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Field Worker: Harry M. Dreyer
April 6, 1937

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BIOGRAPHY OF: T. M. Richardson, Jr.
3119 Classen Ave.
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

BORN: June 1, 1874, in Okalona, Miss.

PARENTS: T. M. Richardson, Mississippi
Helen M. Brown, Mississippi

My parents moved to Shackelford, Texas in 1876. My father was a lumberman in Mississippi, Texas and Oklahoma.

My father and older brother and I came to Purcell, Oklahoma ten days before the Opening. My father had opened a lumber yard there, and began having lumber shipped into Purcell. There were about ten thousand people there. We slept on the floor of the Lumber office. People there slept on the ground, in the open, on wagons in our lumber yard, in tents, or any way they could, all awaiting the day of the opening.

In order to get into restaurants to get something to eat, we had to stand in long lines and wait our turn. I was only fifteen years old then, I had lots of fun and enjoyed the excitement of the run. The town was dry and dusty at that time. A train was in town on the track in the morning before the noon-opening, so my father, brother and I got into a coach early and got a seat. The train pulled out of Purcell with the aisles in the coaches packed, people piled up on top of the coaches, on the engine, on the back of the tender, and everywhere they could get a place to hang on.

When we pulled into Oklahoma City, up to a red Depot, our train stopped at the south end of the town, and those that came into the Territory from the north stopped at the North end of town.

Many people do not know the exact size of Oklahoma City at the beginning. The exact size was as follows: North end was seventh street, east was Santa Fe, south was the Frisco Railroad and the west side was Walker Ave. It remained this same size for three years. As other property was homesteaded and in litigation about the city shortly after the opening, and no other plat was originally layed out.

As we arrived at the depot, the crowd began milling around the station. It seemed as if they thought that the depot would be in the very best part of town. A few minutes after we were off the train, several began fussing over a lot near the depot, saying to each other, "This is mine! You get out of here!" About that time one man began unwrapping his bedding, with a red blanket around it that he had a Winchester rifle wrapped up in. He picked it up and began cursing the other people and said, "Now, I staked this lot and the rest of you get out of here!" About that time a woman rushed out of the crowd and up to the man with the gun and put her arms around his neck and cried, "Oh, my dear, please don't kill anyone else." The crowd began to scatter. He did not kill anyone there but was just trying to bluff the others off of the lot.

My father staked a lot at the corner of Grand and Harvey streets and we camped on that lot that night.

My father had rigged up a team and wagon loaded with food,

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tents, and bedding, with a man-cook in the wagon that he had to drive on to the City after the Opening. They drove the shortest route across the prairie, which was rough going, but they arrived safely at the City that evening and met us so we had our supper and made out beds.

When we arrived there was about two hundred or three troops here, camped out near what is Styles and Second Street Park, who were here to keep order among the pioneers. They would drop the flag in the evening and sound "Taps".

The first night after the opening there was a fellow who lost a mule that broke loose from a wagon and the owner was walking around inquiring for his mule. Some one shouted, "Joe, here is your mule!" and the echo went out over ten thousand people that were camping there. This kept up every night as some one would start it, and the incident later came out in the paper.

We got our water that night from the river with a team hauling a barrel. There was a well at the depot, where we got our drinking water. Some fellows went over and took charge of the well and began selling the water at five cents a cup until some officers at the camp learned about it, and they went over to the well and stopped them from selling the water, and then it was free to everyone.

There was no amusement of any kind conducted when we were first here. I never saw any dogs in town the first night and there were only a few women, but they came in later.

My father opened a lumber yard here. There was not

any lumber only what came in on box-cars after the opening. My father opened up the Oklahoma State Bank here and second year opened up the first National Bank. Many call the first National Bank the first bank, but it was a state bank. We did not get a charter for a National Bank until the Second year.

We had no form of government until 1890 except military control. When the counties were named there was no provision in the Enabling Act. Mass meetings were held and Mayor and Council were elected by the militia. This election was not legal and all knew it was not, and it was ruled out by the United States Court at Muskogee. Everything stayed as it was until 1890.

The Post office was on Main Street, a stockade was thrown up to handle the mail until it was moved into a two-story building that was built. G. A. Dudler was the first Postmaster. California street was not an active street in the beginning.

There was no liquor business in Oklahoma City until 1890. The best joint was back of a butcher shop on Main Street. Saloons were opened in May 1890. The second year after the opening there was a couple got married out west of town and their friends were giving a charivari for them by shooting into the air and ringing cow-bells. Some people who heard the shooting and the noise, they thought the Cheyenne and Arapahoe Indians were coming to make a raid. All the people living west of town gathered their belongings and came piling into town at night and every one stayed there

all night. The next morning they discovered that the disturbance had been caused by the Chovivari. People were crowded into brick houses around town. My father had his house full of people. The Indians, so far as I could see, dressed about the same that they do now. About all I can say about the Indians is that they were peaceful and lazy.

The Cherokee strip at that time was occupied by cattle men and trails led from different sections into the city. As there was a lot of talk going around about the Cherokee Strip, prior to the opening, a lady from Boston who overheard the conversation on one occasion said, "Oh, You should not say Cherokee Strip, you should say, 'Cherokee Disrobe!'" She did not understand the meaning of it and was terribly embarrassed.

We began having dances here the second winter, and got our orchestra from Fort Reno. They came over in a government hack on the evening that the dance was to be held and would go back to the fort the next day. The boys in the orchestra were paid from the receipts of the dance.

I cannot recall what prices were charged at those dances.

We had good churches from the beginning and also good schools, however the schools were all private schools at first. My father bought the property on North Robinson Avenue where the Masonic Temple stands now and built a house where we lived a long time. The north and south parts of town were in dispute over how the town should be laid out as no streets were marked in the original survey. The north side hired a surveyor and the south hired another one. The

surveyors met at Grand Ave. is the cause of the jog in the city streets at this point which was never corrected. 11

In order to get to El Reno at that time we forded the river on the west Tenth St. There was a woman found dead out there and this crossing was called Dead ^{woman} Man's Crossing.

I was never down over the Chisholm Trail. Once a friend and I crossed the trail at Yukon when we rode a horse across it. It was about three hundred feet across at that time.

The country was full of game in 1889, when we came in. I recall my father told me to hitch the team to the wagon and we drove out to Lincoln Park and it was thick with quail then. We tied our team to a tree and had gone only a few hundred yards when four deer jumped up and ran off. However, we did not kill any of them. The country around Latonga was thick with wild turkeys; we used to go hunting up there.

There was a little farming begun the first year of the opening. Most of them built sod houses and dug-outs on their farms. I have seen as high as five thousand head of cattle moving north on the trail over at Yukon at one time and there was a dim wagon road. There were deep furrows made by the wagons from the travel of the road.

There was rivalry between Guthrie and Oklahoma City from the very beginning. They both fought for supremacy and for their city to have the Capitol. They used to play baseball, and both towns would get into a fight and break up before the game was over. Mr. Steele from Indiana was the first Territorial Governor before statehood. He was appointed by Theodore Roosevelt. The first capitol building was in the

Irving School Building.

I had some pictures of the early days, but loaned them all to the newspapers here, and they have never returned them to me.

My parents passed away here. We were of English and Scotch descent. There were no negroes on the opening day but gradually came in just a few at a time.

THE END