart Institute. In addition to the treadmill, the DeBakey cardiologists also performed a carotid artery Doppler to make sure he wasn't in danger of a stroke.

"When we did the tests in Wichita, it took two weeks before we had the results and when we had it at DeBakey Institute in Hays, we had the results within the hour," he said.

"At the DeBakey Institute in Hays, the people were more interested in me and in seeing to it that I was happy with what was going on and that I was comfortable."

"And then, of course, too, the drive to Wichita is kind of a hectic drive," he said. "The drive itself becomes a trauma...Two hours down there and then have to fight the traffic after you get there...and then worry about trying to find a place to park...It's an easy hour to Hays and you don't fight city traffic."

"It was just a much more pleasant experience," he said. "I can drive an hour and have absolutely state-of-the-art cardiology."

"I just go on and live a normal life now."



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"It was just a more pleasant experience."