

T-589

May 26, 1970

Index side A, recording time 22 min.; interview time one hour.

Informant: Robert Long, 87-year-old Wyandotte
Wyandotte, Ottawa County, Okla.

Subject: Wyandot country.

Ottawa County has been home to Robert Long all of his life. He was born near Peoria and has lived at different places in the county, and now in his retirement years he lives alone at his home in Wyandotte town. Mr. Long talks about many things of the Wyandotte country.

Back in 1907 he tells that his father, George Long, and another man by name of Riley Copeland, were delegates to the state convention from Ottawa County when the State of Oklahoma was being formed. His father was of Wyandotte ancestry and Mr. Copeland was a Delaware. He tells that the town of Peoria is one of the oldest incorporated towns in that part of the country. At one time Wyandotte was incorporated but they lost their charter. The village continues as the home of some 200 people, many of which are Indians belonging to different tribes. It is the home of Leonard Cotter, Chief of the Wyandottes. Up on the hill to the west, across Lost Creek, is the Seneca Indian School. The original Wyandotte reservation was one of the smaller tracts of land, which was obtained from the Senecas. The Wyandottes moved into this area of northeastern Indian Territory in 1857. The combined efforts of the government and the land-hungry whites resulted in the Wyandottes of Kansas to lose all their lands and were driven out. These some 200 Indians started life anew by their Seneca neighbors.

Mr. Long says it would be hard now to find a full-blood Wyandotte, since intermarriage with whites have greatly reduced the tribe blood strain. Even in 1940 the Indian rolls only showed three full-bloods. Descendants of the Wyandotte tribe are proud of their heritage and regardless of the degree of Wyandotte blood they are quick to let their sympathies and affiliation be known that they are Wyandottes - as opposed to those who are all Anglo.

Mr. Long had a variety of occupations and experiences. For many years he herded cattle on the grassland areas north and west of Wyandotte. In later years he worked as a cattle inspector. He spent some of his time working on highway construction jobs and helped build the first bridge on Highway #10 in Ottawa County. His main work has been farming and cattle raising.

In the early days of Wyandotte town its location was down the railroad a short distance, but gradually moved on up east to its present business district. When the Frisco railroad came in the early 1880s, the town experienced considerable growth. The depot was located at the west end of town. Near the railroad was the big Robitaille Hotel, Armstrong Livery Barn, Cole Mercantile, Mudeater Hotel, Dehyo General Store, and several other business places. Under the bluff on the other side of Lost Creek was a park like area where the community used to have an Annual Fair. Mr. Long remembers the first fair there and Governor Haskell came there to give a speech. That was back about 1907. In the olden days nearly all of the people living in that area were of Indian blood of some tribe, and those who ran the business houses were also of Indian ancestry. Even to-day,