

M-23

Informant: Joe West, Cherokee
Interviewed by: J. W. Tyner
Interview date: August 4, 1969
Transcribed by: Monette Coombes

Subject: Joe West, 82 year old Cherokee
Lynch Prairie, Mayes County, Oklahoma

In the northeast corner of Mayes County is that area that was once a grass-land prairie and known as Lynch Prairie. The prairie is surrounded on three sides of the Grand River and at one time this was all farming country. The West family settled here after arrival from their native Georgia homeland, coming with the other Cherokees in the Removal. Here Dewitt West was born in 1847, and several brothers and sisters also were born on this prairie. The Cherokee families of West, Scraper, Smith, Foreman, Parrish, Martin, and Gray made homes in this area and built a productive and happy community. For many years, even well past statehood, this was a progressive community. Joe West, the son of Dewitt West and Sarah Scraper West became one of the prominent farmers and stockmen of his neighborhood. From 1898 to 1900 Mr. West was a student at the Cherokee Male Seminary, leaving there to attend the Baptist Indian Mission in Tahlequah. After finishing his schooling there he returned home to devote nearly a lifetime to farming. He still lives on his Indian allotted land. He has retired from most of his farm work, but still maintains a herd of cattle. He is well known beekeeper in his county and processes and markets a high quality honey. In his active days he was one of the producers of baled hay and shipped many car loads of hay from the railroad station at Strang to many parts of the country. In his early days Joe says that this little part of the old Cherokee Nation was all prairie land. Cultivation farming has practically disappeared from the scene and livestock pastures exist now. When the people quit raising crops the country began growing up in brush and trees, and now much of the area is a woodland.