

December 23, 1968

T-360

Index side #1, recording time 30 min.

Informant: Lucinda Sanders Wilhite, 89-year-old Cherokee, of Wauhilla Community, Adair County, Oklahoma.

(Some contribution to interview by her daughter and her son-in-law, Juanita and Jess Christie, both Cherokees.)

Subject: Wauhilla community, its peoples, schools, and some events in its history.

What prompted and directed the many different groups of Cherokees, following the Trail of Tears march, to move out and settle the different parts of the Cherokee Nation is not known. That group of Sanders, Christies, Wolfs, Keys, Vanns, and others, were so richly blessed to make that part of Caney Creek valley known as Wauhilla their home. The Beauty of its hills and valleys might be equaled, but never surpassed. The crystal clearness of Caney Creek only gilds the rose. In these surroundings unfolds some of the stories, events, and the passby under a bright sun of some of its Cherokee settlers.

Among those of Wauhilla's number who survived the tragic removal of 1839 was one, Sally Eagle. The respect and love in which she was held by fellow Indians, gave cause for naming the community for her. Wa-hi-la is Cherokee for eagle.

Close by, near Caney Creek the Keys family built their log house in 1841. The big stone fireplace chimneys at each end stood as proud guards protecting those within. From this family came Levi Keys who lived out his years as patriarch and mentor to the community. Levi married Lucinda Sanders. From Uncle Levi and Aunt Lucinda Mrs. Wilhite learned much of the pioneer way of life. Before the Civil War, Levi put up another log building and operated a general store at Wauhilla for over 35 years. Mrs. Wilhite showed a permit to operate a store issued by the Cherokee Nation, dated for the year 1887, and signed by Henry Chambers, Treasurer.

Her father, Sam Sanders, a full blood Cherokee, was a prominent leader and farmer in the community. Her uncle, George Osceola Sanders worked with the law and judiciary of the Cherokee Nation, and retired as Judge at Ft. Gibson, I. T.

With these people in her ancestral background ~~Mrs. Wilhite~~, Mrs. Wilhite has been happy and content living all her life at her birthplace in Wauhilla. She has preserved many records, pictures, books, and artifacts, some dating to the early days of the Cherokee Nation. Very near her present home is the original Keys log house built in 1841. The ghosts of those who built, worked, read, and loved their neighbor still speak softly in these Cherokee hills,