

T-544

November 21, 1969

Index side B, second part, recording time 20 min.; interview time 1 hr.

Informant: Agnes Gunter Gordon, 75-year-old Cherokee,
Vinita, Craig County, Oklahoma

Subject: Pioneer families, and Cleora Town.

Agnes Gunter was born in Vinita, I.T., in 1894 and has spent nearly all of her life in this area. She has seen Vinita grow up to be a city, from its beginning as a little frontier town of a few stores, dirt streets, a public well in the middle of the street, and when the population was nearly all Indian.

She has also lived on her Indian land allotment in the Cleora country near Grand River. She talks about some of the history of Cleora. There is still a store and a few houses that make up present day country village of Cleora. The original town was up north on what was known as Lundy Hill. When the K.O. & G. railroad was built thru the country it came within a couple miles of old Cleora. To take advantage of whatever the future promised the whole town moved down by the railroad. There Cleora enjoyed peace and prosperity for many years. It boasted of having a hotel, depot, barber shop, produce house, lumber yard, Jim Thompson Mercantile, two general stores, and other business houses. In 1916 a tornado tore thru the town removing porches, roofs from buildings and rearranging things in general, but the town quickly repaired the damage and continued business as usual. Then, like a plague out of the night, came the ever-present government, and tore a new scar in the earth. Grand River Lake formed behind the big dam. Little towns, homes, people, and everything except the ground was moved out of the valley. Cleora for the third time moved again, to a location about a mile north of its last site. Yet that last move was a feeble one. The railroad threw up its hands also and quit business in that part of the country. Jim Thompson bought the depot and moved it to the new Cleora site to continue his mercantile business. A blacksmith shop and a garage moved nearby, and that was about all of new Cleora, apparently a sign that some day the town would be only a memory.

During much of Cleora's happier days Mrs. Gordon lived on her farm nearby. Many Indian families lived along this part of Grand River. Some of them were the Chandlers, Thompsons, Sundays, Vann, Sixkillers, Reeds, Holts, Buzzards, Sanders, Wright, and Riders.

This was the country of Duck Creek, once one of the finest fishing and water fowl hunting areas. Old timers relate that in the early days of this country ducks and geese flocked to this creek by the thousands. Today one would be fortunate to catch a bullhead catfish or see a mud hen.