

October 13, 1969

Index side B, recording time 22 min. (last half of tape).  
Interview time two hours.

Informant: Eunice Bluejacket Wilson, 71-year-old Shawnee,  
Delaware, Nowata County, Oklahoma

Subject: Delawares and Shawnees in Nowata County.

The town of Delaware has long been Mrs. Wilson's home, since she married Charles Wilson, a Delaware. She was born in Vinita at the old Oak Leaf Hotel. Her father was William T. Bluejacket, and her mother was Emma Bluejacket. Although both parents had the same name they were distantly related. Her parents came from Tongonoxie, Kansas, where they were raised. She was also a niece of the well-known Chief Charles Bluejacket, who lived and died at the town that bears his name, after being forced to move from his homeland in Kansas.

In the early 1870s several families of Delawares lived in the Nowata area. One of these families was the Besions. Stephen and Mary Besion farmed land up on what is now known as California Creek. An Indian cemetery had been started shortly after the Delawares came into Indian Territory, and eventually was on land allotted to Mary Besion. She deeded three acres of her land for use as a cemetery, and decreed that no white people were ever to be buried there. She could never see any good in whites, and held a dislike for them as long as she lived. This large cemetery still has no white people buried there to anyone's knowledge. This burial place is maintained and mowed regularly. When Charles Wilson was living, he and Sam Smith, another Indian, built a good fence around the graveyard.

Mrs. Wilson recalls many of the Delawares and Shawnees she has known and mentions many who have passed on that lived in Nowata County. She relates family relations, and speaks kindly of many she knew as a little girl. Some of those were from families of the Armstrongs, Newcombs, Secondines, Dushanes, Bascomb, Washington, Ketchums, Tonguenoxies, Chinbows, Longbones, Brown, Beard, Crockett, and others.

She talks about her people when they lived in Kansas. It was a cruel slap from an unfeeling government that moved the Shawnees from their original homeland in Ohio to Kansas about 1820. After some 40 years these Indians had established themselves with productive farms, schools, and missions. It is not hard to see an Indian's appraisal of a government even down to younger generations, when the government again showed the color of their hearts by the wholesale disregard for any pursuit of happiness in the movement of the Shawnees to Indian Territory in the late 1860s. It must have been of little worth that many of those same Indians have Civil War monuments in burial places across the country. Mrs. Wilson tells of hearing her older people of the Bluejacket family tell of the heartbreak of having to leave their beautiful homes and lands in Kansas to move to Oklahoma Territory with just what they could haul in a wagon. Picture, if you will, a similar movement a hundred years later from their 1868 experience where the people of a present day county were suddenly gathered up and moved to some forsaken wilderness.

To further tell of the Bluejacket home in Kansas, Mrs. Wilson has preserved a story that appeared in a newspaper some 30 years ago, and is copied here as follows: (The article also had a picture of Chief Charles Bluejacket, and a drawing of his beautiful home.)