

T-555

February 26, 1970

Index side A, first part, recording time 22 min.; interview time one hour.

Informant: Hugh Sitts, 80-year-old Cherokee,
Pryor, Oklahoma

Subject: Archer country, of Indian Territory.

For some 100 years or more the Texas Trail was the main road across what is now Oklahoma. This historic road carried much of the north-south traffic across Indian Territory, particularly military wagon trains and troops. Even before there was that area designated as Indian Territory, mention has been made in the written record of the Texas Trail as early as 1802, and ~~then~~ sections of it were old then. Many stories have been written about events that took place on this road, and many more accounts of activities will remain lost and unrecorded. A place on the Texas Trail is told about in this visit with Hugh Sitts.

Mr. Sitts was born in what was known as the Archer community in present Mayes County. He spent some of his boyhood in the Archer country, and attended the country schools in the area. Hugh's father was killed before he was old enough to know him. His mother married a man by name of Frank Jones, whom Hugh has always called Dad. The Jones family moved to northern Ottawa County and spent several years in the Narcissa country, where Hugh farmed his own land. His mother was from the Choate family of Cherokees, who lived in what became Adair County. Mr. Sitts retired after many years of farming, livestock raising, and public work, and now lives in Pryor, near his boyhood home.

Events over the years have changed many things, including the once-familiar place of his birth and boyhood. All of the Archer country was taken in the early 1940s when some 50 sections of land were taken by the government to build the wartime Oklahoma Ordnance Works. Little remains now of the Archer community that Mr. Sitts once knew so well. Access to some of the places of Archer community is now possible where they are outside of the foreboding climb-proof fence that encloses a part of the Mid-America Industrial Development. One of these places is where the Archer Ford used to be, and another place is the Archer Cemetery, one of the few places not disturbed in wartime days.

His stepfather, Frank Jones, had returned to the Archer country long before Hugh came back. Hugh tells that one time back in 1933, he came down to visit Mr. Jones, while he was still up in the Narcissa country. Mr. Jones was telling him that he and his father were at the Archer place shortly after the Civil War, about 1867 or 1868. At that time Abner Archer, an Indian, had a big home on Pryor Creek, where the Texas Trail crossed the creek. The crossing was known as Archer Ford. The Archer home was big enough to accomodate visitors, travelers, and others. At one time a post office was located at the Archer place. From a time lost to record the Archer Ford was a stopping place and rest area for the military. Troops and military wagon trains would stop here to rest and graze horses and mules,