

SAPP, J. D. ^ INTERVIEW
BILL EWING

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FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
WASHINGTON, D. C.

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Carl H. Mayfield

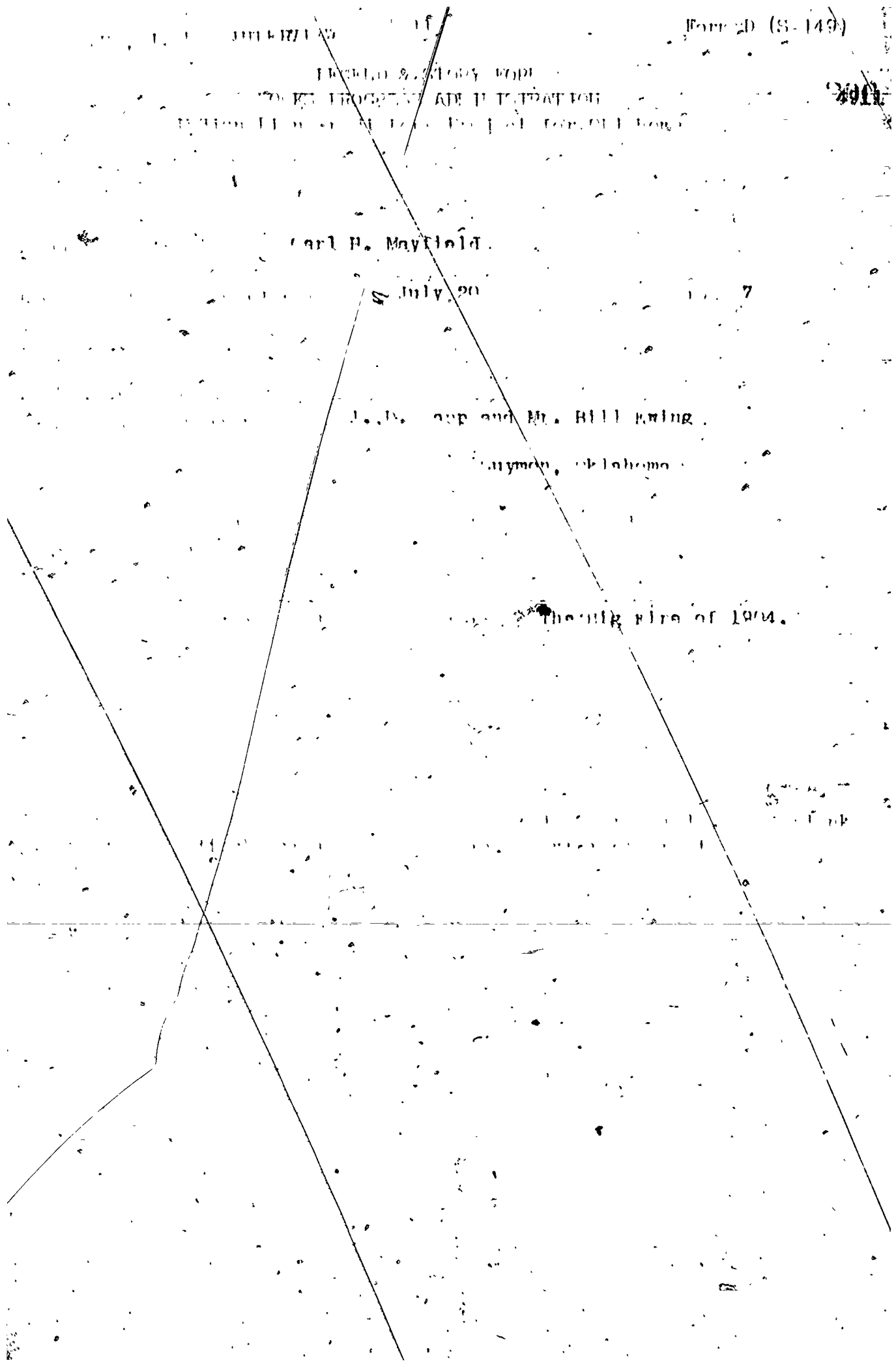
July 20

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J. B. ... and Mr. Bill King

... Oklahoma

The Big Fire of 1904



An Interview with Mr. J. D. Sapp and Mr. Bill Ewing
By - Carl H. Mayfield, Field Worker.

July 20, 1937.

THE BIG FIRE OF 1904.

The big prairie fire in April, 1904, will long be remembered by many early day settlers of the eastern part of what is now Texas County.

A Mr. Dobbs was clearing a tract of ground for his improvements on his claim southwest of Tyrone. While burning the weeds and other rubbish a strong south wind caused the fire to get out of control and to spread rapidly. It went north to the sand hill near the Kansas line. That evening Mr. Dobbs was warned by others to take plenty of water and to be sure to put out all chips that still burned near his claim. This he failed to do.

On the open range south of his claim the grass was very heavy and covered the ground like a carpet. During the night the wind changed to the north and what few chips that were still smouldering were soon blazing and sparks were carried to the grass land. The fire spread rapidly and before long the whole country was a wall of flames. Everyone for miles around worked several hours to keep the fire from spreading.

2

The grass along the edge of the sand hills north of the Bertrand ranch on the Beaver River was very rank, and in some places was high enough to hide a man on a horse. When the fire reached that point the damage was the greatest. At that time of the year range cattle and horses would bed down in the tall grass during the night for protection against the cold winds.

The smoke from the fire which is always ahead of a fire of this kind trapped many cattle and horses. The cattle tried to get to the river but could not make it. Some of them died instantly from burns. Others died the next day and plenty of them died for two and three days afterward.

~~The heaviest loss was suffered by J. S. Green, who lost his entire herd of one-hundred and twenty-five to a hundred and fifty head of cattle. This was the herd he had managed to pull through the big blizzard in the spring of 1903.~~

The Bertrand boys lost about seventy-five head of cattle and several horses. A large part of their range was burned off as was a lot of their winter feed supply.