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BONER, WALTER L.

INTERVIEW

:12417

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Form A (9-149)

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

BONER, WALTER L.

INTERVIEW

12417

Field Worker's name Lula AustinThis report made on (date) December 15, 19371. Name Walter L. Boner2. Post Office Address Durant3. Residence address (or location) 1020 North 2nd.4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month October Day 10 Year 18705. Place of birth Kentucky6. Name of Father Steven F. Boner Place of birth Kentucky

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Mary C. Sine Place of birth Virginia

Other information about mother _____

Notes or narrative by the field worker dealing with the life and story of the person interviewed. Refer to Manual for suggested sheets and questions. Continue on blank sheets if necessary and attach firmly to this form. Number of sheets attached 3

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Lula Austin,
Investigator,
December 15, 1937.

An Interview with Mr. Walter L. Boner,
Durant, Oklahoma.

I came to Indian Territory in 1898, settled in Durant and began practising law. United States commission was the only court we had; for district court we would go to Atoka. The court at Atoka was presided over by Judge William H. H. Clayton who had been prosecuting attorney in United States court at Fort Smith under Judge Parker who held the record for hanging men in the United States.

At the time I came to Durant it was a small town of five or six one story brick buildings and a number of frame buildings with no pavements and no sidewalks, with two wells and frequent hog wallows in the middle of Main Street.

In the year 1899 the town government of Durant was organized by order of the United States District court at Atoka. Mr. W.T. Sprowles and I were partners at that time and we conducted the legal proceedings needed for the organization of the town government; this was in March, 1899, and an election for town officers

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was called and W. H. Hilton, who had been in the lumber business here, was elected Mayor and was the only Republican Mayor that Durant has ever had. After the organization, a board of alderman selected the Hon. R. L. Williams, now United States Judge, for the first town attorney.

There was a census taken in 1902 and Mr. Sprowles and I again conducted the legal proceedings at Atoka needed to advance the town to a city of first class.

The census was taken by James Yarborough and showed a population of over five thousand. (It was thought he took the name of everyone far and near).

I was elected the first Mayor of the city of Durant in 1903 and W. A. Hitchey was elected its first city attorney.

In the summer of 1902 we voted a \$100,000.00 bond issue; \$15,000 for a school building and the remainder for a water works system which was constructed in the latter part of 1903, with the source of supply at Blue River where it has since been. Burris and McDonald of Kansas City were designing engineers and recommended the

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construction of a lake in the southwest part of the city as the source of supply; this recommendation was refused by vote in favor of Blue River.

The extensive construction of a water system was prompted by four different fires in the business district of Durant during 1899 and 1901. In the fire of 1901 thirty-six business houses were destroyed. I saw more than thirty business houses in construction at one time.

Mr. Sprowles and I were trying a case in the Atoka Court of a man who had stolen a pig and Jack Lauderdale, an intermarried white man, was witness for the defendant. After he had been sworn in and was being questioned by the prosecuting attorney, he said, "Judge, as the Bible says, 'Every tub stands on its own bottom'." Judge Clayton made a joke out of what he said when he addressed the jury; the man was cleared.

There was an undertaker and doctor who had offices adjoining ours. We often laughed and said we had a doctor to give the fatal dose- an undertaker to bury the

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patient and we were the lawyers ready to administer
the estate.