

INDEX CARDS

Delawares  
Journeycare, Charles  
Coody's Bluff  
Mercantile establishments--Cherokee Nation  
Bartlesville  
Bartles, Jacob  
Town Government--Cherokee  
Newspapers--Bartlesville  
Banks--Indian Territory  
Churches--Cherokee Nation  
Collections  
Names--Delaware  
Rogers, W. C.

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

Field Worker's name Alene D. McDowell

This report made on (date) April 22, 193 7

1. Name Frank M. Overlees

2. Post Office Address Bartlesville, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) 500 Choctaw

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month October Day 25 Year 1867

5. Place of birth Cachen, Indiana

6. Name of Father Henry S. Overlees Place of birth Pennsylvania

Other information about father Buried in Bartlesville, Okla.

Name of Mother Mary Lentz Overlees Place of birth Pennsylvania

Other information about mother Buried in Bartlesville, Okla.

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 9

INTERVIEW WITH FRANK M. OVERLEES  
BARTLESVILLE, OKLAHOMA.

FIELD WORKER ALENE D. McDOWELL.

THE GROWTH OF BARTLESVILLE, OKLAHOMA.

Mr. Overlees was born at Gachen, Indiana, October 25, 1867 and moved to the Cherokee Nation in Indian Territory in 1888 locating at Coody's Bluff the same year.

Father, Henry S. Overlees, born in Pennsylvania and died in Bartlesville, buried in White Rose Cemetery at Bartlesville, Oklahoma.

Mother, Mary Lentz Overlees, born in Pennsylvania and died in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, buried in the White Rose Cemetery at Bartlesville.

My parents moved to a farm eight miles east of Parsons, Kansas, when I was quite small. I received my early education in a country school near Parsons and attended High School at Parsons.

I was working in Parsons and a friend of mine asked me to come to the Indian Territory and work for him as manager of his walnut lumber business. I agreed and we came as far as Coffeyville, Kansas, on the train and from there to Coody's Bluff, Indian Territory, on the stage hack. The country was thinly settled and I was fortunate to board with a family who were comfortably settled.

2

This family was named Armstrong and I later married their daughter. Mrs. Armstrong was a Delaware Indian. Her father was Chief Charles Journeycake who did missionary work among the Indians. I bearded with the Armstrong's for two years and in 1890 their daughter, Carrie, and I were married.

#### MERCHANDISING.

The trading post at Coody's Bluff was a log building and it is still located there, the sides have been boarded up and is still in use.

In about 1873 Jake Bartles established a trading post on the banks of Silver Lake where he operated for one year, then moved to Turkey Creek and about 1877 he moved to the north side of Caney River, in the bend of the river. There is a monument built there as a memorial to the town.

In June 1889 I went to work as a salesman in the Bartles store where I worked for three years. When travelers came by who were traveling south we would warn them to buy their supplies for this store was their last chance. Within the next year Mr. Bartles built a store building 25 X 100 with living quarters above. Later a blacksmith shop was built.

About this time Mr. William Johnstone and Mr. George B. Keeler embarked in business on the south side of the river.

3

When they opened for business there were two houses on the south side of the river, one was the residence of Arthur Armstrong and the other was John Hallett's home. The Johnstone, Keeler store flourished from the start and they soon bought additional land and sent out invitations for people to locate in the new town. They were real boosters and welcomed new people and new capital.

In 1892 I came over on the south side and worked in the Johnstone, Keeler store for two years, then I established a store on the north end of Delaware Avenue, with a line of drugs as a side line.

Little by little the town grew and one by one different things were established. Frank Morgan operated the first hotel, S. Moomey built a livery stable, my brother Jess Overlees and Albert Rupert put in a stock of lumber. John Findley and Dr. P. S. Ayers bought my stock of drugs and established the Eureka Drug Store. This drug store was operated by Mr. Findley under the same name, until his death a few years ago. John and Jim Gray established a racket store.

#### EARLY CITY OFFICIALS.

In the early 90's Bartlesville had the appearance of a town and a surveyor was hired by Senator Kerr to plat a 40 acre

tract, which is now the northeast part of town. In 1897 Bartlesville was an incorporated town, the business houses were near what is now First Street and Delaware Avenue. What is now the business section of Bartlesville was then a wheat field.

In 1897 Dr. T. A. Stewart, who was the first postmaster, and Harry Jennings were in a heated race for mayor and there were about thirty votes cast. Dr. Stewart won out over Jennings two to one. Charley Keeler was elected recorder. Joe Mitchell, treasurer and George Keeler, Henry Clay, two others and myself were elected councilmen. The first newspaper was the Bartlesville Magnet, edited by Harry Bird.

I erected the first building on the present site of the city, this was the Right Way hotel and was built shortly after the arrival of the railroad and I was the first landlord.

The first bank was established on the location where the Alameda hotel now stands, this was the first brick building and the banker was Frank Bucher.

In 1902 M. D. Parr arrived and he and I formed a partnership in the Real Estate business. Business was dull for a time but finally we sold a piece of property near Second and Dewey and

thought we had made a great deal. A little later we sold the one story stone building at Second and Johnstone to the Baird boys for \$3,100 and made a commission of \$100.00, this made us feel good.

The first blacksmith shop was later torn down, and the lumber was used to build a band hall for the boys to practice in. This building was used for a school house and church. "The Woodman of the World" purchased it and removed it to Second and Osage.

There was a rail fence along the west side of what is now Keeler Avenue, separating Bartlesville from a wheat field, belonging to William Johnstone. Along the east side of this fence was the road to Pawhuska, Oklahoma.

The original Bartlesville was established on the allotment belonging to Nellie Johnstone Cannon.

The first home I built was a square, frame house and is located back of the Barnsdall Service Station at Third Street and Cherokee Avenue, and is still located where it was built. I later built a large residence located at what is now the north end of Santa Fe Avenue, where I had a homestead allotment of 20 acres. A. I. Morgan later bought this and established a

greenhouse. His widow resides there now.

EARLY CHURCH ACTIVITIES.

In the building used for the band hall, we held the Baptist Sunday school and church. I was the first Sunday school Superintendent and held this office for 25 years. I taught a class of young ladies and have their picture which hangs in my office. When they are in town they always call on me and talk over old times. Some of these ladies are very prominent in the social and church activities of our town now.

The First Baptist church has grown from a little group of pioneers to a membership of approximately 1200, and our church has no indebtedness. Our auditorium is not completed and we are now trying to raise the money to complete it. We have an educational building consisting of 66 rooms and a residence for our minister.

The Virginia Avenue Baptist church of Bartlesville has an enrollment of approximately 800 members. They also have a nice building and are doing fine work.

My wife's grandfather, Chief Journeycake, a Baptist preacher, was a missionary to the Indians and whites and was greatly loved.



Mrs. Jacob Bartles, a daughter of Chief Journeycake was also a faithful worker in the church and was the organizer of the Journeycake Memorial Baptist Church at Dewey, Oklahoma.

Chief Journeycake was not an educated man but he had a very brilliant mind and had a large library in his home, near Coady's Bluff. One time I was enroute to Alluwe and stopped to talk with granddad. He was building an addition on his house and barn and I ask him why he was making these additions at his age. He was very slow spoken and after considering my remark he looked straight at me and said, "Son, a man should work like he is going to live for ever, and pray like he is going to die tomorrow." This remark has always made a deep impression on my mind.

The Soldier's Home at Dayton, Ohio, is located on my wife's brother's place.

Mrs. Overlees and I celebrated our 45th wedding anniversary a short time before her death 2 years ago. She was an active worker in the Baptist church until a few years before her death when her health interferred.

#### MISCELLANEOUS HAPPENINGS.

Before I was married I boarded with Mrs. John Carter, a sister of the last Cherokee Chief Rogers. This was while I was

working in the lumber business near Silver Lake.

My wife thought school at Silver Lake where many of the Cherokee and Delaware children received their early education. Many of these people are now living near Silver Lake. When the Delaware children were sent to Leavenworth to the Indian school, the teachers could not pronounce their names so they were given names. For this reason there are a number of Delaware families by the same name who are no relation. One name they especially used was Armstrong, and there are any number of Indians in this country named Armstrong.

Eight years ago I was appointed United States Commissioner, of which office I still serve and also have a small real estate business.

In the early days when things were rather wild in this country, I had the experience of feeling a gun in my back, held by the steady hand of some of Oklahoma's wildest out-laws.

#### COMMENTS.

Mr. Overlees has helped build Bartlesville from the beginning, and has always been active in the civic affairs of the city. He has seen the city grow from one store to the present busy city. He looks back with pride at the development and can see the pioneers' efforts were not in vain.

There are three additions in the west part of Bartlesville known as Overlees First, Second and Third Additions. Mr. Overlees is 70 years old and his health is not the best, but his iron will still keep him active in business.