

MILLER, D. E.

INTERVIEW.

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Investigator, Robert W. Small
February 28, 1938.

Interview with D. E. Miller
Elackwell, Oklahoma.

I was born at Bloomington, Illinois, April 14, 1842, son of a mechanic and a cabinet maker. In 1870 Father moved to Bates County, Missouri, where he died in 1893, at the age of eighty-seven. I also went to Missouri at the same time but left there and moved to Kansas about 1872.

In 1872 I wanted to see some of the Indian country and some of the Indians so I made a trip to the Nez Perce Indian Reservation which comprised several square miles of territory, situated on the north side of the Salt Fork River and mostly east of the Chikaskia River. I found a quiet and peaceable tribe of Indians, about two hundred or not exceeding three hundred in number, living mostly in tents or tepees. A few houses had been erected for them by the Government and some few lived in them.

Their agent had his headquarters on the west bank of the Chikaskia River, about two and one-half miles east of present site of Tonkawa. He looked after their welfare and supplied them with any necessary farming tools or implements from a

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small stock that was kept at the Agency for that purpose. The Nez Perce had not been located in this section long at that time, but some were cultivating small patches of land in corn and small vegetable gardens or truck patches, but no farming was attempted on a large scale. The Nez Perce Indians seemed to be noted for their prowess and skill as hunters. At that time there was considerable wild game in some parts of the country; such as deer, antelope, turkey, prairie chicken and several miles to the west of their reservation there were some buffalo to be found.

Many of the tribe could speak English and some were very intelligent. They seemed to be religiously inclined to a degree uncommon among Indians of that period. They never caused any disturbance or annoyance among the white people of nearby Kansas, as some other tribes had done. Their health was later said to be affected by this climate and a scourge of smallpox brought death to many of the tribe and the remainder was placed on a reservation in Idaho.

In 1889, I made the race for a homestead in Old Oklahoma but owing to the fact that I found a Sooner on every desirable quarter section, I returned to my home in Kansas,

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somewhat disgusted and awaited the opening of the Cherokee Strip in 1893. At that time I entered the race from the line east of Hunnewell, Kansas, on a good horse and secured the Southwest Quarter of Section 3, Twp. 26 North, Range 1 West. In this Run I passed over the site of the present city of Blackwell, my claim being three miles south and one-half mile west.

The site of Blackwell was being surveyed and platted into a townsite under the direction of Mr. Blackwell, its founder, and Mr. Blackwell, riding a horse around over the townsite was a familiar figure in the early history of the town.

On my claim I built a little house 12 x 14 feet, with an eight foot wall on one side and a six foot wall on the opposite side, making a roof that sloped one way.

I had no cattle or hogs to bring to my claim but had three good work horses and three young horses.

I dug a well on the claim and broke up some sod and planted a small crop which was about a complete failure but I kept right on breaking out the sod land each year and planting crops, all of which made but little or

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nothing until 1897, when I harvested thirty-three bushels of wheat per acre from eighty acres, the best crop I ever raised on the farm. This year of 1897 was the turning point; prior to that time little had been made in any section of the country, but afterward the seasons became more favorable for farming and stock raising and the year of 1897 became established as the turning point or the beginning of prosperity in the Cherokee Strip country. Wheat has been the principal grain product of the Cherokee Strip, although corn and oats have been grown with much success in many years and in some of the more favored river bottom and creek bottom sections in years that were somewhat dry. Alfalfa has been grown with gratifying results in many parts of the country. The Cherokee Strip, having the Arkansas River on the east, the Cimarron on the west, the Salt Fork flowing from the northwest corner diagonally across it, and the Chikaskia coming down from the north, with their numerous tributary streams, is the basis for a large amount of rich bottom lands in all parts of the country from which abundant crop yields have been frequent.

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The upland being so near level over a large part of the country, soil erosion has left but little of its effects on the country. The soil of the Cherokee Strip has never failed to respond with abundant crop yields when moisture was sufficient; it has proved to be what the thousands of home-hungry men thought it was when they made the great race to secure a claim within its borders.

The people who settled the Cherokee Strip were unexcelled in their kindness toward each other and their generosity in every way has been outstanding. The fact that people were allowed to have beer and whiskey at any and all times in the early days contributed to the lowering of the standards of morality to some extent, but aside from that the people were unexcelled in the ways of making life pleasant to all who came in contact with them.

I was personally acquainted with Governor Seay and Governor Barnes, and knew each of them to be men of worth. Governor Barnes gave the people lots of wholesome advice during his administration and was ever ready to lend his help or influence to those in need.

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INTERVIEW WITH DAVIS MILLER

FIELD WORKER JOHNSON H. Hampton,
April 28th, 1937.

I was born September 16th 1877, out west of Antlers, Oklahoma in what was known as Jackfork County before Statehood.

My father's name was Daniel Miller and he was raised near Antlers Oklahoma. He was not in the Civil war as he was too young during the war to take sides with either of them.

My mother's name was Sallie Miller and my parents both lived near Antlers. Oklahoma, before there was any Antlers, and before the Frisco railroad was built through this country.

My grandfather, I think, was in the war for I used to hear how hard a time they used to have during the war. They used to say that they would go for several days without anything to eat, only what they would kill out on the road. They rode on horseback wherever they went, and they were ⁱⁿ the northern part of the state. I understood they had a fight with the Cherokees near Fort Smith; the Cherokees had joined the Northern Army, but the soldiers did not come down this far-they were north of us. Mother said that when they had a scalp of one of the enemy, they would pull off a big dance, they called it war dance, and