

T-470

June 11, 1969

Index side B, recording time 20 min.; interview time one hour.

Informant: Ollie Bennett, 91 years old, of Seneca ancestry,
Strang Community, Mayes County, Oklahoma

Subject: Strang, Oklahoma, by comparison is not one of the old towns,
and its beginning dates only from the early part of 1900.
However, Mrs. Bennett has seen its beginning, its growth to
a business district three blocks long lined with stores on
both sides, and has seen it die down to the present two
country stores and a post office.

Mrs. Bennett is not a native of Strang Community, but she is
the oldest person living there. She was born in the southeast
part of Kansas near the Oklahoma line and came to the Strang
community about 1914. Before coming here she was in bad health
and her doctor had given her only six months to live. She thought
by changing to another location might improve her health, so she
and her husband started out by wagon. One of their first stops
was on Spavinaw Creek which they found to be a beautiful place.
Here in this area they decided to make their home. Going across
the river they settled in the Strang area where she has been since.

Strang became a town beginning sometime about 1910. The first
enterprise was a stock yards operated by Old Man Strang, and in
honor to Amos Strang the town was so named. The first store to
operate in Strang was by the Craig family which was continued
by Old Man Craig, his son Granville, and lastly by grandson
Gene. It was from this family that Craig County, Oklahoma, was
named. About 1912 the Iron Mountain Railroad was built thru
Strang, or rather was completed at Strang as the road was
constructed from both directions and met in the center of what
is now the main street in town. On that day when the two sections
of track were joined railroad officials and others gathered to drive
a gold spike to complete the new enterprise. The railroad was
probably the incentive for the town to boom and prosper. She recalls
that there was a large stockyards on the south part of town by the
railroad. Her home now looks out on the old railroad bed, and at
one time for a block north there were great stacks of railroad ties
awaiting shipment. On the north side of main street was Bob Smith's
grain elevator. This was a large farming community at one time and
much grain and hay were shipped from Strang. Joe West, a full
blood Cherokee, was probably one of the biggest hay shippers in the
country and loaded out many carloads of hay for points all over the
United States. Railroad ties and lumber added to the prosperity of
the community and many Cherokees made their living from the timber
lands in the hills and along Grand River, bringing their ties and
lumber here to sell. She remembers that some nights there was no
sleep for the bawling cattle and squealing hogs being loaded for
shipment.