

T-555

March 3, 1970

Index side A, second part, recording time '23 min.; interview time two hours.

Informant: Elzie Harris, 81-year-old Cherokee,  
Perkins Community, Muskogee County, Okla.

Subject: Bayou Manard Country.

The Bayou Manard in the northeastern corner of Muskogee County covers some twelve or fourteen miles, winding its way to the Arkansas River from its starting place where Gulager Springs Branch and Bobtail Creek come together. Through the years man has fenced, bulldozed, chopped, blasted, cleared, let grow up, and other things attendant to what is known as progress. In spite of all this, the beautiful creek and the equally pleasant valley still give some idea of what this area was like a hundred and more years ago. This stretch of Indian country has seen many things, from early French fur traders to the Civil War Battle of Bayou Manard, to its being well settled and occupied to-day. This is the country that Elzie Harris has known most of his life.

We stand on a bluff overlook the creek known as Bayou Manard, and Mr. Harris tells that he has fished and hunted this area since he was a young man. He recalls that long ago there was evidence of some early settlement in this area. What the activity was he does not know, but close by his home in what is known as Perkins, and at other locations toward Ft. Gibson, there were man-made mounds for some purpose. He does not know what purpose the mounds served, but has speculated that they might have been a type of storage built by the early day French. It is believed the name Manard comes from the French, and he has heard that it means "two outlets.". He has also heard from old timers that this area was the home of some of the ancient 'mound builders'. He tells that one of these strange mounds is located in the corner of his property, and another between his back yard the the creek.

Early day settlers to the Manard country included the Andersons, Dye, Crossland, Starnes, Linder, Wilson, Franklin, Cook, Walker, Corderay, Hildebrand, et al. Evidence of settlement long ago in this area is told in the several long abandoned graveyard along Bayou Manard. In one old burial place there is a monument that reads in part "James Griffin, born 1793, died 1846". In another a broken tombstone has the inscription "George Wilson, who departed this life Aug. 22, 1851, Age 64 years (born 1787)". In the Anderson cemetery, the last burial is that of "Creek Jim, Co. E, 2 Indian Inf. Home Guard, died Jan. 13, 1888".

Mr. Harris believed that at one time there was an ancient Indian village on the south side of Bayou Manard across the creek from his home. He recalls when a field there was in cultivation once that after it was plowed in the spring people used come come there and pick up arrow heads and other Indian artifacts.

In the days when stage coaches were the traveler's means of public conveyance, the stage line road used come come from Ft. Gibson on its way to Tahlequah, and the road passed between his house and the creek. A Mr. Cook who was an old timer when he was a boy had told him about the stage regularly come thru that area and he used to see it every day. Whether or not there was a stage stop at what is now Perkins, Mr. Harris does not know.