

December 4, 1968

T-353

Index side A, part 2, 10 minutes.

Informant:

Arthur Fox, 86 years old, of Cherokee ancestry,
Dodge Community, Delaware County, Oklahoma

Subject:

Dodge, Indian Territory.

The early day trading hub of Cowskin Prairie was the little town of Dodge. Nothing remains to-day of this once important trading center in the Cherokee Nation. Cowskin Prairie is located in the extreme northeast part of the old Cherokee Nation, and is joined on the north by the Seneca Nation. At one time this area was a very rich and productive farming country, with many Indian farmers working the land. In the days around statehood the Frisco railroad ran thru Dodge from Southwest City, Mo. to Grove. A main street crossed the railroad from north to south, and another street paralleled the railroad on the south side. Along these streets was Laster Store, Lauderdale General Mercantile, Dodge Post Office, and Edwards General Store. A blacksmith shop was on the south end of the north-south street. On the north side of the railroad was the depot, a flour mill, a wheat elevator, and a corn elevator. Closely surrounding the business district were the school, church, and several dwellings.

A few miles west of Dodge was the Harland Store and Post Office, which served the postal needs of the community before postal service was established in Dodge. Then mail was brought to Harland P.O. by hack or stage coach from Southwest City, then distributed. No rural delivery existed in those days, and people of the area would call once or twice a month for mail.

Of the old Indian burial grounds, Fields Cemetery is probably the oldest of the area and is still in use. Also the burial grounds at Butler School and at Polson Cemetery were used by Indian families. It is at Polson Cemetery that Gen. Stan Watie and Major Ridge, prominent during the Civil War and before, are interned.

In early day Oklahoma and Indian Territory Dodge, Grove, and Southwest City, Mo. were the only trading centers of northeast Cherokee Nation. Progress and invasion of whiteman has pushed the Indians out of Cowskin Prairie to record another tragic chapter in the existence of the Indian.