

December 4, 1968

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T-353

Index side B, second part, recording time 20 minutes.

Informant: Ben Wood, 76-year-old Cherokee, and his wife Maude, a 70-year-old Cherokee, of Zena Community, Delaware County, Oklahoma.

Subject: Both of these people were born and raised in nearby Woodward Hollow and have lived in this area all of their lives. Mr. Wood has been a farmer all of his life, and occasionally operating a sawmill.

This interview begins with talking with Mrs. Wood. She tells about the old Zena Church which was an important part of Indian life in the community in early times. She does not recall much of the activity at the old Zena Courthouse of Territorial days, as she was too young at that time, and that the womenfolk did not usually attend. The Zena Courthouse was located about three miles east of their present home. All evidence of this old place has vanished now, but in its day it was an important function in Indian life. The center of law and court also served the needs of the Senecas, Wyandottes, and other tribes associated with the Cherokee Nation.

(Mr. Wood comes in from wood chipping, and Mrs. Wood leaves to do the evening chores around the farm.)

At one time the village of Zena had three general stores, a grist mill, blacksmith shop, sawmill, school, and a church. Except for a store and the church, the remainder is gone. The Aellys and Hamptons were the first store keepers in Zena. Descendents of the Hamptons still operate a little country store there.

Mr. Wood has not traveled far from his homelace. He has farmed most of his life, and worked in the woods and at sawmilling. At one time he recalls there was much pine and oak timber in the country, but all has now been cut off. Some softwood timber grow well there, but is cut as soon as it is big enough.

In his early days the nearest trading center was at Southwest City or Dodge. They only made two or three trips a year for their supplies. He remembers the road to Southwest City went by the old Zena Courthouse, but he never had an occasion to stop there. It was located in what was known as Courthouse Hollow, and was a large two-story frame building. A Cherokee deputy sheriff lived there and cared for the building when court or other business was not in session.