

HISTORY AND THE NAME FOR THE TOWN OF PRYOR, OKLAHOMA

(This is April 8, 1968. Today we are visiting with Washie Mayes, a 74 year old Cherokee of Pryor, Oklahoma. Mr. Mayes relates some historical facts of early day Mayes County. Of particular interest is the account of the first day by which Pryor, Oklahoma was known. Also he tells of the Wickliff Brothers, who were Cherokees who became outlaws. This interview begins with Coo-Y-Yah ((or Kuwahi-i)) town which is now Pryor, Oklahoma.)

(Do you know how it started? Now it was Kuwahi-yi which means Mulberry tree, wasn't it?)

Well, I'll tell you the way I got it, Jim. There wasn't nothin' but a depot, a stockyard, and one store. And the Indians picked huckleberries, and there's a sale for them. And they'd sell them to these railroad men. And that's the first start Kuwah-i-yi. Now that's the way I always heard. And it's always been my belief, and I think it was right. A lot of people want to get huckleberries and mulberries. You know, they have same pronunciation, but huckleberries is spelled different. Cooy-yah-y' -- has y in it. And it's different. But huckleberry and mulberry was very near the same pronunciation.

(What occasioned the change of the name to Pryor Creek - do you remember?)

Well, I don't know.

(Well, could it have been named for Nathaniel Pryor?)

Well, it could be. He's buried right down on Pryor Creek. I used to know where his grave was, but I've lost it. It's right below that old house down there by that old rock crusher. But I don't know. I haven't been there in 20 years.

And they have put a monument there. Tom Harrison put up a tombstone.

(Is that on the Earl Ward park down there?)

No, it's a mile south, then it's a mile east. It's just about three miles, hardly three miles, then south. But I don't remember. I wouldn't know exactly where