

T-422

April 21, 1969

Index side A, second part, recording time 25 min. Interview time two and half hrs.

Informant: Rufus Lacie, 82-year-old full blood Cherokee,
Alberty's Prairie, Adair County, Oklahoma

Subject: On this warm spring afternoon, Rufus Lacie was walking along a lonely country road northwest of Westville in Adair County. He makes his home with a daughter on the northwest edge of Alberty Prairie. He had come into Westville on the bus that morning from visiting another daughter at Oologah and was walking those several miles thru the woods and along the dirt roads. Rufus has been walking thru this country all of his life and knows each hill and valley well. This is the country he knows and loves.

This meeting with Rufus takes place just opposite the Silas Lacie Cemetery, and as we talk he begins to tell much about this part of the old Cherokee Nation. He points over to the northwest to a little knoll above Peacheater Creek some quarter of a mile away. He describes the log house that once stood there where he was born in the year 1887. During his young boyhood fire destroyed their home twice, but they rebuilt each time to start anew. Sometimes he talks as if reliving scenes and events, and of his people, as if it was only yesterday. Peacheater Creek took its name from a Cherokee who lived a short distance down the stream and who had one of the first orchards in the early days.

We climb a fence and walk some three hundred feet to visit an old Cherokee Cemetery, known as the Silas Lacie Graveyard. Those buried here are his people - Lacies, Grigsbys, Charles, Walker, Sixkiller, Blackfox, and Mixwater. At the far east side of this burial place are two unmarked graves which he says were two horsethieves hung long before his time. He believes they were Fred Grant and George Qualls. As we walk among the some thirty graves, perhaps half of them have markers. Whether marked or not, Rufus points out different ones such as Sallie Walker his great grandmother who died in 1897 at the age of 90 years. Close by is the marker of Ellen Sixkiller his grandmother who lived from 1835 to 1879, and next was Taylor Sixkiller his grandfather who died in 1889. There is the conventional Civil War marker for Alexander Mixwater, who Rufus remembers was a very old man when he himself was a small boy. He points out other graves, unmarked, but familiar and just as honored as if they were marked with an expensive marble monument. There are no words to translate the attitude and outlook an Indian possesses when he calmly looks above and into the distance from a burial ground. In his eyes there is a smile, as if he was soon to see again those he knew and loved long ago.

Before statehood Mr. Lacie walked across the mountain east to attend school at the Baptist Mission. This historic place was the location of the end of the Trail of Tears following that tragic march in 1838-39. School life there was very simple and he does not recall anything of consequence or important happening there.