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BOWLES, W. M. (JUDGE)

INTERVIEW

1945

BOWLES, W. M. (JUDGE)

INTERVIEW Form A-244829

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

Field Worker's name Ida A. Marwin,

This report made on (date) June 16, 1937.

1. Name Judge W. M. Bowles,

2. Post Office Address Perry, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) _____

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month _____ Day _____ Year 1869

5. Place of birth Near St. Louis, Missouri

6. Name of Father Edward B. Bowles Place of birth Missouri

Other information about father Pioneer Doctor.

7. Name of Mother Mollie (Patton) Bowles Place of birth Missouri

Other information about mother _____

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

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INTERVIEW.

#4452.

Ida A. Merwin,
Interviewer.
June 16, 1937.

Interview with Judge W. M. Bowles,
Perry, Oklahoma.

I, W. M. Bowles, was born about eighteen miles from St. Louis, Missouri, as were also my parents and grandparents. Therefore they were pioneers of Missouri. My grandfather was born in 1818.

I came to Oklahoma at the opening of the Cherokee Strip in 1893, landing at the townsite of Perry. I was riding on the tender of the first train entering from the south - with me was Frank Greer who at that time was Editor of the "State Capital", a paper at Guthrie.

The townsite of Perry had been surveyed and laid out by Government officials previous to the opening. It rose to be a tent village of twenty-five thousand people over night.

There was quite a struggle to secure lots; in one instance, a certain block was being held by some people who seemed to think they had authority. These people would tell others that this was Government land. Later

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it was discovered that this land was being held for friends who had not arrived yet.

One day when I happened by I noticed a woman was being tossed over a low fence that she had erected across the front of a lot. I, being young and strong, felt that was no way to treat a woman and I tossed her back; therefore we played ball with her over the fence for several minutes. Finally I got the last toss and informed the others to let her alone. I told them that although she might not have a right to the lot that was no way to treat her. Later, I learned that her name was Mrs. Jack Herrington and her husband became Street Commissioner three or four years after the opening.

I was elected City Attorney in 1894 and held office until 1907, at which time I was elected County Attorney.

At this time there was a lot of gambling done on the street and I attempted to clean up the town. I succeeded in getting the gamblers off the streets by having them move into rooms upstairs and into back buildings.

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At one time from one term of court we sent twenty-one prisoners to the prison in Lansing, Kansas, which was where the prisoners were taken in those days.

I was a member of the first School Board in Perry and was first District Judge for twelve years. In 1903 I was Speaker in the Seventh Legislature.

In the early days when trading with the Indians, the merchants would take their notes and would add to the regular price. When the Indians received their Government check, the merchants would usually meet them at the Agency and have cash enough to pay the difference between the note and the Indian's check; otherwise the Indians would seldom make any effort to pay the note.

On one occasion I was sent by some of the merchants to the Agency to collect on some of the notes but encountered quite a task as they thought I had no right to do this. But through the influence of Mr. Jensen, who had charge of the Agency at this time, things were adjusted and I came out of the skirmish all right.

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I have had some dealings with the Indians in court but I handle as few cases for them as possible since the Indians are poor pay. When I do handle a case for an Indian, I ask for the fee in advance.