

March 13, 1969

T-382

Index side B, part two, recording time 15 min. Interview time 1½ hours.

Informant: Vann Cornelius, 68 years old, of Cherokee ancestry,  
Row Community, Delaware County, Oklahoma

Subject: On the high flatlands of eastern Delaware County is a little town that wont give up. The old, the infirm, and the feeble make up most of the fifty odd population. But it has not always been thus. Around 1905 the city fathers obtained authority for a post office and a man by name of Wilson was the first postmaster. It was Mr. Wilson who suggested the name for the postoffice, Row. For reasons not given the little town was a hotbed for settling difference in fighting, drunken brawls, and even murder. It seemed that contestants would come from some distance, as if it might be better to use proven and established grounds. Mr. Wilson was thinking out loud on the naming of the town and was not making much progress. Here was a community th t was "raw" during the day and "a row" at night. Row was selected which seemed to represent the budding metro.

Just what business other than Wilson's store was going in 1905 is not known. But, by 1910 Row did grow. The main street ran north and south, and three cross streets took off at one block intervals. Along the east side of main street was a hardware store, doctor's office, grocery store, a bank, drug store, and a grist mill. A public well was located about the center of the business district, and in the middle of main street. On the west side was the post office, sundry shop, a mercantile, ice house, and at the north end was the public school. A block west of main street was the livery stables and wagon yard. Beck Prairie spread out eastward going to the Arkansas Line. This was primarily a farming community and Row grew respectable and well served the community for many years.

In the late 1920s a paved highway was built from Kansas to Cherokee City, Ark. and the road missed Row by a mile. The new highway began pulling business and dwellers from Row to the new town called Colcord. In about 1930 the post office was moved from Row and installed at Colcord undergoing a change in name. The decline of Row was rapid and fatal. The business places either moved or closed down. Many houses were moved, but Vann says many have burned in Row in the last 50 years as there is no fire protection. Perhaps a dozen of the old homes still remain in Row.

Vann is considered one of the old timers of Row, although he was born and raised down in Adair County. His family came to Row community about 1910 or 1911, where his father farmed. Vann grew up in Row and attended school there. He was also a farmer, and in later years operated the livery stable there. Row has never had a church building, and has used the school building for their religious services, weddings and funerals.. Also the school building was used as a voting center, for pie and box suppers, and for community meetings. The doors of Row school have been closed for many years.