

7-1170

June 2, 1969

Index side A, part 1, recording time 23 minutes; interview time 1½ hours.

Informant: Hubert Vann, 74 years old, of Cherokee ancestry,
Martha Brown Community, Mayes County, Oklahoma

Subject: Hubert is the son of Johnson Vann and Lizzie Ridge and was born and raised on Grand River in the Martha Brown community. Hubert has spent all of his life in this area, and still has a part of his original Indian allotment land.

For most of his life he has been a farmer, and in his younger days spent much time cutting timber for sawmills and hacking ties. Many changes have come to his part of the country. Most noticeable is the great decrease in cultivation farm lands and the disappearance of the once fine timber stands. Much of the good farming lands of his area are now within the government owned Ft. Gibson Lake area, some of which are undated. He comments on the government programs regarding the reservoirs. The Ft. Gibson Dam was to serve, in order, for flood control, water conservation, and recreation. Now it would seem, with all the foreign peoples going in a continuous cloud of dust to the lake shores past his house, it has turned out that recreation for people foreign to this community is the No. 1 purpose, and the other factors being secondary. This fact, along with others, has meant the end of homes for many Indians that used to live on this west side of Grand River.

Of the many Indians who used to live in the area along the west side of Grand River from the mouth of Chouteau Creek south to to Flat Rock area included the families of Tadpole, Watateesee, Turtle, Tucker, Rabbit, Anderson, Blackfox, Vann, Walkingstick, and Fisher. He says no more than five or six Indian families remain in this area.

In his early life he remembers that Chouteau was their trading center and it was a busy and prosperous little town in those days. Tom Snodgrass had a large hardware and implement store there. Al Vandegriff operated the grain elevator and hay barn along the Katy Railroad. At one time there were two banks on main street. Wisdom and Lake each had large general mercantile stores. Griffin also had a store. In those early days butter, eggs, cream, and poultry were brought in to trade. At one time Chouteau was one of the largest hay snipping points in the country, and much grain and cotton was shipped out also.

In the earlier days of his country there were no bridges crossing Grand River. There was a main ferry on the river about where the present State Highway 33 bridge is now. Near the ferry was a ford which was also used when the river was low.