

7-426
April 30, 1969

Index side A, recording time 20 minutes; interview time two hours.

Informant: Arch H. Ray, 75-year-old Cherokee,
Bunch Community; Adair County, Oklahoma

Subject: The quietness and solitude of the valleys and hills in the Bunch Community keep secret the many events that have occurred in the past, the mention of the many Cherokees who have lived here, and of the changes that have come to this still primitive part of Oklahoma. Arch Ray was born and raised in Adair County and has known the Bunch country all of his life. He operated the country store for many years until he retired and relates some of the past history of this Indian community.

The community is believed to have taken its name from the father of Rabbitt Bunch, one of the original settlers here at the beginning of the Cherokee Nation. The post office was established there on May 26, 1886 and officially named for Rabbitt Bunch, a leader and patriarch of the community. Ike Sanders, who came to Indian Territory on the Trail of Tears and also lived in that day was another of the leaders of the Cherokees of Bunch country. Sanders used to take his trading material (hams, grain, hides, etc.) to the Bollinger Store at the foot of Garrison Avenue in Ft. Smith. Bollinger used to come up to Bunch to visit Sanders and they would talk about and relive the old days.

The Kansas City Southern railroad runs thru the middle of the town, and Mr. Ray points to the place where the depot used to be. At one time Bunch was a town, having a nice passenger and freight depot, even with a colored waiting room. On both sides of the railroad were scattered the business places and houses. He recalls when Bunch had four stores, a grist mill, sawmill, post office, blacksmith shop, and a garage. Also a little factory that made handles, wagon parts, and other finished wood products. Once, there were some one hundred people living in the town. Now the country store is about all that remains.

A part of the old way is still living as the K.C.S. still has a passenger train come thru twice a day, and one of the few sights to be seen in Oklahoma to-day. At one time the railroad station in Bunch had an agent, two operators, a pumper, and two section crews. Mr. Ray remembers when there were four passenger trains a day each way, and in that day all the coaches were made of wood. A repair and wrecker train used to go by about once a day, as this railroad was very crooked and has seen many wrecks and cars jump off the track.

Long ago there used to be a school in Bunch, but progress changed schools along with other things. The school serving the Bunch-Lyons communities is three miles north and known as Cave Springs School. Schools of the community in the olden days were the Kentucky, Wing, and Grey Schools. The Wing School was located in Bunch, but is used now as the Baptist Church.