

T-555

March 20, 1970

Index side B, third part, recording time 10 min.; interview time 45 min.

Informant: Tom Elm, 85-year-old Cherokee, of Vinita, and
Sunnyside Community, Mayes County, Okla.

Subject: Sunnyside Community.

Mr. Elm's story is about a place that was. On the high prairie in the extreme northwest corner of Mayes County, bordering on the Rogers County line was the busy and prosperous farming community of seventy and more years ago. To-day most of this district is owned by one big cattle company.

Mr. Elm came to the Sunnyside district in 1897 with his parents and family. Nearly all of the country then was in cultivation for cotton, corn, wheat and oats. Very few cattle were raised, although there was plenty of grassland available, but in those days cattle was not the most profitable venture. Sunnyside country was in an ideal location for marketing cotton and grain as it was only three or four miles to the elevators and gin at Chelsea to the north.

The center of community activity was around the Sunnyside School. The little red brick school building with its sheet iron roof stands lonely now, and abandoned. Common to some of the old country schools, it had a horse shed where school children kept their horses during school, for in that day the children either walked to school or rode horseback. A few even were privileged to have a buggy to ride in - the ultimate then in transportation. The wind has blown the doors and parts of the roof from the outhouses that are in opposite corners back of the school grounds, and the coal and weed shed stands in the back center, its roof fallen in. To-day looking across the prairie in all four directions, one does not see any of the farm homes that once dotted the countryside, only the ranch headquarters to the north.

Among the families that lived in the Sunnyside community seventy and more years ago were the Pack, Schneider, Green, Elm, Laven, Francis, Buck, Daws, Brown, and others.

Mr. Elm attended school for a short while at Sunnyside, as well as a country school to the east called Centerview. In that day long ago the school houses were also used for church services, social gatherings, voting places, etc.

Abandoned now for over 50 years was the community cemetery then known as the Pack Cemetery, named for the Indian family of that name. At one time there could be seen fifty or more graves. To-day only about 15 graves can be determined, and only three markers remain. Time and the elements, and neglect have taken their toll. Mr. Elm recalls that members of the families of Pack, Schneider, Green, and Brown were some of those buried there. Mr. Elm says it was an old place 60 years ago when he lived there.