

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.