

T-470

June 11, 1969

Index side B, recording time 20 min.; interview time one hour.

Informant: Ollie Bennett, 91 years old, of Seneca ancestry, Strang Community, Mayes County, Oklahoma

Subject: Strang, Oklahoma, by comparison is not one of the old towns, and its beginning dates only from the early part of 1900. However, Mrs. Bennett has seen its beginning, its growth to a business district three blocks long lined with stores on both sides, and has seen it die down to the present two country stores and a post office.

Mrs. Bennett is not a native of Strang Community, but she is the oldest person living there. She was born in the southeast part of Kansas near the Oklahoma line and came to the Strang community about 1914. Before coming here she was in bad health and her doctor had given her only six months to live. She thought by changing to another location might improve her health, so she and her husband started out by wagon. One of their first stops was on Spavinaw Creek which they found to be a beautiful place. Here in this area they decided to make their home. Going across the river they settled in the Strang area where she has been since.

Strang became a town beginning sometime about 1910. The first enterprise was a stock yards operated by Old Man Strang, and in honor to Amos Strang the town was so named. The first store to operate in Strang was by the Craig family which was continued by Old Man Craig, his son Granville, and lastly by grandson Gene. It was from this family that Craig County, Oklahoma, was named. About 1912 the Iron Mountain Railroad was built thru Strang, or rather was completed at Strang as the road was constructed from both directions and met in the center of what is now the main street in town. On that day when the two sections of track were joined railroad officials and others gathered to drive a gold spike to complete the new enterprise. The railroad was probably the incentive for the town to boom and prosper. She recalls that there was a large stockyards on the south part of town by the railroad. Her home now looks out on the old railroad bed, and at one time for a block north there were great stacks of railroad ties awaiting shipment. On the north side of main street was Bob Smith's grain elevator. This was a large farming community at one time and much grain and hay were shipped from Strang. Joe West, a full blood Cherokee, was probably one of the biggest hay shippers in the country and loaded out many carloads of hay for points all over the United States. Railroad ties and lumber added to the prosperity of the community and many Cherokees made their living from the timber lands in the hills and along Grand River, bringing their ties and lumber here to sell. She remembers that some nights there was no sleep for the bawling cattle and squealing hogs being loaded for shipment.