

Racehorse Used to Win Homestead

OKLAHOMA TERRITORY TERRITORIAL TALES

Bits of
History
Before
Statehood

INDIAN
TERRITORY

SEP 16 1982

At the time of the opening of the Cherokee Strip, Will T. Little of Guthrie made inquiries to find a speedy horse on which to make the race for a claim. Soon a horse named La Junta was brought to his attention.

La Junta was a racehorse that had won many and lost none, but he had a vicious temper. He was reputed to have killed two men. His owner was afraid of La Junta and the horse knew it.

When Little went to see the horse, the owner named a price of \$150 but refused to ride him, to show his gaits or even to put a saddle on him. Little

paid the price and led the animal home.

There he roped and tied La Junta for an hour-long battle. Afterward, Little released the horse, told him to follow and the horse did so.

La Junta had never been harnessed, but Little hitched him to a buggy and drove him back to the stable where he had been bought two hours earlier. Little had no more trouble with the horse.

With Little in the saddle, La Junta was entered in the race for homestead claims Sept. 16, 1893, and carried his owner to a choice quarter section in Bear Creek Valley a few miles from Perry.

A year later, Will Little was nominated for representative to the Legislature from Noble County. Up and down the county, Little rode La Junta in his campaign until nearly everyone could recognize both horse and rider. Little proudly declared, "La Junta elected me to the Legislature!"

Subsequently, Little sold La Junta for a good price to a man who intended to return him to the oval race-track. But La Junta never won another race. Such was his former bad name that grooms were afraid of him and jockeys would not ride him.