

POOLEY, EMMA PLEMLEY. INTERVIEW - 8839

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

POOLLEY, EMMA PLEMLEY.

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Field Worker's name Nura Lorrin.

This report made on (date) October 12, 1937. 1937

1. Name Mrs. Emma (Bowlin) Hayes Poolley.

2. Post Office Address El Reno, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) 1005 South Bickford.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month February Day 27 Year 1870.

5. Place of birth Shelby County, Texas.

6. Name of Father Guss Francis Clark Bowlin. Place of birth Arkansas,  
1834

Other information about father Died 1864.

7. Name of Mother Nancy Caroline (Pittman) Bowlin. Place of birth Tennessee,  
1844.

Other information about mother Died 1884.

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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Nora Lorrin,  
Investigator,  
Oct. 11, 1937.

Interview With Emma Plemley Pooley,  
El Reno, Oklahoma.

Mrs. Emma Plemley (Bowlin) Hayes Pooley was born in Shelby County, Texas, February 27, 1870. Her father, Mr. Guess Francis Clark Bowlin, was born in Arkansas in 1834 and died in 1894. Her mother, Mrs. Nancy Caroline (Pittman) Bowlin, was born in Tennessee in 1844 and died in 1884.

When her family first went to Texas all they had was a wagonload of children. There were twelve born to the family and eight of them were still living when their mother died. Mrs. Pooley was born on a farm in Shelby County, Texas. Her father did some freighting and when he did, he went to Shreveport, Louisiana. They did most of their trading at the Louisiana town also. They traded some at Nacogdoches and at a place called Kimbletown which seems out of existence now.

She says that she learned to herd geese, ride calves, and play with chickens down in eastern Texas. Her father

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was a confirmed hunter; in their circumstances and with such a large family, he had to be. There were buffalo, deer, wild cats, panthers, coons, and alligators down in that region. He sometimes hunted alligators in the cane-brakes and swamps of that locality.

She says that "There were pine trees so tall that you had to look three times to see the top and then, some times you could <sup>not</sup> see the top very plain"; and "Sweet Gum". I know that I must have picked a thousand pounds of it". She also states that she has seen some of those tall pine trees catch fire at the bottom and burn, "clear to the top and you could see the blaze for miles".

Her father owned two yoke of oxen, "Bright" and "Bob" "Nig" and "Broad" and she says that her father has pulled many a person out of the bogs down there with his ox team. The Sabine River was between their home and Shreveport, Louisiana, and that river bore the nickname of the "Move All River". It surely lived up to its "nickname" as when it was up, it was a roaring torrent and moved everything that was movable. It was spanned by a bridge that they had

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to cross every time they went to Shreveport, and she says that they have crossed that river when the only thing visible were the railings of the bridge.

One time they came to the river when it was up that way and Mrs. Pooley's father sent her ahead of the team and wagonload of children on a horse they called "Old Nig" to sort of feel the way. He told her to keep in line with the bridge railings. This was the only part of the bridge in view. He was afraid that there was a washout. As it happened, there was no washout and they got across all right. There huckleberries, paw paws, black haws, red haws, mustang grapes, the most beautiful red bed trees you ever saw and dogwood trees, that had blossoms on them as big as teacups.

They moved around so much that it is difficult for her to remember just where they were all the time, but when she was seven years old they moved over into Hamilton County about forty miles from "Hamilton Town" as it was then called. They first lived in their covered wagon, some of them slept in the wagon and some on the ground. There were mountains

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all around them and trees and creeks, and in the creek bottoms were bear, deer, wild cats, wild hogs, wolves, and other animals such as squirrels and flying squirrels, fat coons, etc. They liked the bear meat very much. She says that young bear meat is delicious, and one can drink the grease with no ill effects.

It is a very dark meat. They always had either bear meat or venison to eat or some other wild meat.

Her father and a man by the name of Van Heuser were in the timber, near where they were located, hunting one day and they separated, Mr. Van Heuser going one way and Mr. Bowlin another. After a time Mr. Bowlin heard Mr. Van Heuser yelling to beat the band. He went close enough to see what was the matter and Mr. Van Heuser was treed by a wild boar, a great big wicked-looking beast that had long tusks. It was industriously trying to gnaw the small tree down, up which Mr. Van Heuser had taken refuge, and was in a fair way of succeeding when Mr. Bowlin took careful aim and fired, killing the vicious-looking brute. He had the horse, "Old Nig" with him and he tied his lariat rope around

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the bear and dragged it into camp, not to eat but to show his wife what kind of dangerous things were in the mountains and timber all about them and as a warning for her to keep the children closer to camp.

Mrs. Pooley said that all her mother said about it, was that her children were in the hands of God and He would take care of them. She let the children run loose just the same. None of them was ever hurt by the wild things. She said that they used to chase the bears away from camp; they would come snuffling around at night. Their mother told them "Never try to chase a bear, if it raises on it hind legs and spreads out its arms, it's mad then and will bite you" ✓

Mr. Van Heuser was afraid of bears and one night when her father was away, Mr. Heuser was sleeping in the wagon and her mother and children were sleeping on the ground. A bear kept coming around their beds and they tried to get Mr. Van Heuser to get out of the wagon and scare it away, but he was so afraid he would not do it. Their mother told them to lie still and it would go away and it did.

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Mrs. Pooley's father and Mr. Van Heuser cut great logs and built a great big log house and before it was finished and the doors in it, her father and mother went to cut a "Bee Tree" and left one of the twins, Rhoda, and the baby at the log house. The other children were out in the timber playing somewhere. Rhoda was in the house with her baby sister, Ellen, and some cowboys chasing a big yellow and white spotted bull with hounds came into the clearing. The bull headed straight for the house and Rhoda saw him coming. She grabbed the baby and climbed the rough log wall with her, and got astraddle of the joists, just as the bull came into the house. The cowboys finally got him out of the house. The dogs had bit his poor nose so bad that it bled all over their new punched floor. Her father and mother were almost scared to death over it.

Her father found some of the loveliest white rock and used it to build their chimney or fireplace. Before it was finished, her mother kept a yarn quilt over the empty space where the fireplace was to be built and the yarn quilt had a hole in it. One night when Mrs. Pooley was sleeping on the floor, she looked at that hole in the quilt and a



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mountain lion had stuck his head through the opening. She called her mother and told her a lion was looking at her, her mother said, "SSSH, be still, it's only a booger, he will go away", and Mrs. Pooley said it lo ked for a second or two and left. The next morning they saw the lion's tracks, but they got so used to the wild things being around that they ceased to look for tracks, and took them more or less as a matter of course.

There was only one other woman within forty miles of them and she was a widow named Newsome.

The cowboys let her mother milk twenty head of cows from a herd and they had so much butter with no market for it that they used it to make soap.

They were on this place about a year when her father took down with pneumonia. There came a great big snow and when her father got up, he sold out to a man for a yoke of oxen and another wagon. Everything he had for a yoke of oxen and a wagon. They moved to a rented farm near the city of Alvarado in Johnson County, Texas. They raised a crop and hired a man to help her father with his work. The man's name was Morrison; he married Rhoda, one <sup>of</sup> the twins.

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They then moved to Tarrant County and her father bought 140 acres of land. Her parents lived on this farm until their deaths.

In 1890 she lost three of her sisters in one month, Ellen, Kate, and Melinda.

Mrs. Pooley and her first husband, Mr. Wiley H. Hayes, were married by a Presbyterian minister in 1886 and they lived two miles from Kennedale. The railroad ran through Kennedale and on south. Kennedale had mineral water. In 1887 they went to California.

The climate out there did not agree with Mrs. Hayes Pooley, and so her husband sold out and moved to Oklahoma, and settled at the "Old Cattle Trail Crossing" on the north fork of the Red River, just north of Mangum. They lived there in a picket house and she said that "It leaked like thunder. We had to sit under a parasol and put a wagon sheet over the bed when it rained". Her husband and another man hauled lumber from Vernon, Texas, to the Trail Crossing, where Charley and Will Cleveland ran a store. Her husband built a frame house down by the river, below the Crossing and bought horses from the Kiowa and Comanche Indians.

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While living there in 1888 she had <sup>her</sup> first baby girl, who lived just 48 hours. They named her Tempy Lorensen Hayes and buried her at Doan's Crossing just across Red River. Mrs. McBride, whose husband was a contractor working at Fort Sill, took care of her.

Their home was not fenced in and the cattle could and did get up around the house. It was hot and they would try to find shade and they were pretty much of a nuisance.

Tom Wilson, Johnny Passmore and a lot of other cowboys, together with Mr. Hayes, caught a calf one day, tied a tin can to its tail and filled the can with firecrackers and set them off. That calf took out over the hills bawling at the top of its voice, with the whole herd in hot pursuit of it. In a few minutes there wasn't a cow in sight. They were not troubled with the cattle around the house anymore that day and they never saw the calf again.

They moved to a place called Navajoe and while living there got acquainted with an Indian policeman called "Polant". One time Mrs. Hayes Pooley, Sally Eades and a girl called T. Machelroy went across the river into the Indian country to

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pick up some deadwood for a woman who was living in a dug-out and was down with pneumonia. There was snow on the ground and the woman was needing wood badly. They picked up some dry sticks before crossing the river; after they crossed into the Indian's country, they saw "Polant" and another Indian police coming. They threw out what sticks they had picked up and had none in their wagon when the Indian police caught up with them. The other Indian was in for arresting both of them right then and he was pretty ugly about it. Mrs. Hayes Pooley told "Polant" what they wanted the wood for, that it was for a sick woman and then "Polant" told the other policeman that "Maby so -White squaw good. Squaw all time, feed me". If it had not been for the fact she had been good to the Indian, they would have been arrested. As it was after they had palavered awhile, the Indians rode on and when they were out of sight, the girls went on into the timber and piled their wagons just as high as they could pile it with deadwood and took it to the sick woman. They were not molested by any of the other Indians they saw that day.

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Polant offered \$500.00 and 15 ponies to Mr. Hayes for his wife. He already had three wives. Mr. Hayes told him all right. Mrs. Hayes Pooley told them that it took two to make a bargain and she had something to say about it; she objected, hence no sale.

She and her husband were out in what they called the "Devil's Canyon" one time and they came across a horse that had just been killed by a mountain lion. The horse's side had been ripped open by its (the lion's) powerful claws. The horse belonged to the Bar X Ranch.

Polant was a Kiowa Indian and he rode one day into the yard of a woman by the name of Ingebard and he was shot off his horse. A cowman by the name of Machelroy did the deed. The Indians had been stealing his cattle, and he had

sent word to them if they did not stop it, he was going to kill some of them. He, however, killed the wrong Indian as Polant was a good Indian and liked by most everybody.

The Indians were wrought up and very angry and Machelroy had to leave the country to save his own neck. Mr. Hayes and a man by the name of Ben Franklin could talk Comanche

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and they went to the Crossing where the Indians had congregated and tried to talk and beg them out of their dangerous mood. Mr. Hayes finally told them that the soldiers from Fort Sill would come and take them all to Fort Sill if they did not quiet down. It scared them and they did quiet down.

There was a cowboy out there who was nicknamed as "Coarse and Fine". His real name was T. Witte and he had a peculiar voice, it would be high and fine and suddenly drop to a deep bass. Her husband told her about him before she met him, and that she must not laugh at his affliction as he was sensitive about it, and he could not help it. It was funny to hear him talk though.

In 1888 they loaded up their belongings in a wagon, took 43 horses and went to Shreveport, Louisiana. They were gone a week and then came to the home of one of her sisters, who lived at Fort Worth, Texas. Then back again to the Old Trail Crossing. She had a very fine saddle horse. Her husband paid \$60.00 for it and she named it "Painter", and the Indians called it a "Calico Pony".

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They next built a large dugout on the banks of the North Fork of the Red River, also digging a well. An orphan boy by the name of Paddy Morris lived with them at that time. Mr. Hayes went to Mangum on one New Year's morning and was gone for two weeks, gambling. Paddy and Mrs. Hayes Pooley started to dig some post holes, when the sun went back on them. She looked up and the sun was about half in eclipse. Paddy got scared and began to cry, saying "What if the world's coming to an end". She reassured him, however. She lived with Mr. Hayes seven years and besides the dead baby girl they had a son, Harry H. Hayes, born in 1890. They soon left this place and after they were gone, the river came up and filled their well and dugout full of dirt.

She then went to Fort Worth, Texas, and worked out down there. When Oklahoma was opened for settlement, her husband would not let her come. He had got to the point where he gambled so much, she could not depend on him much. He did get a claim. They lived at Fort Worth, Texas, awhile and then her husband went to Vernon, Texas.

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When she came here, she said that it seemed to her as though there was a saloon every other door. El Reno was a small place with board sidewalks. Posts were stuck up with gas lanterns on them for street lighting. She went to work waiting tables in the Western Hotel, located just north of the present high school building on the east side of Choctaw Avenue in the 400 block, south. She said that she had rung the old dinner bell many a time out of the side door of that old place. The proprietors, Mr. and Mrs. Thompson, sold out and went to California and then she went to Fort Reno to take care of Captain Joe Mackey's blind baby girl. They wanted her to sleep with the 'nigger' woman cook, and she would not do it. There was another white servant called "Annie" and she slept with the negro cook and gave her bed to Mrs. Hayes Pooley. The negro cook was mad the next morning because Mrs. Hayes Pooley would not sleep with her and she would not give her any breakfast. Mrs. Hayes Pooley felt obliged to give up this position because of this difficulty. There was no depot at the Fort then and she just had to go out to the railroad and wait for the train to



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come along and there was only one train a day. It was very hot and she sat down on the track under her parasol. It was not long before she looked up and a negro girl came along and sat down by the track to wait for the train. The negro girl said, "What for, you-all leavin'" and Mrs. Hayes Pooley said, "I was told to sleep with the colored cook". She then told the negro girl that she could come and sit with her under the parasol, saying she'd sit with a negro but she would not sleep with one".

Pretty soon another girl, a white one, came along with a similar complaint and all three sat out there in the broiling sun waiting for the train to take them into El Reno. A quick hard shower came up and they tried to get out of it by getting under the cow chutes, but without much success. The train came finally and they all came to El Reno.

She then got a job working for a Mrs. Beard, who was running a restaurant located about where the Crystal Laundry is now at 110 North Choctaw. There was a Salvation Army headquarters located just south of the restaurant. She worked in this restaurant until Neal Evans, Billy Biggerd and W. A. Pooley got together and built the first big steam

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laundry in El Reno. It was located about where the Liebman Ice Plant is now located at 117 North Choctaw Avenue. She got a job working in the laundry at \$1.00 per day. She boarded at the Western Hotel paying \$4.00 a week for room and board. She worked at the laundry about a year and five months. Neal Evans, Billy Biggerd and Mr. Pooley came to El Reno from Fort Reno; Neal Evans ran a store and post office out there and the other two were interested in it.

A Mr. Ladd ran a seed house just south of the laundry, and near it was a meat market. She saw a man run out of the meat market one day with his shirt torn open; he had been stabbed near the heart. He was covered with blood. She said that it was a horrifying sight and she never found out if he lived or died. Mr. Pooley sold his interest in the laundry to a Mr. Bodine and then Mrs. Hayes Pooley worked for Mr. Bodine awhile.

In 1896 she was married to Mr. W.A. Pooley by a Presbyterian minister in Oklahoma City. She had five children by Mr. Pooley, two girls and three boys.

She knew Mr. and Mrs. Frank Groves, Mr. Groves being publisher of the Supper Bell, a free press.

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She was acquainted with the Kerfoot Brothers. The Kerfoot Hotel was the first brick building in El Reno and Mrs. Poolsey saw it built. The Kerfoot Brothers also had a clothing store that was located where Kelso's store is now at 106 South Rock Island.

She has known Mr. and Mrs. C. R. Miller ever since she has been here. She saved Mrs. C. R. Miller's life one time in a runaway accident. The team ran away with Mrs. Miller and a woman companion, and the buggy tipped over and threw the women into the top of the buggy. Mrs. Poolsey stopped the team and helped to extricate them. Mrs. Miller had some of her ribs broken.

Mr. Poolsey served as sexton at the cemetery for four or five years. He also served as janitor of the Webster, Lincoln and Irvin schools for a period of fifteen years. They got to talking about laying the old fellow off and Mr. Poolsey resigned when he was 70 years of age. He said that he never had been fired from a job and so he quit. He never worked again, and he died on July 17, 1932, at the age of 77 years.

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Mrs. Pooley has lived in the same home since the 29th day of June, 1898. She is the last of her family, having no living sisters or brothers. She has children to take care of her though and she gets an old age pension. Her home is nicely and comfortably furnished and she is a devout Christian. She said something that pleased me very much, as I never had heard anyone else make similar statement. She said, "Bless God, I was so happy. I'd like to go back and live over every step of it again". and she seemed genuinely sincere about it. Most people are horrified at the idea of doing it again or at least pretend to be. It's refreshing to find someone that appreciated their life enough to be perfectly willing to go through it again, with an anticipated enjoyment.