

M-18

INFORMANT: JIM PHILLIPS, CHEROKEE

INTERVIEWED BY: J. W. TYNER

INTERVIEW DATE: MAY 27, 1969

In the high flat country of northeast Cherokee County is Lowrey Prairie. Once thickly settled and a prosperous farming community, has now given way to large cattle pastures and ranching. It's terrain returning perhaps to somewhat its condition at the time the Cherokees came to Indian Territory.

With the Cherokees came Switchler Lowrey who came to Lowrey Prairie, for whom it was named. This pioneer Cherokee cleared, built and progressed this section of wilderness to see it become a populated and happy community. At the time of his death in 1905, he was 116 years old, and had lived to see the cornucopia of his labors. Came the machine age, with all its schemes, pleasures, and easier life to spell the end of a farming community. In the plan of the Creator, perhaps He did not wish Switchler Lowrey to see what was to become of his beloved prairie, now nearly completely infested and invaded with land-hungry, greedy people foreign to the Indian Territory.

Through the community of Lowrey ran the main road from the northeast part of the Cherokee Nation to Tahlequah. No trace of the old road remains now, but Mr. Phillips points out where it used to be.

At one time there was the village of Lowrey, with its two stores, post office, sawmill, blacksmith shop, school and church. In the area lived many Indians of the families of Smoke, Beaver, Redbird, Foreman, Lowrey, Roach, Napier, Garrett, Phillips, Osborne, Adair, et al. For a short time the village was called Tail End City, but apparently popular opinion returned to Lowrey. Men by names of Rozell, Reed, and Hobbs were some of the early merchants who operated stores in Lowrey. The third and last post office was in the present Lowrey store. Prior locations of the post office dating back to the 1880's were first about a mile southeast, followed in later years to a location just south of the present Lowrey school. Lowrey community has been one of the more fortunate of the small present day communities in that it has been able to retain its public school. The community maintains its church as the center of religious life. Except for the Phillips, Roach, Sam, and Sourjohn all other Cherokees have left Lowrey Prairie.

Adjoining the Phillips place was the Roach farm in olden days. Mrs. Phillips came from the Roach family. We visited the old Roach home, originally a log house reputed to be well over a