

MILLER, JERRY M.

INTERVIEW

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BIOGRAPHY FORM

WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION

Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

#8105

MILLER, JERRY M.

INTERVIEW.

Field Worker's name Robert H. Boatman

This report made on (date) July 27, 193 7

1. Name Jerry M. Miller

2. Post Office Address Cole, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) _____

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month October Day 15 Year 1872

5. Place of birth Kentucky

6. Name of Father Bill Miller Place of birth _____

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Margaret Barnes Place of birth _____

Other information about mother _____

Notes or complete narrative by the field worker dealing with the life and story of the person interviewed. Refer to Manual for suggested subjects and questions. Continue on blank sheets if necessary and attach firmly to this form. Number of sheets attached _____.

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An Interview with Jerry M. Miller, Cole, Oklahoma.
By - Robert H. Boatman, Investigator.
July 27, 1937.

I was born October 15, 1872, in the state of Kentucky and came from Edmonson County, Kentucky, to Texas where I lived for some seven or eight years. In 1891 I came with my father's family to the Indian Territory. We came through by wagon and on arrival began farming near Pauls Valley.

After staying at home for some six months I was hired by Waggoner and Suggs, ranchmen near Pauls Valley, as a cow puncher. I worked as a cowboy for these two men for twenty years running cattle on the open range. There were no fences but each man knew his boundary lines. The range was abundantly supplied with grass which grew higher than a man's head and water was plentiful. It was the job of the puncher to see that the cattle did not stray and to keep them on their own range. There were sometimes when disputes arose that even caused bloodshed, over water rights or range rights. Things of this sort seldom happened but when they did they were usually with some range hog or a would-be cattle king who was unwilling to compromise on equal grounds.

The life of a cowboy was not as glamorous and easy

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going as it is sometimes pictured, and then it was not as wild as it was made to seem. In some tales every one from the cook up wears two pistols in his holster. This is not true. I wore one forty-five when on duty and shot it only when necessary. I also carried a rifle on my saddle. When I was at the ranch house my guns lay under my bunk.

Each morning I arose before daylight, saddled my pony and began the day. About sundown I bedded the cattle down and cooked my supper; beef and corn bread. All the utensils were tin as they had to be carried on horseback and my bed consisted of a single blanket.

About twice annually the cowboys went to town for supplies. Paula Valley was the nearest place and was our supply center. As these were about our only outings, sometimes we went to a dance but we generally spent our meager earnings for whiskey.

Each year several herds were driven to Dodge City, Kansas, each herd consisting of two or three thousand head of cattle and it took from thirty to forty men to drive a herd. There were no definite roads, just trails. There

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was only one definite route set and this was known as the Chisholm Trail. This was an established route that wound around through the less dense parts of the woods and passed the place where Blanchard is now located. The trail was so named because John Chisholm from Texas was the first man to drive a herd of cattle over the trail.

When the herd reached Dodge City it was loaded on cars and shipped to Kansas City, then to Chicago and then East where the cattle would be marketed.

Dodge City was at that time one of the most wicked cities in America and was known far and wide as a regular cow town. All classes of bad characters from gamblers, saloon keepers and pick-pockets to make believe preachers came to Dodge City to prey on the cowboys. Dodge City had two graveyards, one known as Boot Hill, where all the men who had been killed or had died with their boots on were buried. The other was used for those who died peacefully in bed.

The first jail in Dodge City was a hole dug in the ground, twelve to fifteen feet deep. Dangerous drunk men were lowered into this hole and allowed to remain until they

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were sober and ready to promise to leave town.

If one could visit and see Dodge City today as it was then it would be more educational than studying all the history of the city we have on record .

After I quit working for Waggoner and Suggs I worked for Amos Wate, a Chickasaw Indian. The methods used for ranching by Mr. Wate were somewhat different from those of my former employers. Mr. Wate was shrewd and calculating, but was slow to accept the white man's methods.

I worked for two years for Mr. Wate and in 1912 I married Miss Eliza Crone, daughter of a farmer who lived near Chickasha. At that time I had formed the acquaintance of a Mr. Harrison and Doc Ward who were United States Marshals.

There were few churches and the schools were subscription schools. A fee was paid for each child who attended school, generally \$1.00 per month.

I now live at Cole where I have resided for two years.