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 March 29, 1937

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BIOGRAPHY OF: Mr. W. L. Mills
 Pauls Valley, Oklahoma

BORN: December 20, 1865, in Texas

PARENTS: J. C. Mills, Illinois
 Jane Courthers, Missouri

I came from Texas to the Indian Territory in 1883.

I started farming on the Franklin farm at Leon, which is about thirty-five miles from Gainesville, Texas. Six miles east of Leon was a small town named Burneyville, and five miles southwest from Leon was Jim-town. I raised lots of corn and have sold corn for fifteen cents a bushel. I raised some cattle but the cattle-thieves were so bad around Leon that we farmers couldn't raise many. We could have raised them all right if they cattle-thieves had not stolen nearly all of them. Two of the rustlers were Frank Nation and Melvin Brown but I couldn't catch them stealing. In later years Frank Nation was caught and sent to the penitentiary at McAlester. I think Melvin Brown was killed while he was stealing some cattle. There were lots of turkeys and deer around that country.

When I was just a young man about eighteen I married a girl in Texas and a week after we were married we started out in a wagon with two mules for the Indian Territory. My wife was only seventeen years old then. It was the same as two kids starting out, but I had been making my own living since I was ten years old, so I knew what to expect in making a living for a family.

After staying on the farm of Mr. Franklin for seven years, I had saved some money and owned a fine span of mules, a wagon, and several cows. I left Leon in 1890 and moved to old McGee, two miles north of where Stratford is now. I leased a farm there and started farming again. I raised corn and garden vegetables. We always had plenty to eat. I raised my own meat-hogs and when we moved from Leon I sold all my cows except two. They were the best milk cows in that part of the country. I had sold a lot of milk and butter to the people around Leon. After leasing this place at old McGee I farmed there one year and made one crop. I didn't like that part of the country very well. The people I knew were friendly but there were not very many white people. Most of the population were Indians and my wife was afraid of them. I loaded up and left McGee. I came through Pauls Valley and stayed a few days. I intended to settle at Pauls Valley but changed my mind. My wife wanted to go back to Texas where her people lived. I liked the country around Pauls Valley, I met Zack Gardener, who owned a mill east of Pauls Valley on the Washita River. Mr. Gardener owned lots of land and wanted to lease some to me, but my wife wanted to go back to Texas, so back to Texas we went. I farmed in Texas till 1907, then we moved to Pauls Valley, Oklahoma and have farmed and lived here ever since then.

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