

7-546

December 23, 1969

Index side B, recording time 45 min.; interview time 1 hour.

Informant: Robert Whitebird, 59-year-old Quapaw,  
Quapaw, Ottawa County, Okla.

Subject: Indian tribes of northeast Oklahoma.

Dating back to a time nearly 100 years ago, at least ten different tribes of Indians were forcibly moved by the government and crowded into a comparatively small area of what is now Ottawa County, Okla. The how of that tragic period in history has often been told. Also the why of those separate movement of peoples has been recorded, and the answers always fall on a discordant note. Yet, many of those people did survive, with no thanks to the white man, and many members of those tribes still live in Ottawa County. Indian Territory maps as late as the 1900 showed those separate Indian reservations. The government was very liberal when it came to decisions regarding other peoples lands, and carved off a portion of the Cherokee nation on which to locate other victims of the spreading white plague. Whatever else historians may refer to the several great movements of Indians, it will always come out under a heading of greed. That greed for another's home, land, and improvements resulted in a degree of suffering, humiliation, heartbreak, and death beyond any the world has ever known. Some of those tribes of Indians were the Quapaws, Peorias, Miamis, Wyandottes, Senecas, Shawnees, Ottawas, Modocs, Wea and Piankashaw. The history of each tribe was not seen one of great joys and happiness.

In this country there are no longer Indian reservations for those tribes, although a few Indians do still own individual land. Members of the various tribes are widely scattered. For the most part these Indians have successfully competed for jobs and have a standard of living equal to other races of people in their locale. Time and progress has been cruel to some, and those of Wea, Piankashaw, and Peoria blood are almost non-existent. It is believed that there are less than ten of the Modocs still remaining in that locality. At one time there were a group of Nez Pierce Indians that lived on Flint Creek, but they too are all gone now.

The Meosho and Spring Rivers have seen Indian camps, villages, and hunting parties long before there was an Indian Territory. The Osages, Ponca, and Pawnees have lived in this country. Belawares passed thru this land in the early 1800's. Other Indians of long ago have fished these streams and hunted the woodlands and prairies.

This is the country that Robert Whitebird knows. He was born in this area and has spent most of his life here. He attended various Indian schools in his homeland, and attended Haskell Institute. Robert is well versed in Indian affairs and activities, and contributes his time and assistance to the people of his Quapaw tribe.