

T-535

September 16, 1969

Index side A, second part, recording time 15 min.; interview time one hour.  
Index side B, first part, recording time 15 min..

Informant: Tom Captain, 80-year-old Eastern Shawnee,  
Moccasin Bend, Ottawa County, Oklahoma

Subject: Eastern Shawnees, and other small tribes of Northeast Oklahoma.

As a tribe of Indians, the Shawnees must have really incurred the wrath of the Great White powers-that-were in the mid-1800s. The government was not satisfied with just moving the Shawnees to Indian Territory, they received the dubious honor of being split up into three separate groups and scattered to the three winds (the fourth wind is the good wind which the Indian seldom reels). So it was, the Eastern Shawnees were located on a little patch of land between the Peorias and the Wyandottes from Spring River to the Missouri line. Tom says that about a thousand Shawnees were located on this reservation about five miles wide and some six miles long. How the government did it is not known, but they brought about 250 Modocs from Oregon and placed them on the Eastern Shawnee reservation. But theirs was not to question why - just do and die.

In the Moccasin Bend country of Spring River Tom Captain has spent nearly all his life. He has seen much as time and progress have marched by. Of what is left of the Eastern Shawnee reservation still owned by the tribe is almost heartbreaking. Just 57 acres. Ironical it may be, but he tells that recently the government got big hearted and offered to build a council house for the tribe on their few remaining acres. As Chief of the Eastern Shawnees at that time, he turned the offer down. Within reasonable distance of the tribes land, Tom can count the concerned Shawnee families on the fingers of one hand. At present the tribe rents out this little piece of bottom land which brings in a little tribal income.

Tom Captain was born on the same section he now lives in, at a time when the land was all Indian land, no fences to separate the people, no posted signs to tell of greedy minds, and a paramount hope that they be left alone at last. Perhaps they were fortunate, as Tom tells that big timber covered a lot of the area and that there was no underbrush. High grass grew among the trees and one could see for a half mile thru the woods. This was typical Indian land, with clear and beautiful Spring River on the west side of their reservation.

The other Shawnees that were moved into Indian Territory may not have been so well blessed. The Cherokee Shawnees were scattered thru what is now Craig County settling mostly around the town of Bluejacket and in the southern end through the Shawnee Hills. The third group were located in central Oklahoma and are now under the Indian Agency at Anadarko, and known as the Absentee Shawnees.

In his lifetime he has seen most of the Indians of those several little tribes disappear along with their reservations. He only knows of one Modoc who lives in Seneca, Mo. There are no Peorias in the town that bears the tribe's name. A few Senecas can be found in the Turkey Ford area of what was once their reservation. A few Wyandottes are still around their old tribal grounds. The Quapaws, Miamis, and Ottawas probably fared better than most in later years. For these three tribes the lead and zinc mines paid them a 10% royalty, but now this income has