

T-540

October 21, 1969

Index side B, recording time 30 min.; interview time 1½ hours.

Informant: Claude Cochran, 65-year-old full blood Cherokee,
Rucker Community, Rogers County, Okla.

Subject: Some history of Rogers County.

Claude Cochran is now a cattle rancher, living on his original land allotment in the high prairie country of southeastern Rogers County. He lives alone at his ranchhouse, enjoying a life desired and planned for. Claude was born at Catoosa, and spent some of his boyhood on Cochran Prairie in Delaware County. The family returned to Catoosa where he began his schooling. After the grade schools, he attended Northeastern State College and earned a degree in education. For many years he was a school teacher. The last several years he was Principal at Wickliff School in eastern Mayes County.

Claude's father was George W. Cochran who was born in Georgia, and came to Indian Territory after the Trail of Tears March. His mother was Julia Chambers Cochran a daughter of Henry Chambers who was at one time Assistant Principal Chief of the Cherokees.

He talks of many things as they come to mind. He tells that Ed Sanders was the first Sheriff of Rogers County following statehood, and that he was later a County Commissioner. Sanders was one of the many Indians who held important offices and contributed much to the early days of Oklahoma. Sheriff Sanders was at Catoosa when Jess Cochran, Ben Frank and another Indian were killed while robbing a store. Arch Cochran, a relative of Jess, brought the body to the Hendricks place and asked if they could bury poor ole Jeff in their family cemetery. The request was refused because they believed the "bad" spirits would bother the others buried there. Jeff was probably buried up on Tiawah hill somewhere.

Claude showed a photograph taken sometime in the 1890s showing the Jim Wofford Ferry in operation on the Verdigris River. The Ferry was then located just below the railroad bridge which would be about two miles north of the town of Catoosa.

There is a large area of prairie country east of Tiawah known as the Rucker Community. This is now all cattle ranch country, but at one time there was some farming. In early days a white man by name of Frank Rucker came into the country and got control of a large area for his cattle grazing. Rucker married a Cherokee woman named Mary Taylor, probably to secure some of his land holdings, as the Taylors had considerable land in the area. After a while Rucker quit his wife (Mary Taylor), and married a school teacher from Hulbert. He stayed in the Rucker Community a long time. He supported the building of the only school on this prairie which was called Rucker School and the name of the community took the same name. Eventually Rucker disposed of his holdings and moved to Hulbert and finally up and died. Rucker School has now passed away and remains only a memory for the old timers.