

This was once the country that included Oldfield Bend, the one time home of Stan Watie and the Bell family. Close by was the little town of Needmore which disappeared under the waters of Grand Lake. A short distance up the river was the town of Bernice, a busy and prosperous trading center, but it too fell before the lake waters. Bernice struggled to survive and relocated just above the high water mark to become a settlement of retirement homes and a fishing resort, a far cry from its better days.

Old school buildings standing vacant, and some reclaimed for other uses testify to the great changes that have come to Cleora country.

Records viewed indicate there were many old cemeteries affected by the coming of Grand Lake. Many unmarked graves still remain at the bottom of the lake. Of the Cleora area the Buzzard, Needmore, Lundy, Bigknife, Hildebrand, and some other cemeteries were moved to other locations. Still within the boundary of the lake reservation is the Chandler (or Davis) cemetery. Perhaps it had lost its identity before Grand Lake was formed. Mrs. Gordon tells that when she lived there, one year some vandals removed all the stones from the cemetery one Halloween night and piled them up in the nearby county road. The stones were never put back in the correct places and some were broken and discarded.

Mrs. Gordon has traveled quite a bit in her time. Once she was visiting in Houston, Texas. Some friends there took her to a place just north of Houston where she spent several hours visiting an old Cherokee settlement, an old school, and an old Indian cemetery.

The Goforth family of Cherokees were close friends of her family and they lived south of Vinita on Cabin Creek. She recalls hearing the older folks talk about a plantation the earlier Goforths had long ago on the Okla.-Arkansas line, which was known as Hi-ko. On the site of this plantation is now the town of Siloam Springs, Arkansas.

Her early memory reveals times when the family would travel to Seneca, or Southwest City, Missouri. She recalls they would have to cross the river on the ferry. Some of the ferries she remembers were the Marlin, Copeland, and Carey. She remembers seeing the homes and farms of many Indians when she was a little girl in that part of the Delaware District of the Cherokee Nation.