

November 29, 1968

T-345

Index side B, recording time 45 minutes.

Informant: Jim Hughes, 83-year-old full blood Cherokee,
of Snake Creek Flats, Delaware County, Okla.

Subject: He talks of conditions seen by the Cherokees on their arrival in this new country from Georgia and the east in 1839, as he remembers stories told him by his grandmother, who came on the Trail of Tears. As related to him, the Indians were released from Army control on arrival in the Indian Territory and left to fend for themselves as best they could. They viewed a wilderness and an uncertain future in a strange land. Yet for a people who had just survived one of the most tragic trials in this country's history, they accepted their lot, proving they would not be beaten. For example, for Hughes relates, one of the first things they did in their new homeland was to find a little patch of land and plant corn by means of digging a hole with a stick.

Jim Hughes was born on Spring Creek in the Cedar Bluff area near Grand River in 1885, and lived there until he was nine years old. He first attended Cedar Bluff School to begin his limited education. He likes to recall that near his home on Spring Creek, he could hear wild turkeys gobble nearly every morning and see deer when he was on his way to school. He learned to fish and hunt very early and talks of it as a part of the Indian way of life.

The family moved east to Snake Creek Flats in ¹⁸⁹⁴~~1884~~ where grazing land and tillable acres were somewhat better. From their new home he attended school at Snake Creek and at Smith Chapel for a while, abandoning the effort to farm, cut wood, and raise a few cattle. And here he has lived all these years, witnessing the many changes that have come to affect the Cherokee way of life.

In his early days the observance of whiteman's Thanksgiving Day was not a part of the Indian's life. However, the Cherokee embraced the spirit of thankfulness each day as a definite part of his life knowing that all he had came from the Creator. Mr. Hughes does remember that the Indians observed the spirit of Christmas and its meaning when he was a little boy. Most Indians had little money to spend for gift exchanging, but did give of what little they had during the holiday season. He recalls that one time an old Indian, Jerr Balleu, came to their home on Spring Creek, and was greeted by his mother with "Christmas Gift". All that he had to give was a piece of tobacco, which was accepted in the true spirit. At other times