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BILLY, SIMON.

INTERVIEW

#7369

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

BILLY, SIMON.

INTERVIEW.

7369.

Field Worker's name Gomer Gower.

This report made on (date) August 29, 1937. 1937

1. Name Simon Billy.

2. Post Office Address Wister, Oklahoma. Route #2.

3. Residence address (or location) Seven miles west of Heavener.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month _____ Day _____ Year 1850 (?)

5. Place of birth Sugar Leaf County. (Now LaFlore).

6. Name of Father Does not know. Place of birth _____

Other information about father Came from Mississippi.

7. Name of Mother Eliza Billy. Place of birth _____

Other information about mother Came from Mississippi.

-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 3.

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Gomer Gower,
Interviewer,
August 20, 1937.

An Interview With Simon Billy,
Wister, Oklahoma.

The subject of this sketch, Simon Billy, a full-blood Choctaw Indian, can approximate his age only as it is related to the War between the States, as he was more than half grown at its close in 1865.

He speaks the English language fluently when he so desires.

It was learned that Simon Billy has led a very active life, that he played a prominent part during the period just prior to statehood. He served as Deputy Sheriff at the time Noah Folsom was County Judge of Sugar Loaf County and was, according to those who knew him at that time, a most fearless officer.

The capital of Sugar Loaf County was located at a point about four miles southwest of the present village of Summerfield, a region about seven miles west of LeFlore on the Frisco Railway.

Upon the construction of that railroad in 1886, this section enjoyed an activity in the making of railroad ties

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and the manufacture of lumber which brought with it numberless men of questionable character, who were wont to scoff at law and order. The white men of that period in the Indian Territory enjoyed an immunity from arrest and punishment which did not extend to the Indian citizens. They were not amenable to the tribal laws as were the Indian citizens. A violation of the Federal laws, such as the introduction of intoxicating liquor and other felonious acts which came directly under the jurisdiction of the United States Court at Fort Smith, Arkansas, were the only offences for which a non citizen could be prosecuted. No provision had been made to deal with misdemeanors such as carrying concealed weapons, fighting, gaming, petty larceny, etc. This state of affairs, very naturally lent itself admirably to the growth and spread of a disorderly and vicious condition with which the local officers, such as Simon Billy was, found it difficult to cope.

The introduction of liquor was at once profitable, and destructive of good morals; it was profitable to the peddler, but when consumed planted the seed from which major crimes would grow, which, in turn, would require the best efforts of the officers to curb.

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Simon very modestly disclaims such honors as those to which his many acts of heroism might lay claim and is content in the feeling that he discharged the duties of his office in a manner satisfactory to those who thus honored him in extending to him the appointment.

At this time Simon Billy is living quietly at home, his only diversion being an occasional trip to Poteau, Wister or Heaven on astride his mouse-colored Indian pony which he has owned and ridden for a number of years.

He is very tall, well over six feet in height and his appearance on his pony, about fourteen hands in height, is remindful of that period in the Indian Territory when horses of more than fourteen hands in height were rare. His legs extend well below the body of the animal; in fact, nearly to the ground; stirrup-leaders, such as were used in the old days, would, in this case, create a ridiculous appearance.