

T-539

September 22, 1969

Index side A, recording time 20 min.; interview time one and one half hours.

Informant: Nannie Wright, 74-year-old Cherokee,
Archer Community, Mayes County, Oklahoma.

Subject: Some Mayes County history.

Nannie, the daughter of James Gamble and Anna Adair Gamble, was born in eastern Adair County, and came to Mayes County with the family in 1899. Mrs. Wright has seen as many changes come to one small part of the old Cherokee Nation as has few other people living to-day.

In the days of the Indian Territory the Grand River valley was one big farming country, and that portion of the river running through Mayes county was no exception. To the west began the wide expanse of prairie that stretched to the Verdigris River and here were the great herds of cattle grazing on lands leased from the Cherokees and Creeks. This was the scene as Mrs. Wright first remembers.

As the Indian Nation progressed in the early days there came the families of the Mayes, Sixkillers, Walkers, Adairs, McNairs, Albartys, Riders, Gambles, Bushyheads, Daughertys, Beans, Crittenden, and Wrights. There were many other families whose names have escaped her memory. Very few of the people of those early families remain there to-day. Perhaps Mrs. Wright is one of the more fortunate as she still lives on Indian allotted land.

The little towns of Chouteau and Pryor Creek (as it was called then) were the only trading centers of their area in those earlier days. To those little railroad towns the farmers and ranchers brought their returns from a good and bountiful land.

But to those people of the valley, theirs was a life lived close to their homes. They identified themselves according to their school area. The Gambles and Wrights belonged in the Archer School district. Times were when children attended different schools of the area such as Slapout, Browning Springs, New Cannan, or McNair. These schools served purposes other than educational. Church services, funerals, weddings, social activities, and community civic affairs were held. To her knowledge, there was never a church building constructed in this large rural area. In 1902, Ellis B. Wright, a Cherokee, established a little family cemetery on his place, and in 1914 he made a deed for three acres of land from his allotment on which was to be built the Elizabeth Chapel and a parsonage. This tract of land also included the Wright Cemetery. This gift to the community was in memory of Ellis Wright's wife, Elizabeth (but always known as Lissie). The chapel and parsonage never materialized, and the little cemetery now appears almost forgotten.

As a little girl Nannie attended Browning Springs, Archer, and McNair Schools. When a young woman she married Cornelius Wright, and by their efforts and hard work they built up a 170-acre farm tending their fields of wheat, oats, and cotton. In those days their mail address was R.F.D. No. 1, Chouteau, and she recalls the early-day postmen who drove horse-drawn mail hacks, or in bad weather they came on horseback.