

7/510
March 25, 1969

Index side B, recording time 35 minutes.

Informant: Mrs. Clara Ward Robinson, 80-year-old Cherokee,
Bushyhead, Rogers County, Oklahoma

Subject: Mrs. Robinson was born and raised in the Bushyhead community of northern Rogers County, and this has always been her home. Her parents were Bryon James Robinson and Esther Ward. Her maternal grandparents were of the Ward family in Georgia, and at one time had been with the Texas Cherokees. They were forced out of Texas and settled for a while near Siloam Springs, Arkansas, and later at Flint, I.T. After a while her grandfather, Joseph Ward, settled about two miles south of Bushyhead where he lived out his life. The old Ward's Grove School, and Wards Grove Cemetery were named after him.

Mrs. Robinson well knows this part of the old Cherokee Nation. She attended schools at Ward's Grove, Chelsea, Washington, and finally the Cherokee Female Seminary. She taught school for many years and also she and her husband operated hardware and implement stores in the district.

She talks of the old community centers surrounding her hometown. Owala, Sequoyah, Foyil, Sagecyah, Good Hope,

A few miles southwest of Bushyhead was the community of Owala, once a center of social life in pioneer days. The settlement had a school and a church. A Mr. Lipe operated a store there, she recalls. Owala came by its name thru Mr. Lipe, who wanted the village given an Indian name. The nearest the Cherokees could come to using his name was with the word "light", which was acceptable and has been used these many years. The village was on the main road for travelers going west to the crossing on the Verdigris River some three or four miles west, and provided a stop over place. Sometime about 1875 some travelers had stopped there with a sick child one night. The child died and was the first burial in what is now the Owala Cemetery. Strip coal mining, ranches, and the invasion of whites have erased most of this old community now, except possibly the cemetery. Even then, coal miners want to move it. Strip mining has nearly completely surrounded the burial ground, and the only access is a narrow road between two deep coal pits. At one time Owala had a post office beginning about 1887, and she recalls hearing her folks mention that John Foreman, a Cherokee, was the first postmaster.

The town of Bushyhead probably had its beginning about 1882 when the Frisco railroad came thru. J. W. Stewart was one of the first to put in a store which was the beginning of the little town. The town grew and prospered until it had many stores and houses. Farming was done on a large scale, and lots of cattle were raised and shipped from the area. Like so many of the frontier towns, many lived to see it grow up and then die. The advent of paved roads and automobiles was the first of a series of events that started its decline. The period after World War I was one of hard times, unemployment, and no market for farm products. Farming in the area reached a low ebb from which it never recovered, and the country became one for cattle raising. Then came the strip coal mining beginning near the community of Sequoyah and going