

T-509

July 11, 1969

(Electric fan interfered with recording.)

Index side B, recording time 15 minutes; interview time 1 hour.

Informant: Jeff Fields, 86 year-old Cherokee,
Whitewater community, Delaware County, Okla.

Subject: Except for a few years Mr. Fields was attending the Cherokee Male Seminary in the early part of 1900 he has lived on his Indian allotment and with his people on Whitewater Creek in this northern part of the Cherokee Nation. He is now retired from the farming and ranching life he has known, and likes to visit and talk about the olden days.

Many Cherokees have lived in the area which includes Honey Creek, Shell Creek, Elm Creek, Whitewater Creek and Butler and Peters Prairie. Mr. Fields has known many of them in his time. Old Man Tom Rabbit and Old Man Cheater were of the well known Cherokees in his early days. He remembers Rev. Dabo Bucket as one of the highly respected Cherokees that lived over half a century ago. Huckieberry Shell and Annie Snail were two others that were held in high regard and respect for work among the Indians of that country. Butlers, Masters, Cheaters, Hawks, Starrs, Gourds, Downings, Lowreys, Silversmiths, and Fox were among a few of the other Indian families that lived in Mr. Fields immediate area. Also, Rev. John Butler was another of the leaders of the Whitewater Country and it was from his family that Butler School and Butler Prairie took its name.

Mr. Fields talks about the old Indian cemeteries that were a part of his area. Even though some of them have disappeared he names a few: Shell, Starr, Bucket, Downing, Cheater, Scraper, Ward, England, Butler, and Peters Prairie. Only a very few are used anymore, as most of the older Indians have died and the younger ones moved away leaving no one to care for these places. Some have been deliberately removed to make way for cattle pastures, cow lots, etc.

In the old days part of the Indians' way of life was going to meetings, whatever occasion it might be. Usually the gatherings would be what is now days called a "stomp dance", but to the uninformed these were religious and ceremonial dances. Dances are the Indians' way of worship, giving thanks, and expressing gratitude to the Great Spirit, and just as important and sincere to the parallel of the whiteman's worship. He recalls the times great numbers of Indians would go to Horse Ridge, Sycamore, Piney, Browning Creek, Muskrat Hollow, and Sweetwater Hollow to hold their ritual dances and meetings. Also, they would go to Grey's Prairie and the Euchea country. No longer do the valleys and hill vibrate to the beat of the ceremonial drum, for these things are now only in the memory of the people who lived in another time. Travel in those days was a major undertaking as we would look at it now, but the rough roads and trails were just part of the way of life and two or three days of travel by wagon posed no problem.