

January 21, 1969

T-371

Index side B, second part, recording time 24 min; interview time 2 hours.

Informant: Tom Ward, 90-year-old pioneer of Cherokee ancestry, of Ketchum, Delaware County, Oklahoma

Subject: John George Ward and his wife Emma Thompson Ward were both of Cherokee ancestry and had left their native home in eastern Tennessee to seek a better way of life. About 1871 they started on a long journey that was to take them into Missouri, across Indian Territory, and into northern Texas.

In 1878 Tom Ward was born in Texas near Red River near an old Spanish Fort called Billingsley. After a few years the family moved into Oklahoma Territory or what was known as the Chickasaw Nation. Here they farmed extensively in the rich bottom lands raising cotton, corn, castor beans, broom corn, and other products. Tom Ward's father was an adventurous man and never stayed long in one place. When Tom was 16 years old the family moved into the Cherokee Nation to establish themselves in the area of Ketchum. He recalls traveling on the old Military Road, so oft mentioned in early day history and which to-day traces of the road can be seen a short distance from Ketchum.

Old Ketchum of the year 1894 when he came there was located in a canyon near the banks of Grand River. Since that time Mr. Ward has remained in this once locality to witness the many changes that have come to northeast Oklahoma. He is the sole surviving member of a family of six boys and six girls. On this afternoon this 90-year old pioneer tells some of the things he has seen and done.

Tom farmed for many years around the Ketchum area, and in later years went into the mercantile business. Old Ketchum was about a mile and a half ~~from~~ the present town of Ketchum. In those early days he says that the town had fourteen stores and several houses. It served as a trading center in its early days as towns then were few and far between. He recalls that the only other nearby towns were Vinita, Seneca and Southwest City, Mo., Salina, and Ogeechee.

Tom tells that after he was established as a merchant he married old Ida Yoda. They had a home for awhile a couple miles north of Ketchum at the Old Sulphur Springs, but moved into town to operate his store. Most homes in those early days were log houses or box houses. Box houses were usually made with a minimum of framing and covered with clapboard shingles. The walls were of wide rough lumber placed or nailed in a vertical position. For the most part these box houses did not have an inside wall. While they were cool enough in the summer, they were cold and hard to heat in the winter. As the rough lumber dried and seasoned, cracks would show up in floors and walls to permit 'varmits' and assorted wild creatures to traffic at will.

A main road came into Ketchum and on down to the river. A ferry there on Grand River was operated by a Cherokee by name of Bill Thompson. This ferry was important to the area in those early