

T-546

December 18, 1969

Index side A, second part, recording time 23 min.; interview time one hour.

Informant: Martha Keys, 79-year-old Cherokee,
Tahlequah, Oklahoma

Subject: Blue Springs (Gideon) country.

At the headwaters of Fourteen Mile Creek a community there was once known as Blue Springs. Perhaps so named from the beautiful waters in a large spring at the foot of a hillside on Elijah Wilson's place. When the first school was built the elders sought for a name. Elijah was first suggested, but Mr. Wilson objected, so as a compromise they suggested Gideon, who also was a Biblical prophet, the same as Mr. Wilson's namesake. In early days so many places were known by the prominent watering places (springs) that they wanted to be different, and eventually the name was nearly changed for all purposes to Gideon. One exception is the ancient cemetery, which is still known as Blue Springs, which dates to a time way before the Civil War.

Gideon School is probably one of the oldest in that part of the country, although it has been closed now. The old church building is gone now, and a new church has been built recently on the old site close by the Blue Springs Cemetery.

Along prominent streams in olden days, many Indians made their homes, and Fourteen Mile Creek was no exception. Among the many Indians who have lived in this area were the Mattlingourds, Vanns, Bearers, Wilsons, Thompsons, Ryals, Hummingbirds, Grasshopper, Greese, Downing, Triplett, Houstons, Shade, Blackbird, and Lowreys. Some of the others who were whitemen were Harless, Hulbert, Snodgrass, Gravett, etc.

Measured in distance of long ago, Gideon was a long ways from other places, and neither have they ever had a railroad come by their town. But they did have a town at one time. Once there were five stores, a cotton gin, a sawmill, blacksmith shop, barber shop, and a doctor's office.

Gideon country is a variable area, with wooded hills, flat farming land, and small areas of high prairie grassland. At one time a most ideal place to live and farm. Cotton, corn, and oats were the main crops. Most cropland was fenced, so the country was known as 'open range' where livestock ranged wherever they wished. Fall roundup time usually accounted for most of the stock, and they were branded, some sold, and some turned loose again. It was also butchering and hog-killing time after the fall herds were brought in.

Gideon country was another area where tales of buried money had many believers. When the 'fever' took hold men would take off and dig for days at some suspected treasure spot. Strange as it may seem, money has been found. She tells that one Indian dug up \$800 in silver coin. Stories still circulate to-day and men still hunt for buried money. She tells that when her husband was living he used to go out and dig until he wore his fingernails off.