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BOSTIC, PHIFER BAXTER.

INTERVIEW.

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J. S. Buchanan,
Investigator
January 26, 1938.

Interview with Phifer Baxter Bostic,
Muskogee, Oklahoma.

MUSKOGEE'S FIRST FIRE ALARM

Back in the early days of Muskogee the only way of giving a fire alarm was for everyone who had a pistol or gun to begin firing at the slightest indication that there was a fire. When such an alarm was started it was taken up all over town and lasted as long as the ammunition did. This was very dangerous, which was realized after a number of narrow escapes of people being shot.

Being on the city council and chairman of the fire committee it fell on my shoulders, at the direction of the council, to work out some safe and sane kind of fire alarm, although the city had no money for that purpose.

Sam Smally, a fire chief that we had brought to Muskogee from Dallas, Texas, said that he could buy a "wild cat" fire alarm whistle for \$75.00, but we didn't have the \$75.00, and if we had the whistle we didn't have any steam to blow it, but after much negotiation the Muskogee Electric Company, at that time located at Cincinnati and South Cherokee

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streets, agreed that if the whistle was purchased they would connect it to the boilers in their plant and blow it when notified.

The Muskogee Telephone Company of that time agreed that if anyone phoned in a fire alarm they would connect them with the Electric Company phone at the plant, then the alarm could be sounded.

The next thing was to get the \$75.00, so in order to get the money to buy the new fire alarm whistle without begging, a baseball game was arranged between the city council members, of which ^{there} were eight and a mayor, other office help in the city hall and the fire department, of which, as I remember, there were four paid members and about sixteen volunteers who received \$1.00 for each fire they went to.

Well, the big ball game was arranged and advertised to be played at the old Benson Park, the ball park at the south end of Twenty-third Street and the advance sale of tickets was sufficient to purchase the whistle and insure a big crowd. The game was played before a large crowd without any serious mishap, but with much hilarity. I will not

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attempt to describe the game, I am leaving that to your imagination and the worse you imagine, the better picture you will have of the game.

The whistle was purchased and installed as per arrangements and when it was sounded for the first time it more than met expectations. It sounded like a wild cat in a mad tantrum and could be heard from Wagoner to Checotah. When it blew the first time, there was a startled populace and most of the negro population thought that Gabriel's Promise had caught them right here in Muskogee.

This whistle was used and gave good service for about five years, until the modern alarm system was installed about 1911.