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BELL, ROSCOE.

INTERVIEW

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

Field Worker's name Amelia F. Harris

This report made on (date) January 4 1938

1. Name Judge Roscoe Bell

2. Post Office Address Oklahoma City

3. Residence address (or location) 316 Security Building

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month April Day 26 Year 1882

5. Place of birth Greenville, Ohio

6. Name of Father Louis L. Bell Place of birth Green County, Ohio.
 Came to Oklahoma in 1898

7. Name of Mother Myra J. Bell Place of birth Duck County, Ohio.

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 subjects and questions. Continue on blank sheets if necessary and attach firmly to this form. Number of sheets attached 7.

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Amelia F. Harris
Journalist
January 4, 1938.

Interview with Roscoe Bell
Oklahoma City, Okla.

Father came from Winfield, Kansas, on April 22, 1889 via the Rock Island to Oklahoma City, which was a thriving tent town. He did not attempt to file on a homestead, but did file on a lot where the Lawrence Hotel now stands. Then J. M. Owens, Dr. Munger and my father filed on lots which extended from the place where the Lawrence Hotel is now north on Broadway to the place where the Insurance building stands today, but they didn't keep these lots long but sold them to a railroad broker for \$200.00 and this broker in turn sold them for \$1000.00 each two weeks later.

Father never officially lived in Oklahoma City as we owned our own home in Winfield and Mother would not agree to sell it, therefore, father traveled back and forth between Oklahoma and Winfield and thereby relinquished all rights to a lot he held on Main and Harvey Streets in Oklahoma City. There was much contention between "Actual Settlers" and "Prospective Settlers". One of the two factions was known as the "Seminoles" and the other faction which originated in Topeka, Kansas, was called the "Prospective settlers".

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The actual or legitimate settlers were known as the "Kickapoos". My father was an ardent leader of the Kickapoo faction. This was before the organic act had been passed and the nearest court was at Muskogee and outside of the limits of Oklahoma Territory. The Actual Settlers would organize and elect City officials but they had no lawful authority and the "Prospective Settlers" faction organized theirs too, and thus it became a conflict and there being no law the matter resolved itself into numerous physical and brutal encounters. The military forces were on hand to preserve order; Company G was commanded by Captain Styles whose military stockade was near the place where the Corpus Christi church now stands and the nearby Styles Park got its name from Captain Styles.

Captain Styles allied himself with the Seminoles and attempted to break up an election that the "Kickapoos" had called and which was held at the place where the Broadview Hotel now stands on the southwest corner of Grand avenue and Main street.

When first noticed, Captain Styles was heading his company over the hill where Broadway now crosses the Civic

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Center; he halted his company in the street about where the Muckins hotel annex occupied by Western Union is now. This was one of the lots owned by my father and was where he resided. Captain Styles advanced to the north side of the Herskowitz building and commanded the election crowd to disperse and to abandon the election. This aroused the ire of the Kickapoo faction and under the leadership of my father they refused. Captain Styles then formed his company into a company front according to "Casey's Code of Civil War Military Tactics" and ordered a bayonet charge against the "Kickapoos".

Father stepped forward and with a commanding military voice raised his hand and halted the company. He disarmed two or more of the soldiers and stacked their guns in front of the company and then in the presence of Captain Styles put the company through the maneuver provided in "Casey's Tactics" and headed it back to the place where it had started under the leadership of Captain Styles.

In this procedure father, a Union soldier, had the hearty cooperation of some ex-Confederate soldiers who had

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settled here too. Among these Confederate soldiers was Major Allen from Mississippi who was thoroughly convinced that Father was right. The following words were spoken by Major Allen: "The carpet baggers have returned and the settlers are about to experience military despotism such as the South experienced during the days of Reconstruction." Major Allen was thoroughly convinced that Father would be subjected to civil and military arrest. The men had a hurried conference and at the suggestion of Major Allen a fund was raised to send Father to Washington where he was instructed to report to President Harrison who had been a Union Soldier too. Father started for Washington but stopped at Winfield to leave Mother some money and to see how his family were and he found Mother, sister and me in bed with the Lagrippe and all alone. This situation made it necessary for Father to remain at home until we were able to take care of ourselves; but our illness did not stop him as he knew just what to do. He had a personal friend, Samuel C. Shellsbarger, a former congressman from Ohio, practicing law in Washington, so Father wrote Mr. Shellsbarger a full account of the activities of Captain Styles

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aligning himself with the Seminole faction, going into the details of matters on both sides and Mr. Shellsbarger took this letter to President Harrison direct and President Harrison gave the letter the same attention as though it had come directly to him from Father.

After reading this letter, President Harrison immediately sent this telegram to Captain Styles: "Repair to the Military Reservation and cease your interference with the municipal affairs of Oklahoma City."

When Father returned to Oklahoma City, he found Captain Styles a very docile man. Soon thereafter the Organic Act was passed and there was orderly government from then on and by that time President Harrison realized that when allotment of lands again took place great care should be taken to appoint men who knew the country thoroughly. He had in mind the "Big Pasture Country" in 1901 - and when the Cheyenne and Arapaho Country was opened President Harrison appointed Father as the first postmaster in Cheyenne. Father served as postmaster for two years and in 1893 he moved to Perry and resumed the practice of law, specializing in land titles. While at Cheyenne Father made the acquaintance of Chief Red Moon and they

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became very close friends. Chief Red Moon was a full blood Cheyenne Indian, highly educated, the soul of honor who could speak the English language fluently though he did not often do so. However, he always spoke in English to Father and in conversation they would trace back to analogous customs, and usages in the Tribal laws and in the English common law. The Chief had acquired considerable legal knowledge and since Father was a lawyer Chief Red Moon would come to Father's office and sit there for two or three hours talking law.

A young Eastern fellow came to Oklahoma City as a sight-seer and after hanging around a few days the cowboys at Cheyenne filled him so full of Indian stories and he became so excited that he thought it was his duty to kill the first Indian whom he saw in a blanket costume. This he did and when the Cheyennes heard of it they armed themselves and all headed for Cheyenne. Father heard of it and he and Jim Purdy got on their horses and started out to meet the Indians before they did any harm. Chief Red Moon was leading his men but when he saw Father he checked his men and Father explained to him just how everything had happened

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and told him that they had had the man who had killed the blanket Indian locked up and that he would be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law and that the citizens of Cheyenne were sorry and they wanted Red Moon and his men to be their guests for an open air dinner.

The ladies glad of the averted massacre, cooked a big dinner and all of the Indians ate it and then smoked the Pipe of Peace and were friends of the white people again. This Eastern man was really tried and convicted but was soon pardoned and left Oklahoma. The Chief said in the settlement of this country first came the missionary, then the trader, then the soldier and that generally the missionary was more successful in Indian uprisings as the soldier's idea of "law" and "order" contained too much politics.