

7-540  
October 16, 1969

Index side A, second part, recording time 27 min.; interview time 2½ hours.

Informant: Alvin West, Talala Community, Rogers County, Okla.  
77-years old of Cherokee ancestry.

Subject: Some history of Talala Community.

On the prairie at the northern edge of Rogers County is the little town of Talala. Its history dates from the early 1880s when the railroad came thru that part of the country. A few miles to the east ran the Verdigris River, up and down which lived Indians of several tribes long ago. Delawares, Shawnees, Cherokees, and probably much earlier the Osages claimed this area as home. The town of Talala took its name from Talala Creek which ran just north of town. The creek was so named because of the large number of red-headed woodpeckers that lived along the stream, and the bird's Indian name is Ta-la-la.

To-day the town of Talala is not the busy industrious place it once was. Its two stores and elevator are all that remain, along with a few houses. At one time the rural country around Talala was one of a large farming district, and that agriculture helped support a community of some 2000 people.

This is the community that Alvin West has seen from its beginning almost, seen its growth and prosperity, its decline, and its present struggle to keep its identity. He tells some of the things he has witnessed.

About statehood time and before, Talala was already a town. In 1906 a brick building was built to become the Talala State Bank. This banking venture was prompted by the oil boom to the west and north of Talala. During this period the W. C. Rogers Store and the Campbell Mercantile did a good business. (this W. C. Rogers was William C. Rogers, who served as Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation at one time). Old Man Wilmuth operated the hardware store and lumber yard. Dr. E. Y. Bass, M.D. owned a drug store and had his doctor's offices above the store. Jim Lytle was manager and clerk in the drug store for Dr. Bass. Dr. Bass traveled the community in a one-horse buggy. Mr. West was living down on the river when his first boy was born, and Dr. Bass went down there that night, some 9 miles from town. Mr. West says the Dr. charged him a total of \$10. for that OB case! Things were high priced in those days, one would gather. Ray Patterson owned the elevator on the railroad, and it was operated by Jack White. Talala Post Office once had the designation "I. T." on its cancellation stamp, which was later to be changed to "Okla.". A cafe, among other small businesses helped make Talala a town.

Other than the early day school in Talala there were the country schools in the district of Maple Grove, Sunny Side, High Prairie, and Lone Mound, and two or three others the names of which he does not recall. All have been closed now. A few years ago the school at Talala was a large building constructed of stone, and one of the finest in stone masonry artistry to be seen. It drew a lot of its pupils from the Verdigris River Valley. Then