

March 3, 1969

T-379

Index side B, recording time 45 min.

Informant: Sarah Cheater, 84-year-old Cherokee,  
Peters Prairie, Delaware County, Oklahoma

Subject: This full blood Cherokee was born on Whitewater Creek and has been in this valley all of her life. She is one of eight children of James Wright and Molly Snail Wright.

Mrs. Cheater talks about the old burial grounds of her community. Probably the oldest graveyard is the Sallie England Cemetery, and according to the markers that remain the last burial was in 1888. It is told that this was a large burial ground at one time, but to-day by piecing together the broken stones and digging out some partially buried markers a record of 14 of the deceased can be accounted for. In present use are the Bucket, Sloan, and Butler Cemeteries which the Indians use. She recalls her mother talking about Stand Watie. When he died in 1871 on Peters Prairie it was his wish that he be buried in the Oldfield Cemetery on the west side of Grand River. In fulfilling his wish to be buried at his home place in Oldfield Bend, his friends and relatives took his body as far as Grand River. The River was up and they could not cross over, so the funeral wagon went back to Peters Prairie where he was buried at Polson Cemetery. (In later years the old Oldfield Cemetery became known as the Bluma Cemetery. Up until a few years ago this graveyard had kept its identity, but to-day nothing remains, and a part of the place has been the victim of bulldozer and clearing activity. George Bluma tells that his father once owned the land on which the graveyard was located, and that there were fourteen graves there. He remembers that there were stone markers for Col. James Bell and his wife and two of their children, Sallie C. Watie (wife of Stand Watie) and two of their children, and two of the Dubois children. Mr. Bluma says that Stand Watie had put up the monument for his wife and two children before he died, but the dates on the markers seen to-day does not bear this out. In Vol. II of a History of Oklahoma printed in 1910, it shows that Sallie Caroline (Bell) Watie died in 1863).

Indian children of her generation in the 1880s and 1890s all went to Butler School if they lived near enough. This old school has long since passed and nothing remains to-day of it.

Mrs. Cheater talks about the early days of Peters Prairie and Whitewater Creek country when there were lots of Indians living there and all had little farms. In the community long ago Charley Masters, a Cherokee, operated a sawmill. She says she used to put in her own garden every year with an old mule called "Put" and a double shovel, and raised plenty of garden stuff for her family. No farming is done there any more. Many of the Indian families have been crowded out by white people. The white plague has ruined this once beautiful and peaceful Indian country.