

T-614

May 11, 1970

Index side A, recording time 15 min; interview time one hours.

Informant: Lucinda Sanders Wilhite, 90-year-old Cherokee, Wauhillau Community, Cherokee County, Okla.

Subject: Incidents of the old days in Wauhillau country.

In all her 90 years Mrs. Wilhite has lived in the immediate neighborhood of Wauhillau. Her present home is at the original location of the old Levi Keys Store which was established about 1842. Near by her house is a big three room log house that was built before the Civil War by the Keys family. Close by was the original general store and other buildings, all constructed of logs, but most are gone now. The area of Wauhillau was considered that stretch of land from the old Caney church and cemetery to a place some half mile east where the last Wauhillau store and post office stood. The place was named for the Eagle family, using their Cherokee name. Mrs. Wilhite was a niece of Levi Keys and his wife Lucinda Sanders Keys, both of Cherokee blood. To-day nearly all of the old homes and landmarks are gone, but Mrs. Wilhite likes to recall and tell of the people, places and events that have been a part of Wauhillau.

As a child, she remembers a very old negro lady who was brought from Georgia as a slave of the Eagle family. This old negro woman was known only as Yo-sta, who spoke the Cherokee language most of the time, but could speak and understand some English. She was treated as a member of the family. The old Eagle home was about halfway between Wauhillau and Tailholt. She tells that Yo-sta attended the little church at Caney with the Eagle family and had her own little chair over to one side of the congregation. Mrs. Wilhite recalls that one time she was over at the Eagle home during hog-killing season. Some of the women were down on the creek cleaning and preparing hog entrails at the swift running creek. Some of the hog guts got loose and were floating down the stream, and Yosta became very excited and was running along the bank hollering "Ketch him!" Yosta's age was never known, but Mrs. Wilhite says she was an old woman when she herself was a little girl. Yosta was buried in the Mixwater family burial place, but time and changes have erased all evidence of this little cemetery, and no one now can locate it exactly.

She tells that there were bitter times in the Cherokee Nation during the Civil War when hatred, destruction, and killing was rampant. Some of the families that had the means moved out during the war and went to Texas. Some of the others stayed and endured almost unbelievable hardships. The Civil War was another event in the history of the Indians marked by wars, suffering, disappointments, and tragedies. And it continues.

Mrs. Wilhite shows a picture taken the day after the Cherokee Female Seminary burned April 10, 1887. This is an original photograph.

Among her many momentos of long ago is one of the store record books used by Levi Keys at the Wauhillau Store started sometime after the Civil War. It records many of the credit sales, collections, livestock trades, purchases, and relates memoranda. This book also tells of some of the people who lived