

April 16, 1969

1-422

Index side A, recording time 20 min. Part one. Interview time one hour.

Informant: Ben Henry, 81-year-old Cherokee, Washington Community,  
Rogers County, Oklahoma.

Subject: In the early days of the Cherokee Nation, the second location of the district courthouse of the Coo-wee-scoo-wee District was at Kephart (or Sulphur Springs). This would be about seven miles north of the city of Claremore and a little east. This area has long been known as the Dog Creek country, originally designated as Black Dog but shortened for simplicity. Also, in this area was the Washington community. It is this country that Ben Henry was born and has been here all these 81 years.

This is a hilly, wooded and sandy area, a part of a range of hills beginning far to the north, possibly in Kansas and extending far to the south across Oklahoma. These hills for this area are known variously as Dog Creek Hills, White Oak Hills, Shagbark Hills and by other names. In the olden days this country was all Indian settlements including Tiawah, Sequoyah, Owala, Foyil, Justice, Sageeyah, Washington, Bushyhead, and others.

A few of the old families who helped settle this part of the Cherokee Nation were Ward, Falling, Nelm, Tincup, Henry, Downing, Smoke, Link, Ofield, McIntosh, Keys, Nellem, Hicks, Tickeater, and Foreman. Others who also added their efforts and labors to the building of homes, farms, and community life were the Lanes, Rogers, Ragsdales, Englands, and Mitchells. These were a hardy people, God-fearing, and industrious. The modern roads, schools, towns, beautiful farms stand as monuments to these Indian pioneers.

Mr. Henry first attended the Washington School, in 1895. He recalls that Sam Sanders, a Cherokee, was one of the teachers. Sanders was not one to tolerate any foolishness and expected all of his students to apply themselves well to the business of learning while they were in his charge. Mr. Henry remembers that Professor Sanders applied the paddle to twenty-four boys one day. Another of the school teachers of that olden time was Cyrus Whitman. Whitman was a one-armed man, and he also kept a well disciplined and orderly school. He says that in those days there was no protests, demonstrations, marches, and disturbances as we have to-day, and parents supported the teachers. This meant that when the kids got a whipping at school, they most likely would get another when they got home. Ben wonders often what has happened in the last fifty years that has brought on the mass disregard for respect, manners, courtesies and family concern that was ~~was~~ so different in his young days.

The community of Washington was located on the north side of Dog Creek and served as the hub of activity for a large area. Here was the country store run by Claude Medlock. This was a large stone building, as was the nearby church. Then just east of the church was the Washington Cemetery which was established by the Falling family sometime before the Civil War. West of the store was Washington School. South of the school near the creek was a large sorghum mill, and a saw mill. The original store for the community was in the old log building near the school house which