

T-480

June 23, 1969

Index side A, recording time 32 min.; interview time 1 1/2 hours.

Informant: Emmett Lowrey, 73-year-old Cherokee, Stigler, Oklahoma

Subject: Mr. Lowrey spent nearly all of his life in his home community of Briartown at the southwestern edge of the old Cherokee Nation. He still owns his Indian land allotment at Briartown but has recently moved across the river to live in Stigler.

Historic Briartown community dates to time the Cherokees came to Indian Territory on the Trail of Tears, and possibly before as there were some Indians here who came at earlier times. It is in this country that the Starrs, Harnetts, Wests, Lowreys, Campbells, Barnes and many others settled and by their labors built this progressive part of southern Muskogee County. Some parts of the area long remained untamed where the Youngers, Belle Starr and others lived in apparent safety from the lawmen. Before the Civil War a prominent Cherokee, Spring Frog, made his home here. Not the least of the men of early days was William G. Russell who lived here in his later years, and has been recognized as the discoverer of gold in Colorado in the 1840s. In historic Briartown Cemetery not a hundred feet apart are the graves of Spring Frog and of William G. Russell.

Spring Frog was gifted as a naturalist and was a full-blood Cherokee. He lived out his life in the Briartown community and died in 1859 at about 100 years of age. This Indian of many talents lived a humble life, but did lay aside his feelings to lead a war party of Cherokees against the Osages at one time. He probably best known in his time as the guide and friend of John James Audubon, the French painter who gained immortality with his painting of birds and wildlife. Few, if any, match the odd shape coffin-like monument which covers Spring Frog's grave, and which once made Ripley's "Believe it or not".

This is also the country of Younger Bend on the Canadian River. In this once wild country outlaws retreated to enjoy the fruits of their profession. Yet even in Younger Bend not all was peace and quiet, for it was here that the "Queen of the Outlaws", Belle Starr was shot and killed. Not until recently was it known that she was killed by her son, Ed Reed.

It is in the Briartown country that the Starrs came from their homes in the Cherokee country of Georgia, driven to the Indian Territory to start a new life. The Starrs did well and prospered in the new land. The old Starr Cemetery in this area contains the graves of ~~the~~ many members of this family who lived and died here. Charles, Tom, and Catherine were three of this family who came on the Trail of Tears.