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Merrill A. Nelson
Field Worker
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Interview with Mr. Eli Perry
Route #3, Enid, Oklahoma.
Born September 25, 1855, Ft. Wayne, Indiana
Father-Thomas Perry
Mother-Emily Knowles

STORY OF ELI PERRY

My native state was Indiana. I left there as a small boy with my parents, moving first to Illinois, and later by myself to Nebraska, in which latter state I lived about four years. I had farmed a little in Illinois so I ^{was} prepared somewhat for conditions on a place twenty miles north ^{of} Grand Island. In 1892 I sold what I had and came as far as Wellington, Kansas, where we stayed four days. In our party was my mother-in-law, myself, wife, and three children. I could hardly make a living there, so I decided to come into Oklahoma. That was not always so easy here either, and since coming to this state I have worked with a team for 25 cents a day. I was nearly thirty eight at the time.

We came along, the three wagons of us, wife and I and a man by the name of Cargo. My wife got scared going down a hill, and jumped out of the wagon; the team

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left to themselves came running up to the other wagon which I was driving and stopped, upsetting the load. We reached our destination near Marshall. The country looked at that time like one great big pasture.

We went to the Cheyenne-Arapaho country at the time of the run. It was pouring down rain. That country was too far from market, and as I did not know anything but how to follow a plough, 15 miles or more even, seemed too far.

So I bought a little house in the town of Marshall and did anything I could to get employment.

When the time came for the Cherokee Strip to open, I made the run. I was not in any group. I had to go on horseback on just an old plug. A woman was near me on a side saddle, and when the signal was given she fell off her horse. So she gave up making the run and returned her borrowed horse. A man by the name of English and I contested. We secured a place several miles north and a mile east of my present place. I had stopped on a previous place but there were three men on it and to avoid trouble I went on. According

to my watch I was thirty minutes in going that ten miles. The other man had a 1200 pound horse which wasn't sweating, so I never figured out how he got there unless he was a SOONER.

I went back to Hennessey till I built a place to move to but soon had a shack on the place. We did not have much furniture, just a few old chairs, I have one of them yet, which I sometimes show folks. We dug a well at once. This was fifty five feet deep. It was February when we moved in. We stayed there until eleven years ago and then moved into this present fine home, but I still own the old homestead.

I had three cows from the start. I planted some kaffir corn. This would stay green in dry seasons. In the daytime it would shut up and at night it would open. Finally on the 15th of August we had a rain, filling every buffalo wallow on the place. We were thankful as this saved that crop.

We never ran short of food but some got so hungry, they ate prairie dogs. There was little game

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around here. I usually bought my supplies from Enid.

My parents are buried in Illinois. I had four brothers and sisters. Two of my sisters are in Illinois. We have had no children. My brother, T. R. Perry, lives one ^{one} and half miles north and a little ways east (first house) on the pavement. My mother made me all my clothes.

I built up a good herd of cows and had a few horses on my place.

My father, Thomas Perry, was born in Ireland, and was a farmer. My mother, Emily Knowles Perry, was born in Georgia or Indiana. She made her own clothes on a spinning wheel and loom. Lived first house east--came here in 1895.