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NAA MS 2776, folder 6
Truman Michelson field notes from the Munsee in Kansas
and the Delaware in Oklahoma, 1912-1913
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There were 3 bands of Delawares. Wolf, Turkey, and Turtle. There used to be villages of bark houses. Each village would be composed of one of these bands. There was an old woman who had a granddaughter 6-7 years old who became pregnant. No one knew how for in those days children were pretty well guarded, not as today. When the old lady kept watching the girl, when the child was born, thinking it might be born at anytime; when the girl took sick to deliver the child; when it came it was a little fish. So the grandmother when she saw it said "Is this my grandchild?" It was a little fish she was looking at. So she didn't know what to do, for it was a water animal & she didn't know how to take care of it. So she picked it & remembered a swampy over there. When she got there she saw a little pocket of water where some stock had tramped in. She put that fish in the water, the little swam round & round in a circle. Next morning she

went back there to see her grandchild
~~the fish~~. When she got there she
 saw a big lake there, and this
 fish had already grown to be a
 large good sized fish. It was still
 swimming round in a circle as
 when she first turned it loose. That
 lake grew to an enormous size.
 And this fish, the last time it was
 seen was an awfully large fish.
 The mother of the fish went over
 there one day, but she didn't
 see it. The water was so deep.

They began to find out some
 people would go in that direction
 and never would come back.
 So they didn't know whether it was
 this fish who killed the people or
 not; they didn't know for sure.
 They got to watching it because
 everyone who went in that
 direction never returned. Finally
 they found out for certain that
 it was that fish who got the people.
 So the chiefs got together after
 they found out this fish was
 killing the people so they counselled

together to find out a way to
 kill that fish, because he was
 going to do worse if he was not
 done away with some way -
 They decided that among the tribe
 there was probably some one who
 could kill him. So the people
 gathered this morning. That was
 the money those days - they got a
 big abundance of them. So they took
 those beads to the chief. They told
 the chief these beads were to be given
 to whoever said "I can kill that fish"
 or who said "I know a way that fish
 can be killed". So the conjurers began
 to gather where the beads were. Or
 they all decided they knew no way
 of getting rid of that fish. Well there
 was an old woman very poor who
 lived on the outskirts of the town.
 She had two grand children, boys, who
 stayed in the bark house all the time
 eating parched corn. The old
 woman went every day to where
 they were counselling. Well one day
 one of the children asked the
 old woman why she was always

going over to the town. She took up a club & hit him over the head.
 "Why do you inquire about other people's business? There's a big pond over there, it grows larger & larger; and there's a large fish that grows larger and larger. He will soon eat up the whole tribe if he is not killed."
 "Will," said the boy, "I can kill him." So the old lady, knowing they were looking for someone to do this, next morning went up to where the big gathering was. So she told the people there what this boy said. So then the putel (a man elected to carry messages) was notified to come to the big gathering. When he got there this putel was told "to get those little boys & bring them here for the reason that those little boys told their grandmother they could kill this fish". So when the putel got to where those boys were, he told them what he came for, that he had come to get them. So those little boys who were sitting in the dust in front of the fire-place jumped right & went with him

putel. So when the putel got them
~~to where~~ the chief was, the chief
asked those little boys "Well my
grandchildren, I understand you
can kill the fish over here in the
big lake." So the little boys said
"Yes, that's what we said we could
do." So the chief told them "My little
grandchildren, that's what we've been
gathering here for the purpose of finding
someone who can kill that big
fish. There's the big pile of beads,
Wampum beads; if you boys
shall kill that fish you boys shall
get all of those beads right there -
So after the chief ~~they~~ told them they
went back home & their grandmother
went with them. When night came
they did nothing, just sat round
the fire place. So the old lady wondered
how in the world the boys were
going to kill that fish. She got to watching
them - So bed time came; those little
fellows made the pallet pretty
close to the fire place; so they laid
down the usual way; kind of
talked a while. The old lady

didn't want to go to sleep. She wanted
 to watch these boys; she didn't go to bed.
 Finally she went to bed. She laid
 in bed awake. She was going to
 find out about the boys. She was
 watching them but didn't want
 them to know. So these little boys
 lay in their bed as if they were
 asleep, silent. So when she went
 to sleep - the boys heard her
 snoring, the littlest said "How
 are we going to proceed to kill that
 fish? He's an extra large fish &
 doing great damages." The older
 told him "Well I don't know any
 other way but this: this Sun is my
 friend, so we'll go up & get his
 fire" the big boy said. The young
 brother told the older brother: "Now how will
 we do to get to where the Sun is" (It was
 after dark you know). So one of these
 boys, the eldest, turned to a raven, the
 youngest turned to a pigeon. So the
 oldest said "That's the best I can fore-
 pass you. You can not turn to a raven,
 you can turn to a pigeon. But I
 will help you as I can get to

where the Sun is". So he said: The
 Sun lives in house far across the
 big water. He goes there ~~at~~ every night
 before he gets up in the Morning.
 You, being a pidgeon can not
 get there. You will fall. But O being
 a haren can help you. Every time
 you fall I will fly under you
 and raise you. That way we
 gradually can get to where the
 Sun is." So when they got where
 the Sun's home is, they went into his
 house, the Sun had not got there
 yet. And there was an old lady
 there who was the Sun's grand-
 mother. They asked her if the Sun was
 there. The grandmother said he had
 not yet come, but would be in
 in a short time. So when the Sun
 began to appear at his house, he came
 in with flashes of light into the house.
 The oldest brother had hidden his
 little brother in the corner back of the
 door. So the Sun saw the boy any-
 how even if he was hidden. So the
 Sun told the eldest boy: Who is
 that? The eldest said "That's

our youngest brother." So the Sun
~~asked~~ asked the oldest boy what they
 come for. "Well we come to get
 your fire." And the Sun asked what
 he wanted with the fire. The boy
 told him: "We want to use it to kill a
 big fish that's doing us big damages."
 So the Sun said: "No, you can not use
 my fire for the reason ~~that~~ you
 will burn up the earth that
 you live in. But you can go
 to my ash pile" (off quite a distance).
 There ~~was~~ had been a good many
 years back. So those two boys
 got the ashes; tied it up in very
 small bundles. So those two boys
 went back with the ashes. When they got
 back there they went to this big lake to
 watch this fishes' movements. So by
 the way this fish moved when they
 got there, the fish seemed to know
 what their intentions were when they
 got to that lake. ^{It was} By this fish being
 so powerful and knowing things
 ahead. So these boys counsilled
 together & turned to several different
 things in order to get next to this

fish. So they found out he was
 going to be kind of hard to handle.
 They used little insects to approach
 him. They found a pale butterfly,
 they sent him to the fish & locate the
 latter. The fish paid no attention to
 the butterfly. Didn't watch him, nor
 anything. So the boys decided
 the butterfly was the very one
 needed by them to get near him.
 So one of these boys turned to this kind
 of a butterfly as they found out the
 fish didn't watch it or pay attention
 to it. This butterfly got pretty well
 on top of the water flying around.
 The other boy dove down in the
 lake to the center of the earth, & he
 turned the ashes loose there which
 he had brought from the Sun. And
 this other boy, the butterfly, turned
 his ashes loose into the water. So
 then they left & went home. And
 when they got there they laid
 down on the same old pallet.
 The night was all over. Next
 morning the old lady woke
 up, and looked over &

saw those boys then asleep. So the
 old lady picked up a wooden
 poker & began beating the boys.
 "Here you are asleep. And you
 said you were going to kill that
 big fish." So the old boy said
 "Go out & look at the lake &
 see what we've done!" So the
 old went there walking around
 & saw no water in the lake. She
 went on walking towards the lake.
 She didn't believe those boys. When
 she got to the lake she saw no
 water. She saw that great big
 fish laying from one end of
 the lake to the other burnt to
 charcoal. So the ashes which
 the boys used which they
 had got from the sun was so
 hot & dried out the lake & burnt the
 fish into charcoal. The old lady
 after she found out how the fish
 was killed went & told the tribe
 about it. So they all went over
 there & looked at the fish that
 was killed. So they gave the
 heads to the oldest boy for

a reward for killing this fish.
After they gave him the beads, the
two finally grew to be men & looked
upon by the tribe as being something
very great. So when they grew up,
the oldest one came to be a
chief in his band; was well
thought; got to be a great man,
powerful.

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MICHELSON, TRUMAN

MUNSEE

&

Delaware

Ethnological and linguistic field notes from the Munsee in
Kansas and the Delaware in Oklahoma. [1912]. 170 pp.
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This field work is referred to in 34th Ann. Rept.,
B. A. E. (Washington, 1922), p. 16.



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