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Over-Towns

Native

Openings--Cherokee Strip

Fieldworker: Harry M. Dreyer
March 26, 1937

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BIOGRAPHY OF William Miller (White)
200 West 4th Street
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

BORN 1873 in Illinois

I was born in Illinois and came to Kansas, when a boy, with my parents. I came to Guthrie by train in 1889. I opened a Gandy Kitchen there, the first of its kind in the state. We had considerable difficulty in getting water in Guthrie at first. We had to haul our water from about twelve miles west of town. I have paid as high as 15 cents for a single cup of water. I didn't take a homestead at that time. I made the run into Chandler, Oklahoma and got a town lot and sold it later. I finally made the run into the strip and took a homestead two miles east of Perry, Oklahoma. I had a fine saddle horse and trained her every day for about a month before the run to improve her wind for the long race. So on the day of the opening, some were afoot, some had wheel bars, some teams of oxen, teams with wagons. When the shot was fired some galloped their horses at top speed. I started behind others, with saddle horse, at a slow steady gate, but as I rode along the leaders began dropping out stopping to rest their horses. So I kept passing a few at time until I could see only 4 or 5 ahead of me. But finally they let up as their ponies were out

of wind, and just waived to them as I passed them and kept going and staked my homestead 2 miles east of Perry. After improving my homestead I went to Tulsa. I shipped the first Soda Fountain into Oklahoma. I was there for about two years then came back to Guthrie to live.

I also made the run into that western country around Woodward, Oklahoma. I have seen that country then when it was nothing but a desert. There wasn't any grass or vegetation or anything. It was as bare as this floor. But I didn't care for any of that country at that time. In all my riding on my horse out there, I saw only one tree, and that was a small Cottonwood tree.

We had a lot of dry and hot weather in those days and got along pretty much with very little money, as most people were pretty much in same financial condition.

The Indians so far as I know we were not bothered by them. They were peaceful with us. Except only one that I have any knowledge of and that was a Cheyenne and Arapaho Indian, but he was around Lawton and created a little disturbance there, but not to amount to anything. There is a building at Lawton, Oklahoma named after him that stand there yet.

I came to Oklahoma City after the Capitol was moved over here and have spent most of my life in Oklahoma City since that time. I sold all my interest in Guthrie and Tulsa and have been in business here since, struggling along same as others.