

BRIEF INTRODUCTION

August 28, 1968. Today I am visiting with Bessie Rusk, a 78 year old full-blood Cherokee of Oaks Community, Delaware County, Oklahoma. Mrs. Rusk lives along in a community quite removed from modern times. She uses only wood for cooking and heating and prefers to live in the woods so that she can be close to the things of nature and enjoy the peace and quiet of country living. She tells of many things about her life that is interesting. Of particular interest is that she learned to read the Cherokee language from the newspapers that was used as wall paper in her home when she was a child.)

(Much static on tape)

OAKS COMMUNITY IN EARLY DAYS - SALINE COURT HOUSE

(How old a community is Oaks? Has it been here a long time?)

As long as I can remember and I'm 78 years old. I think it was there, way before I was born.

(It was originally an Indian community to begin with and still is.)

Yes. Yeah, because that old post office has been there, I guess from the time the first post office was built. This was Oaks Indian Territory as far back as I can remember. Used to be District Five.

(Well, do you remember anything about the Saline Court House?)

Not much.

(You would have been a small girl then when Statehood came and course it quit operating when Statehood came along. Well, that must have been quite a place from what Mr. Ragsdale told me.)

Well, I must have been about ten or eleven years old then but still yet, I can't remember anything.

(Yeah, they told me about they had a trading post there and they made Indian payments there. I think they had a grist mill there also, and a jail, in addition to the regular court house business.)