

OKLAHOMA
TERRITORY

TERRITORIAL TALES

Bits of
History
Before
Statehood

INDIAN
TERRITORY

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Elections Perilous In Indian Territory

Pre-statehood elections often were deadly serious business. An account of one such case is the story of M.A. Looney, as recorded in "History of Oklahoma" by J.B. Thoburn.

Looney was a lad of 16 when he came to Indian Territory in 1902. He was chosen for a dangerous mission following the campaign and election of a governor for the Chickasha Nation in 1903.

The contest gave rise to such bad blood that rumors were spread in the case of the election of Douglas H. Johnston that ballot boxes were to be seized and destroyed, or the men in charge of them would be murdered.

It was necessary that the ballot boxes be put in a place of safekeeping. The place selected was the home of a farmer near Durant.

Any citizen who undertook the mission of carrying away the ballots would be in danger

of losing his life. After secret debate among leaders, young Looney was selected to perform the hazardous task.

The ballots were sealed in a small package, handed to him, and he was instructed on how to proceed. He was to take a train at Tishomingo, transfer to another railroad that would take him to Durant, and drive in a buggy to the home of a man who was designated to keep the ballots until danger was past. Looney was to keep his mouth closed, answer no questions and invoke no delays.

Looney did not know that upon his journey depended the policies of the Chickasha Nation for many years. Fortune favored him. He made the trip and accomplished the mission without accident or incident. Governor Johnston was elected and history records that the administration generally was a satisfactory one.