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BOOTEN, MARTIN E.

INTERVIEW

#9093

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

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BOOTEN, MARTIN E.

INTERVIEW.

9093

Field Worker's name Ida A. Merwin

This report made on (date) October 29, 1937

1. Name Martin E. Booten

2. Post Office Address Perry, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) 818 Delaware Street

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month June Day 25 Year 1861

5. Place of birth Washington County, Iowa

6. Name of Father John Wesley Booten Place of birth _____

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Elizabeth Dickey Place of birth Indiana

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 5.

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Interview with Martin E. Booten,
818 Delaware Street, Perry, Okla.

I was born in Washington County, Iowa, June 25,
1861.

In June, 1892, I left Fremont County, Iowa, for
Indian Territory; my wife and brother-in-law were with me.
We wanted to secure land to make a home.

We camped near Chilocco and I secured work with George
All, putting up hay. We worked for a while near Chilocco,
then moved our camp near Kaw, where we continued to make hay
until October, when we went to Arkansas City to spend the
winter and await the opening of the Cherokee Strip.

The trip from Iowa was made in covered wagons and,
as I was a trader, I had with me about fifteen head of
horses.

In June of 1893, we moved to Mulhall, old Oklahoma,
where I traded for a restaurant, which we operated until
the opening of the Cherokee Strip.

On Saturday, September 16, 1893, I entered the race
in the opening of the Strip. I started on the south line
at a point five or six miles east of Orlando. There were
three of us who were trying to get land near each other.

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We rode horses and ran four miles in twelve minutes. I staked the SE4, sec. 9, twp. 20, R. 1 W; and I still own it. The other two staked in the section east of me.

There were several others who claimed the land I had staked, but I out-stayed them and held the land without a contest. I was among the first to file and my filing was done September 19, 1893.

Shortly afterwards, I built a building at the railroad station, Wharton, which was at the south edge of the townsite of Perry, and moved the restaurant from Mulhall to this place, but I did not do good there as there was so much competition in the town of Perry. I bought a building, that had been used as a drink stand, for \$3.50 and moved this to the land I had secured and made a house to live in. This was about 9 x 11 and only a frame. I nailed it to a tree to make it secure; it did not have any floor in it. We had lived in this a short time when I added a room. This was our home for two years, then I built a room, 10 x 12, using cottonwood lumber which I purchased at a sawmill for \$1.25 a hundred feet. I paid a carpenter \$10.00 to build this room.

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Our house was located near a spring and we used water from this until I could dig a well, which I dug twenty-two feet deep and got plenty of water.

There was some timber on my land and I made some into wood, which we used for fuel. The horses I had were quite small, so I had Jim Francis who made the race with me to break sod and plant the first crop. I cut a rick of wood for him off of his land in exchange for his plowing an acre of sod for me. He planted kaffir corn and corn for the first crop which we shared; he did the work on my land. Later I rented the land for wheat.

I followed the business of trading and worked by the day. I worked for Joe Hodge who owned a nursery, and for this work I received 25 cents and six peach trees for a day's work. The trees I would sell or trade to others who wanted them to set out on their land. I traded some of the trees for poultry.

When the Perry mill was built, I think this was about two years after the opening, I walked eleven miles a day to work on it and I received \$1.00 a day for the work and I paid 10 cents for dinner. (This mill is being torn down now.)

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During the first few years our furniture was all home-made. Our cook stove was the only thing we bought.

As there was no floor in the house, we drove posts and built a frame on them for a bed, using the space underneath for storage. The table was a small home-made stand. We only had a very few things but got along with them.

During the first years we raised good crops; the melons were immense; they did well on the sod land, but there was no market for them. There were so many melons raised, the price was low. Some people made syrup from them and this was real good, too.

We bought our supplies in Perry, and sometimes I would get ground corn, kaffir and oats from a mill. We would sift this and make bread and cereal from it. I never ground any myself but would buy it when we needed it. My trading and work by the day was the way I managed for our needs.

I was not much of a farmer and, as my business was a trader, I rented the land for farming, and as soon as I had proven up on the land I moved to Perry.

The first building that was built in Perry was on the corner of Sixth and D Streets. It was a bank building.

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This building was brought here in sections on the train and was put up in a very short time. It opened for business September 26, 1893.