

T-544

November 10, 1969

Index side A, recording time 30 min.; interview time two hours.

Informant: Joe Ray, 66-year-old Cherokee,  
Chouteau, Mayes County, Okla.

Subject: Fisher Bend history.

In the early days of settlement of the Cherokee Nation an area in the extreme northeastern part of Wagoner County and the southern edge of Mayes County was the home of many Indians. Along both sides of Grand River where it made a large bend was the settlement known as Fisher Bend. Farming was the occupation of most of the families. On the east side of the river was the village of Yonkers, serving as the trading center of the community. This is the country where Joe Ray was born and raised, and about which he talks now.

Nothing remains to-day of the town of Yonkers, having been removed when Ft. Gibson Lake was formed. At one time it was a town, with three general mercantile stores, a cotton gin, post office, railroad depot, blacksmith shop and sawmill. About the town were several homes. A Bill Ashworth and Sam Williams were two of the merchants in Yonkers in its early days.

Some of the families that lived in Fisher Bend were the Tadpoles, Andersons, Walkingstick, Rabbitt, Sullateeskee, Carey, Dugger, Dinsmore, Boothe, Pumpkin, and Sanders. Joe recalls that most of the families in that area when he was a young man were Indians. With the coming of Ft. Gibson Lake nearly all of Grand River bottoms and valley was cleared of people, and they resettled in many other places. Only two of the original families still remain on the edge of the government controlled land now.

The Ray family home was on Cat Creek in the Fisher Bend country. Near their home was a very old Indian couple he remembers only as Grandma and Grandpa Sanders, or Uncle Joe Sanders. He says Grandma Sanders was one of the most religious people he has ever known. She would spend her evenings reading her Cherokee language Bible. As neighbors Joe would always go carry in their fire wood during the winter and sometimes stay all night with them. He recalls they both smoked clay pipes with long cane stems. The Sanders home was a big log house with a huge fireplace in the south end. Joe says some of his most pleasant memories were those evenings spent with this old couple.

When he lived in that country there used to be a road that came down the river going thru Fisher Bend, then on down south thru a little place called Sleeper, and into Taylor Ferry settlement. Another road also went from Fisher Bend up by Flat Rock Store and on into Wagoner. Both of these old roads have now disappeared, having been taken in by the Lake reservation boundary or by Kerr-McGee Ranch.