

T-509

July 15, 1969

Index side B, recording time 20 min.; interview time two hours.

Informant: Floyd Colvert, 70 years old of Cherokee ancestry, Braggs Community, Muskogee County, Okla.

Subject: Somewhat isolated by the Arkansas River at the eastern edge of Muskogee County is the little town of Braggs. Not unlike many similar small towns, within its history is included its own rise and decline. It is in this community that Floyd Colvert has spent all of his life and watched the many changes that have come.

The coming of the Missouri Pacific railroad in the late 1800s, and the establishment of Camp Gruber in World War II days marked the separate great changes to come to this western edge of the old Cherokee Nation.

Between Braggs and the river was the big bend of rich farming land, while to the east was the woodland hill country, Greenleaf Lake and Creek.

Sitting on the curb in front of one of the old mercantile buildings on what was once the Main Street of town, Mr. Colvert recalls some things of the old days. He points to a vacant lot on the corner up the street where once stood the Guaranty State Bank and across the street "catty-cornered" was its competitor, the First State Bank. Floyd says that shortly after statehood there were some fifteen stores along this main street paralleling the railroad. Other places of business were scattered about, but he does not remember how many they were or the names. He does recall then the Herzog Trading Co. as the biggest store in town. In the olden days many traveling salesmen and buyers came to Braggs on the train and would put up at the Miles Hotel, which was later sold to Elmer Coon and renamed the Monticello Hotel. The hotel was noted for its class, and no one could eat in the dining room unless properly dressed, which required that all men wear coat and tie. In the days when there was lots of timber in the hills lumber, logs, railroad ties and posts were brought in and sold to dealers. Floyd says that at the north end of the business district timber products sometimes covered an area three blocks long alongside the railroad awaiting shipment. From the river bottom country would come great quantities of potatoes to be shipped to other markets. Lots of corn and wheat, oats and some broomcorn was also grown there and sold to dealers in the town. He recalls the days when Braggs was called "Saturday Town", and on that day people of the area came to trade, buy and visit. He says that the people were so thick you could hardly get up or down the streets. That day seems so far away in the past as only the old general store and the little post office look out on a changing world. Freight trains still rumble past but they are not the same to the old timers as when the coal-