

T-511

July 23, 1969

Index side A, recording time 20 minutes; interview time 1½ hours.

Informant: Lindsey Mayes, 79-year-old Cherokee,  
River Bend Community, Mayes County, Okla.

Subject: Mayes County, Oklahoma, was named for the Cherokee Mayes family. Many of this large family have been prominent and successful in many fields and pursuits. From this family came Joel B. Mayes and Samuel Mayes, both Principal Chiefs of the Cherokee Nation. Saugee Mayes was acclaimed as one of the great ball players of his day. Others were well known in politics and government, while many were teachers, farmers, and stockmen. All contributed much to the growth and settlement of the Cherokee Nation. Lindsey, the son of Watt Mayes, and nephew of Joel B. and Samuel Mayes, was born in the river bend country of Grand River in Mayes County, and has spent nearly all of his life here. He still lives on his Indian land allotment and is retired from an active life as a stockman. At one time Lindsey was a County Commissioner, and thru his work and influence the Pryor-Locust Grove bridge across Grand River was built, which is usually called "Lindsey Mayes Bridge".

Lindsey tells that the home of Chief Samuel Mayes was located about a mile west of Salina on the north side of the present Highway 20. He had a large farm in that river bottom area. Chief Joel Mayes had his home and farm lands was located on the west side of Grand River on the south side of the Pryor-Locust Grove highway and would be that area on the east side of what is now the Pryor Country Club. Joel Mayes had a large and beautiful home there and spent most of his life in that place. Lindsey is not sure where his uncles were buried, but believes Samuel was buried either at Tahlequah or at the Ross-Mayes Cemetery. The Ross-Mayes Cemetery was moved out of the river bottom when Hudson Lake was formed by the construction of the Markham Ferry Dam, and its original location was known as the Ross Cemetery. He believes Joel Mayes was buried either at Tahlequah or at the Bryan's Chapel Cemetery. A mile south of the Bryan's Chapel Cemetery is the large family cemetery of the Lindseys. The Lindseys were prominent Cherokees in the early days and contributed much to the growth of their part of the country. From this family came school teachers, stockmen, and members active in the political affairs of the Cherokee Nation.

In talking of the old pioneer families who lived near Grand River long ago he mentions the Vanns, Drakes, and Markhams, each of which had their own little family cemetery. Watt Mayes, who was Lindsey's father, also had a family cemetery located at the west edge of his ranch property now. These old cemeteries have not been used for fifty or sixty years and except for a visit once in a while are abandoned.

A mile or so up the river from Lindsey's home was the old McNair place and the Bushyhead place. These closely related Cherokee families owned and farmed much land in the river bottom back in the 1870s up until around statehood. The McNair home was a favorite gathering place in the area for social affairs in that day.