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BRUCE, GILES W.

INTERVIEW

10650

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BIOGRAPHY FORM  
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION  
Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

BRUCE, GILES W.

INTERVIEW

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Field Worker's name Don Moon, Jr.

This report made on (date) May 3, 1938

1. Name Giles W. Bruce

2. Post Office Address Guthrie, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) 324 E. Viles Ave.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month May Day 1 Year 1867

5. Place of birth Red Creek, Wayne County

New York

6. Name of Father Albert J. Bruce Place of birth New York  
Of Scotch descent State State

7. Name of Mother Kather Humphrey Place of birth New York  
State State

Other information about mother Of English descent

Notes or complete narrative by the field worker dealing with the life and story of the person interviewed. Refer to Manual for suggested subjects and questions. Continue on blank sheets if necessary and attach firmly to this form. Number of sheets attached \_\_\_\_\_.

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Don Moon, Jr.,  
Interviewer,  
May 3, 1938.

An Interview with Mr. Giles W. Bruce,  
324 E. Vilas Ave., Guthrie, Oklahoma.

Mr. Bruce's parents moved to Linn County, Kansas, in 1871, and the son lived there until he was about grown. Then he went to Hutchinson, and began to work as a stone-mason there and at Wichita and other points. He married and established a home in Wichita.

In the spring of 1892 he came down to Pawhuska to help build a Government School for the Indians there. There was not much there at that time, two little stores, one called the Red Bird, a little white house called a hotel, a frame boarding house, run by a man named Stout, and on the bluffs, the Council House and the Agent's office. The Indians were camped in the valley east of the bluffs.

After the school building and a boiler house was finished, Mr. Bruce worked on a convent that was being built about seventeen miles southwest of Pawhuska. An old frame building, the largest frame building Mr. Bruce ever

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saw, stood at the foot of a hill. It looked as if it must have been built long before the Civil War, for it was about to fall down. The lumber in it must have been hauled from away up in Kansas.

Money had been given for the new building by Mother Drexel, a woman in Pennsylvania, who put a good deal of money into Catholic missions and schools in the new territory, especially among the Indians and negroes. The new building was erected on a hill about eighty rods from the old site. It was built of stone, with an open court 40 x 40 feet in the center. At each corner of this court, was a large chimney built from the ground up. Mr. Bruce built these chimneys, a gable, and painted the whole building. Ponca was the nearest railroad station at that time, and there was nothing there but a small depot and the station agent's house. This station is now called White Eagle.

Mr. Bruce had to come over to Guthrie to collect his wages for the convent job, and as there was plenty of work to do here, and he needed the money, he stayed, although he did not like the looks of the place at all.

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The Federal jail was just about finished when he arrived, and he worked about a week on it. Then he built the third story on the west half of the Royal Hotel building, while the House of Representatives was in session on the first floor, and the Council was meeting in a parlor on the second floor.

He also helped build a pumphouse for the city water-works. It is still in use.

His wife and child came down to Guthrie, and they had a hard time finding living quarters. The first place they lived was a one-room house divided by a partition made of calico nailed onto a framework of strips of wood. On one side of this "partition", which did not go all the way up, lived the landlord, and on the other side, the Bruce family. Later, they were able to find better accommodations.

When the baby was just learning to walk, Mrs. Bruce died, and Mr. Bruce broke up housekeeping. A Mrs. Cooper took care of the child and the father was there as much of the time as possible. Later Mr. Bruce married one of the daughters of the family.

He served three years on the police force on night

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duty. Other members of the force at that time - '93 to '96 - were W. H. Baxter, Chief, L.P. Tipton Assistant and John Mathews and Frank Bassett.

At the time of the opening of the Strip, Bruce was the only officer left in town. All the others made the run to Perry. He sat on the porch of the old Cottage Hotel, just above the depot, and watched the crowd leave. Guthrie was a quiet place that day. Very few men were here, but they were well supplied with ammunition, as it was feared that outlaws would take advantage of so many men being gone, and rob the banks or storm the Federal jail and carry away Bill Doolin who was a prisoner there. But nothing of the kind happened, and the day passed quietly.

In 1896 Bruce became the Deputy County Treasurer, and carried most of the responsibility of that office for several years. While he was thus employed, the Secretary of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows died and Mr. Bruce was appointed in his place. He moved the books and equipment from El Reno to Guthrie, kept them in one corner of

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the treasurer's office and worked on them at night. After awhile he quit the Deputy Treasurer's job, rented the E.M. Bamford building, and gave full time to the Odd Fellow's work. After five years as Grand Secretary, he resigned and for six years audited the records of Dewey, Blaine, Pottawatomie, Greer, Kiowa, Washita, Day and Woods Counties. Day County, whose county seat was Grand, was later divided between Ellis and Roger Mills Counties.

In October, 1910, at the first meeting of the Grand Lodge of Oklahoma after the consolidation of the Grand Lodges of both territories, Mr. Bruce was again elected Grand Secretary, and has served in that capacity ever since. The lodge had erected a two story brick building for their own use on the corner of Harrison and Broad Streets during the years when Mr. Bruce was working as an auditor. In point of service, Mr. Bruce is the oldest Grand Secretary of Independent Order of Odd Fellows in the world.

Mr. Bruce is a member of the Methodist church, and the family has always been active in church and in cultural activities of the community.