

March 11, 1969

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Index side B, part one, recording time 15 min. Interview time 1½ hours.

Informant: Elmer Parker, 79-year-old full blood Delaware, of Shawnee Hills, Rogers County, Oklahoma.

Subject: Elmer Parker was born about four miles northwest of Chelsea and has been in this Shawnee Hills country all of his life. He is best known in these hills as Buddy Parker, as he has always gone by that name. His father was Dave Parker and his mother's maiden name was Mary Bigfield.

Buddy's original home was in the southern edge of the early Shawnee settlement, and although his family were Delawares they shared much in common, including their language, customs, and mutual struggle for survival. Theirs was a life of farming and some livestock raising. For the most part the hills and valleys of the Shawnee Hill country is extremely sandy, but also rich and fertile. This easily tillable soil seems to grow most any of the products common to northeast Oklahoma. Some parts of the Shawnee Hills have suffered thru discovery of oil, and the resulting salt water and waste.

He speaks of hunting and fishing in his early days. Fishing was good in Verdgris River and in Whiteoak Creek and on Upper Pryor Creek, until oil and pollution ruined them. Buddy says deer did not stay in the hill country of his home, possibly because it was too thickly settled with Indians. Now with only a very few people living in this area deer are beginning to come in. Prairie chicken, quail, rabbit and squirrel, along with muskrat and coon have always been plentiful to supply meat for the Indian tables. Trapping the fur bearers was a profitable sport in Buddy's young days, and there are still plenty of hides on foot, there is no demand anymore for them. The resettled Indians of many tribes, like the Shawnees and Delawares, were forced to do without some materials normally used in dances and ceremonies. When these Indians came from Iowa and Kansas to this part of Oklahoma, they were removed also from sources of certain stones for ornaments, Eagle and pheasant feathers, red and black pipestone, and certain plants and herbs commonly used by their forefathers. However, the Indian is a master at improvising and making-do with what is at hand. In the absence of eagle feathers, dance leaders use the feathers of the black hawk, (or feathers of the immature broad-wing hawk, in which phase are black). Few areas of any Indian country are without the terrapin and turtle shells. The terrapin shell is commonly used by the women dancers in the Shawnee Hills.

At one time this area known as Shawnee Hills had a large Indian population. Buddy remembers that some of the families were those of Carpenter, Secondine, Longtail, Dick, Daugherty, Greenfeather, Bread, and Brown. It is with a note of sadness that Mr. Parker mentions that now most all of the Indians are gone from the hills there, and perhaps only eight or ten Indian families still remain.