

M- 27

INFORMANT: RICHARD HARNAGE, CHEROKEE
INTERVIEWED BY: J. W. TYNER
INTERVIEW DATE: NOVEMBER 28, 1969
FINAL COPY BY: MONETTE COOMBS

GENERAL SUBJECT: GOOSENECK BEND COUNTRY

The Harnage family has known the Gooseneck Bend country of the Arkansas River since early in the beginning of the Cherokee Nation. His grandfather, Samuel Harnage, was a Texas Cherokee, and came into the Cherokee Nation as a cattle drover. His maternal grandmother came from Georgia in 1839--she was Elizabeth Vann. His mother and father were both born and raised in Gooseneck Bend, and here Richard has spent nearly all of his life.

Before the Civil War the Vann family were prosperous farmers in this rich and fertile valley. The sandy soil in the valley was easily tillable and would grow most anything planted. The Vann family in his grandfather's day, owned slaves. Both the Harnage and Vann lands were farmed right up to the west bank of the Arkansas River. Cotton, wheat, and corn were the main cultivated crops. At one time great fields of potatoes were grown in this area.

Not unlike most people, his early recollections begin with going to school. His first school to attend was Howard's Chapel, and later he attended White School located upon the hill to the west. For a while he also attended the school at Frozen Rock, farther on west. However, Richard received his final schooling at the Cherokee Male Seminary after spending a short while at the Presbyterian Mission.

Richard has been completely happy and satisfied with his little part of the earth and has been richly blessed with much good. His parents and grandparents experienced many bitter times and hardships in their day. Not far back of the present Harnage home are a part of a chimney and a few foundation rocks that was once the big log house of his parents. During the Civil War, Yankee soldiers bent on killing, burning, and pillage burned the house. It is no wonder that many of the older generation have died with a bitter hatred for the North in general.

Much of this part of the Arkansas River is now being torn up and reshaped for the coming navigation era when boats will ply up and down the river. Boats traveling the river will not be a new sight for Mr. Harnage, as he remembers the sternwheelers on the river when he was a young boy. In that time river traffic went upstream as far as Ft. Gibson. With the coming of the railroads before the 1900's the boats quit using the river waterway. To the young people of long ago, hearing a boat whistle on the river always created excitement, and many of the kids would run down the land to the river to watch the boats go by.