

February 18, 1970

Index side B, second part, recording time 20 min.; interview time two hours.

Informant: Ausley Welch, 79-year-old Cherokee,
Pryor, Oklahoma

Subject: Peters Prairie Country, and other parts of Delaware County.

(Tape and notes made while riding with Mr. Welch through his native homeland of northern Delaware County.)

Mr. Welch was born and raised on Cowskin Prairie, and many of his people (Welch and Butlers) spent all of their life in the area that encompasses Peters Prairie, Cowskin Prairie, Honey Creek, Butler Creek, and the Whitewater Creek country. As we ride through this country, Mr. Welch recalls many events, places, and peoples of a bygone time.

As we drop off the hill into the Butler Creek valley, Mr. Welch points out the old home site of Jackson Polecat. Just above the site is the Polecat Springs which feeds Butler Creek. On a little tableland of ground above the springs, he tells that there used to be an old church house there and an Indian meeting grounds. He recalls attending meetings there as a young boy, and particularly remembers the big dinners they used to have.

On to the east we come to the old Johnson Oldfield place. Nothing remains now but, Mr. Welch points out where houses and fields were at one time. Close by was the old place of 'Old Man' George Fields. Mr. Fields was a patriarch in his day. He had married two sisters and each of them had families. But they lived in separate homes, one down by the creek, and the other up on the hill. In that early day the homes were usually referred to as the 'Upper House' and the 'Lower House'. That was a time in Indian Territory, before society started trying to make white men out of Indians.

As the years have gone by many changes have come to the country he once knew. He recalls that the main road from the Honey Creek Country used to go up the Bud Fields Hollow, out onto Butler Prairie, then onto Peters Prairie. The old road lead to Southwest City, which was the main trading center in early days for people of Indian Territory in that area. On Peters Prairie another road branched off to go to Maysville which was another of the early trading centers. Those old roads have all disappeared now, as most of that country has section line roads. One marvels at the mode of travel in those days. Mr. Welch says he used to go by buggy from Honey Creek to Maysville over the winding roads. Many times he would go home after dark. On a dark and moonless night he would just let the horse go and the horse always got him home.

Up on Peters Prairie Mr. Welch points out the place where his grandfather's home used to be. He was Rev. Dave Welch, an Indian preacher. A little farther on he points out the old home of Walker Fields still standing and in use. Up by the road there is the Peters Prairie School where Mr. Welch had gone to school at one time. He also attended Butler School back to the west, but the old school building has been gone a long time now.