

August 29, 1969

Index side B, recording time 40 min.; interview time two hours.

Informant: Nola Jones Egnor, 70-year-old Cherokee,
White Oak, Craig County, Oklahoma

Subject: Some of the history of white Oak.

Located in the southwest part of Craig County, white Oak village existed in the late 1870s as a shipping point for cattle and grain, but it was not officially recognized as a town until a post office was established there in 1895 in Andy Hampton's store. Charley Brown and Theo Jones are credited with starting the town which takes its name from the nearby white Oak Hills.

Nola Jones Egnor is the daughter of Theo Jones and has known the life in white Oak all her years having always maintained her home here. She shows a photograph taken about 1900 or before giving a view of the main street of white Oak looking north. Store buildings are on both sides of the street. Seen in the background of the picture is the Frisco Depot by the railroad going northeast toward Vinita. On the south side of the street is the Miles Hotel and Looming House, which replaced an earlier two story frame house used as a hotel owned by Joe Beck. Later Miles sold his hotel to Beck. C. G. Mills, a cattleman, and Fred Kelley, cattleman and hay producer, were among the early leaders promoting the growth of the town. For nearly 60 years Oliver Haynes, a Cherokee and graduate of the Cherokee Male Seminary, has owned a store in white oak. Other early settlers to white oak were the Raffertys, Harlins, Stouts, and Becks. Dr. Haynes, a southerner, came to white Oak in its early days and established himself in a little office.

Like many of the old timers of Craig County, Mrs. Egnor remembers the Wolfe Orphanage that was located some two miles north of white oak. Yet no one can recall much about this kindly old couple and their work. It has been told that Mr. Wolfe was a wealthy German and Mrs. Wolfe was a full blood Indian and they devoted their life to caring for orphan children. It is said that in their large and beautiful two-story home they cared for as many as forty children at a time. No one can recall how long they lived here, but some say Mr. Wolfe died in or about 1905 and the orphanage closed. Mrs. Egnor remembers going there with her mother to decorate the little graveyard which contained twenty or more graves, most of which were orphan children. On a visit to the site of the little orphans cemetery this year no trace of it can be found since white cattlemen have removed every evidence to make way for a cattle feedlot.

Original white oak was located about a half mile south of the present site. When the railroad came thru about 1880 the town moved up by the depot and at that time lots were laid out and streets opened. Near her present home at the south end of Main Street was the Jones home where Mrs. Egnor was born. Dr. Haynes attended her birth and this has been her home these seventy years.