

T-509

July 21, 1969

Index side B, recording time 10 min.; interview time, two hours.

Informant: Phillip Rider, 60 years old, son of a Cherokee Freedman, Longview Community, Mayes County, Okla.

Subject: In a minority group to-day is that first generation of Indian Freedmen. Phillip Rider is one of these. He was born on what is known as Longview Prairie and has spent all of his life in this area. He is the son of Sam Rider and Bertha Vann Rider, both of whom were at one time Negro slaves of their Cherokee owners. Both of his parents were born in the Brushy Creek area of Grand River Valley and spent all of their lives in southern Mayes County. Only a very few of the Freedmen decedents remain now.

In the days before Ft. Gibson Lake was formed, the great length of Grand River was a rich and productive farming area where many Indian and freedmen families lived in peace and harmony. Old communities such as Yonkers, Drake Bend, Brushy, Booth Bottom, Fisher, and Martha Brown are only memories now as these places for the most part have been inundated by the lake waters. In the days of yesteryear people farmed and sufficed well along the river. Not the least of their pursuits was hunting and fishing which was excellent. At one time Grand River could be forded in several places, and at one such ford near the river was a natural salt spring. This saline spring produced salt in such quantities that wagon loads of it were hauled to the market. It was in this area also that a century and a half ago that Hopewell Mission and Union Mission were operated for Indian children.

Phillip attended school at Martha Brown and at Brushy Schools. He terminated his schooling early to work on the river bottom farms as well as on his own farm. There he came to know many of the Indians that lived in the area. Some of these families were the Senoyah, Sullateski, Roach, Fisher, Chualukee, Downing, Vann, Tadpole, Walkingstick, and Anderson. To-day no more than three Indian families remain in the area. At the mouth of Flat Rock Creek a large settlement of Indians lived at one time, favored because of the good hunting and fishing. For some reason the settlement was abandoned and the Indians scattered up and down the river and east beyond the river to the high flatlands.

Phillip recalls when he was a boy his father bought supplies in large quantities enough to last a long time as travel to a trade center was a major task. He remembers seeing flour bought in 100 pound bags which cost \$1.05. The same size bags of cornmeal. Green coffee came in ten-pound bags and was roasted and ground at home. They seldom bought sugar since they would let their sorghum crystalize and harden ~~and~~ use it for sweetening. Store bought, clothes and shoes were not a commodity they bought often. He recalls