

February 9, 1969

T: 376

Index side B, first part, recording time 20 minutes.

Informant: Sarelda Williams Frye, 81-year-old Shawnee,
Whiteoak Hills, Craig County, Oklahoma

Subject: This full-blood Shawnee woman recalls her people telling of coming to this woodland hill country of Indian Territory after having been driven from their home in Iowa. She has lived a simple and humble life in this area all of her years. Her father was Billy Williams, who lived to be 112 years old. In his earlier years he carried mail on horseback and by hack thru the northern part of the old Cherokee Nation.

The Shawnees of this original band have all died out, and their decedents have scattered widely. Very few Shawnees live in this area now, yet they keep in close contact with one another. They preserve some of their old customs and beliefs. In the old days the Shawnees did not have a church building, but would meet at different homes for services. She remembers old preachers like Sam Bread, Moses Harvey, and Silas Journeycake. When one of their member died, people could come to the home where they would sit in meditation and prayer, certain others would prepare the body for burial, and others would prepare the feast. The burial would be on the second day. The third day was for mourning. On the fourth day all the people would wash their heads and then go home. These were very sacred events.

Mrs. Frye talks about the old graveyards of the Indians of long ago. Just south of her home is an old Cherokee burial ground which was last used in 1910. It is located back in the woods in a small clearing, but cattle have just about destroyed the physical evidence of this sacred place. Except for the only marble marker, all the other markers are of sandstone on which dates and/or Cherokee syllables are scratched. This was known as the Lu-li or Boots Cemetery. A few miles west of her home is the old abandoned cemetery known as the Secondine Graveyard. Some 17 graves can be counted here, and the last burial was in 1926. After abandoning this burial place, the Shawnees started another cemetery farther back in the Shawnee Hills known as the Carpenter Graveyard. It would seem, in several cases, names of burial places changed from time to time.

Long ago she recalls her father telling of carrying the mail in Indian Territory. She does not know where the place was, but her father would tell of going to a river where a man on the other side would walk all the way across on a raft of saw logs to bring him the mail bag.

She recalls her father telling of a time at the beginning of the Civil War. Then, he was living with his mother, grandfather and some uncles along a river. One day they saw some soldiers coming and his folks called to him to climb up in a tree to hide. His little sister was with him and he took her up in the tree with him. The men also hid themselves from the soldiers. Her father said the men looked