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Alene D. McDowell,
Research Field Worker,
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Biography of William M. McGuire
Early Day Experiences of Oklahoma,
Given by Mrs. Evelyn McGuire, widow.

When one realizes that but two decades have passed since Bartlesville was only a store and a few houses, it hardly seems possible that it is a thriving city of approximately 15,000. Through a period of forty-seven years Mr. McGuire considered Washington County his home.

William M. McGuire, better known as "Shorty" and to the old timers as "Skite" was born September 26, 1868 in Webster County, Iowa. His parents were William and Susan Woolsey McGuire. His father was Irish and his mother was a descendant of the noted Woolseys of Scotland. His maternal grandmother was born in Scotland, coming to America when she was a young woman. His mother died in Iowa, when he was three years of age.

The family moved to Western Kansas and settled near Republic, when the subject of this review was six years old. He spent his early childhood on a farm at this place, moving with his father to Dexter, Kansas, when he was a young man. They again took up the occupation of farming and remained here for several years.

In 1888 Mr. McGuire came to the Indian Territory to

help drive the cattle out of "old Oklahoma" in preparation for the "run of '89." He bought a string of ponies and sold them to men to ride in the run. I remember him telling about one mare, the beauty of the spring, that he was saving to ride himself. There was several who wanted to buy her, but he knew she was a racer and he intended to make the run and did not care to sell. The last morning, about an hour before the bugle blast sounded, a man offered him \$150 for her and he sold. He later heard she was loco.

He made the run and staked several lots in Kingfisher, but he was only twenty years old and could not file so sold his claim. He described the run as follows: People in hopes of making a home were lined up on all four borders of the land to be opened, to wait for the signal to start. There were people from all stations in life, old men, young men, women and children, in every conceivable kind of conveyance were ready to start. There were prairie schooners, buggies, carts, surreys, mules and horses. Thousands made the run on foot. The Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad crossed the land from north to south and had special trains running in both directions, entering from Arkansas

City, Kansas on the north and Purcell, Indian Territory the south. These trains traveled at the same rate of speed as the horses so the advantages would be the same. The trains were overloaded and people were hanging out of the windows.

At twelve o'clock, noon, the signal was given and they were off. By night fall thousands of homeseekers had staked their claim, stretched a tent and had begun their pioneer life in what is now Oklahoma.

Guthrie was a flourishing little tent city overnight. There was a land office established there where people could file their claims.

Mr. McGuire made the run into the Iowa, Shawnee, Sac and Fox and Pottawatomie country when it was opened in 1891. He also staked a claim in this run, but I do not know where it was located. He again sold out.

In 1892 he made the run into the Cheyenne and Arapaho opening but did not want to settle in this part of the territory so sold it. He did not make the run into the Cherokee Strip in 1893.

While awaiting the opening day of the run of '89, people would stand in line for days for their mail. Mr.

McGuire stood in line for days and when he would be near the postoffice he would sell his place. He said the young men who did not expect mail would do this, and could sell their places for a good price.

Mr. McGuire was a cowboy for years. He raised his cow horse, a big rangy gray, from a colt and trained him to be a very efficient roping horse. He helped to drive a herd of Texas long horn cattle from the Texas border to Caldwell, Kansas. It took them about three months to make this trip. While on this drive one day he heard a peculiar noise and while he was off his horse making an investigation, the horse was some distance from him and one of the long horn steers started for him. He saw he could not get away and his horse was too far to reach.

~~He started to run and whistled to his horse and horse~~
circled the steer on the run and ran between him and the steer. As he ran past Mr. McGuire caught hold of the saddle horn swung himself into the saddle.

While on this same trip, he was riding in close quarters, when a steer started for them and would have torn the horse's side open, but just as the steer charged the horse reared up and knocked it to its knees, with his front feet.

He worked for the Miller Brothers on the 101 Ranch for a year and while there he told of the following experience: A gawky boy of about twenty, came to the ranch one evening and asked for a job. When they asked if he could break horses, he said he had broke colts for his grandfather on the farm in Missouri. The foreman told him to hang around until morning and they would see what they could do. The boys thought they were having a great time that evening when they had him tell his experiences breaking colts. There was a big blue roan out-law, they used to try out new cow hands, so the next morning the boys roped old "Blue," saddled him and had him ready for "Slim." When he came out of the bunk house he wore spurs, chaps and a ten gallon hat and was carrying his own bridle. The boys knew the joke was on them. He put his bridle on old "Blue" and rode him like an "old cow hand" and he never "pulled leather" once, something they could not do. When he finished he asked them if they had anything except tame ponies to ride. Needless to say he got the job.

Mr. McGuire worked for William Johnstone on a ranch near Bartlesville and gained the reputation of the best roper in the country. He told of riding bucking bronchos

until his nose bled and blood ran from his ears.

Mr. McGuire and his father leased land near Copan, Oklahoma, where they followed agriculture for two years. While they were located near Copan, his father organized a Baptist church in this community. He and a Mr. Kinney (who was then the husband of Mrs. Jack, now living in Dewey) and an Indian preacher, I think his name was Lacy, made a trip into Kansas and Missouri and asked for donations to build a church. This church was known as the Pooler Creek Baptist Church. I think this church has been discontinued, but the membership was taken to Copan.

Mr. McGuire helped to build both the Missouri, Kansas and Texas railroad from somewhere in Kansas, I do not remember, to Oklahoma City. He told the following experience which happened while they were camped near Bartlesville: A child belonging to one of the families was bitten by a copperhead snake. The doctor had done all he could for the child. Cyprian Tayrien, a very prominent Osage County farmer, who was part Osage Indian, lived near the camp. They had heard he could cure snake bites so the child's father, Mr. Pearson and Mr. McGuire rode over to talk to Mr. Tayrien about it. When he saw them coming, he walked out to the gate and told them

what they had come for. He asked them to wait a few minutes and he would come back. He went to the back of the house, was gone a short time and when he returned he advised them when they arrived home the child would be better. When they returned home the child was asleep and her leg had stopped swelling. She recovered in a few days.

A few years later Mr. McGuire was working for Mr. Tayrien, hauling shocked corn from the field. The snakes were so numerous the men would not stay in the field. They went to the house and told Mr. Tayrien they would not work where these snakes were. He walked over the field and returned to the house and told the men to go back to work, the snakes were all gone. They did not see any more snakes.

When the subject of this review was a boy, his father and older brother and himself went into the southern part of the territory to hunt deer. That evening a severe storm came up. They could see it was coming so drove into a thickly timbered place, hauled enough large logs for fire wood and drove their wagons on the north side of the camp for a wind break. They were camped there for several days, until the storm was over. On this trip they killed several deers.

Old Bartlesville was located just below bridge at the north edge of the city when Mr. McGuire first came to Washington County. Jacob Bartles, for whom Bartlesville was named, operated a general store, flour mill and blacksmith shop at this place. There was not much to Bartlesville on the north side of Caney river.

William Johnstone and George B. Keeler embarked in the merchantile business on the south side of the river and invited others to join them and little by little the town grew.

In 1897 Bartlesville was made an incorporated town with a cluster of business houses, near what is now First street and Delaware avenue, with a wing extending south to about Third street. There was nothing west of Cherokee avenue, except possibly a log cabin or two. At that time the business section of Bartlesville of now was a wheat field.

About this time oil had been discovered and it was rumored the railroad was coming. From this time Bartlesville grew very rapidly.

Mr. McGuire was married in 1900 to Miss Evelyn Owsley of Hoplin, Missouri.

Mrs. McGuire came to Oklahoma after the railroad was completed in 1904. Her impression of Bartlesville when she arrived is quoted as follows:

"When I arrived in Bartlesville, I thought it was the end of the world. I am one-eighth Cherokee Indian, but I had been reared in Missouri where there were no Indians and cowboys and when I saw Indians wearing blankets and cowboys dressed in their gay regalia, I really thought this was a wild country. There was not a side walk or a paved street here, and there were no houses for rent. We had to live in a tent for three months and when we did find a house it was only two rooms and very delapidated. My husband was driving a team in the oil field for a man named Bradford. He worked fourteen miles in the Osage country and would be gone from Monday until Saturday night. I was a stranger in a strange land and did not enjoy being left alone in this wild country with my baby, so after two years he gave up this work and engaged in contract business for himself. He helped build Bartlesville from this time.

In 1905 he could have traded his cow horse for the lot where the First National Bank is now located, but

would not part with his faithful old "standby." Shortly after this, the horse died, after twenty-two years of faithful service.

Mr. McGuire's contract was building the grade for the viaduct over the railroad on Eleventh ^{street}. He did all the excavation work for the three smelters in Bartlesville and for the smelters at Collinsville, built the grade for the Interurban track from the smelters west of town to the railroad, moved the dirt for most of the basements of the business buildings and school houses here.

For the last fifteen years, before his death December 1, 1936, Mr. McGuire was general foreman for J. H. Hamilton Construction Company of Bartlesville, paving most of the city streets in Bartlesville and Pawhuska, paved ten miles of United States Highway 60, from Bartlesville to the Nowata County line, and United States Highway 75, from Bartlesville to the underpass north of Vera and numerous other pavings and building jobs in Washington County and also other counties in Oklahoma.

He was very active in his work until the last two years, when his health failed. He was 68 years of age when he passed on and had spent over two decades of this time in Washington

County. He was very proud of his work and of the fact that he had helped in his small way, in the building of Oklahoma.

Mrs. McGuire now resides at 1021 Maple, Bartlesville, with their only daughter, Mrs. Alene D. McDowell who is the Field Worker for this project in Washington County.