

T-335

November 8, 1968

Index side No. 2, recording time: 30 minutes.

Informant: Jefferson Fields, 84-year-old Cherokee,
Whitewater Creek Community, Delaware Co., Oklahoma

Subject: Mr. Fields was born and raised on Cowskin Prairie in the Cherokee Nation district of Coo-wee-scoo-wee (now Delaware County). His working years and retirement has been on his farm just south of Cowskin Prairie in the whitewater Creek community. Much of Delaware County is populated with Cherokees to-day as it was in Indian Territory. His early home was on Honey Creek.

Jim Butler, a prominent Cherokee in old times, established one of the first subscription school in the area, on the prairie bearing his name. Butler Cemetery, an early burial place is near the old school. Mr. Fields first schooling was at this place of Butler School. U-li-te was another of the old country schools where Indian children began their education.

Near his childhood home was also the home of the Muskrat family. Some of the Muskrat boys became prominent leaders and businessmen, one of whom is Frank Muskrat. Another was Ruth Muskrat Bronson, Indian educational advisor in the 1930s.

The old log house in which Mr. Fields was born, had belonged to General Stan Watie during the Civil War period and before. Gen. Watie built this double log house and lived in it for many years.

In telling of his young er days on Cowskin Prairie, there were many Indians living in the area, each tending his own little farm and few head of livestock. He says he was a backwoods type of boy, as were most of the Indians then. Of course, he says they were civilized and went to school, but the love of the backwoods always remain with them.

Of the early cemeteries the one most used by Indians is the Ta-ne-see Cemetery for that area. It was started by Dan Tane-see's father who was a full-blood minister. After Dan died, Mr. Fields married his widow. Rev. Tanesee was a circuit rider, wore long hair, spoke no English, but was revered by all who knew him. Other cemeteries used by Indians of that area were the Snell, Peters Prairie, and Poison. It is at Poison Cemetery that Gen. Stan Watie, and Major John Ridge were buried. Major Ridge was killed by Nighthawks near his burial place. Mr. Fields says that while the monument and marker for Gen. Stan Watie is at Poison Cem., he has reason to believe that Gen. Watie is buried at a place on Grand River.