

October 18, 1968

T-316

Index side A, third part, Recording time: 10 minutes, and
Index side B, all Recording time: 45 minutes.

Informant: Gilbert Fallin, 81-year-old Cherokee,
Estella Community, Craig County, Oklahoma

Subject: "Gib" as he has always been known, was born in this community and has spent all of his life here as a farmer and rancher, on his land allotment. His father, Henry Fallin, was a prominent Indian leader in the early day community.

Estella was named during the establishment of the first post office in the late 1800s, and was named for the first postmistress, Miss Estella Franklin, who was of Cherokee decent. At one time it was the center of community life in the area. It had three stores (operated by a Zumwalt, another by a Miller, and another by John Franklin). A Mr. Cook ran a grist mill there. The village also had a blacksmith shop, a school, and a church. Little remains to-day of this old settlement except the name.

Before the turn of the century, the community was a large cattle country extending north to the Kansas line, much as it is to-day. Cultivation farming once was extensive in the area. In earlier days white cattlemen rented grazing land from the Indian Nation and its people. Among the prominent cattlemen were Hebrew Skinner, Tom Haisell, John LeForce, and the Oskisons. Gib relates that he has seen so many cattle around the branding pens that the ground would be churned into a sea of thick dust.

He remembers his first school, which was built about a mile and a half southeast of Old Estella and built by Indians of the community. It was first called Fallin School, then Oo-la-ha School. Before it was consolidated with the Estella School it was referred to as the Contrary School. A man by the name of Franklin headed the consolidation movement; and was met with much opposition; hence the opposing faction were termed "Contrary". The Indians opposed the move because the children had to cross Thompson, Pawpaw, and White Creeks which were problems when there were no bridges there. Footbridges were later built for the children. Misses Mary Ballentine, Lila K. Taylor, and Willae Lane were the first teachers at Fallin School. These women were all of Cherokee extraction. In a very old picture that Mrs. Fallin (also of Cherokee blood) has of the school and school children, all of the boys went barefooted and wore overalls.

After Fallin School was closed and consolidated with Estella School some of the Indian boys did not care too much about classes and would just take out thru the woods when they felt like it and be gone the remainder of the day.