April 10, 1969 T-400

Index side A, second part, recording time 5 min.
Index side B, first part, recording time 15 min.
Interview time 1½ hours.

Informant: Jess Fields, 84-year-old Cherokee,
Peters Prairie, Delaware County, Oklahoma

Subject: This old Cherokee was born and raised in this northeast part of Delaware County. Born on Honey Creek, he has lived at different places, but has settled in retirement on his old Indian allotment. He is well acquainted with Cowskin Prairie, Butler Prairie, and Peters Prairie. These three areas make up the bulk of northeast Delaware County. Many Cherokees have lived in this area and he has known most of them in his time.

He talks about Vann Ward, a full blood Cherokee who lived long ago and had his home on upper Honey Creek. Vann Ward was a successful farmer and stockman. His orchards were the pride of the valley. He died about 1890, but it is not known where he is buried. Where ever it is his marker will probably be of the type used for Civil War veterans, or of convential type showing he fought in the Civil War with the Indian Home Guards. When he was living at his place on Honey Creek, he set aside an acre of his land sometime in the 1850s as a cemetery for the community. According to Mr. Fields this was known as the Ward Cemetery, and many Cherokees were buried here. On visit to the place, sixteen markers or pieces of markers could be found over an acre of more of what used to be the cemetery. Most of the markers are broken, and some partly buried. The earliest date of burial noted was in 1855, and the latest marker indicates 1889 the last burial. Represented here are members of families of Dick, Wood, Trout, Fields, Ward, and Reed. It is not known when or who permitted the place to be desecrated and destroyed. The present owner of the property, a whiteman, Jeff D. Harding, bought the place, (he says 51 years ago) about 1917. Some of the markers which are at this cemetery were of the expensive type. For example, the four-piece monument of William Trout, with a fine type of engraving, and a Masonic emblem engraved on the three-foot spire mounting the top must have cost a considerable amount even by to-days standards. Some have wondered then, if the monument to be yet erected for Jeff D. Harding is to receive the same treatment, No, they say, for it is not these acts that we are to judge.

Sallie England was one of the full-blood Cherokee Matriarchs of her time. Well educated and possessing a fine farm and good livestock she managed her holdings well. Much of her time was devoted to her people, seeing to their health and welfare. She supported and worked for education of the younger people, and was advisor and counselor to those of her Honey Creek Area. Her home was just a mile east of the Vann Ward home. Mr. Fields recalls eating dinner at her home some sixty years ago, and remembers they had a fine dinner, including mushrooms. The England family cemetery was established about 1871 or before according to the monuments in the graveyard on the old England farm. Sallie England died in 1925 at the age of 100 years.