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Merrill A. Nelson, Interviewer
June 24, 1937

Interview with Mr. W. J. Olvie.
223 S. Third Street, Enid.
Born October 20, 1864, Indiana.
Father-Noah Olvie
Mother-Martha Grant.

I was born in Indiana in 1864, my father was a farmer and stockman. My mother was a good manager and noted as a cook. I came to Kansas in 1886. I planned to make the run in old Oklahoma in 1889 but did not so.

My first visit to this country was in 1888. I was checking cattle in this district and I was doing a little prospecting for a place to settle. Our duties were to round up and brand cattle and count them. Then we would turn them over their proper owners. In doing this work, I rode over a large part of Oklahoma on horseback. Yet I do not claim to be a regular cowboy as I only worked in the summer or fall. Each winter I returned to Kansas.

One place I worked on was the Tuttle Ranch twenty five miles southwest of Hunnewell, Kansas. Henry and

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George Tuttle were partners. They might be described as men of medium size, of dark complexion and were fair-minded men. I also checked cattle on the Stunkie ranch. Bill Bertsell was one of the boys. His ranch started at Hunnewell and he had thirty miles square south of this point. Tuttle's joined it on the west and south. I worked in the fall round-ups. They tried to keep the cattle closer to the ranches in the winter time.

There were two kinds of grass that the cattle liked. One was buffalo grass. This was a rather short grass which would curl and would cure itself. In fact it was better after a dry than a wet year. In wet years it would rot and the cattle did not like it. The other was the blue stem grass which grew so high that I have often tied bunches of it together over the horse's withers.

Among the other cowboys I recall were Pawnee Bill who was more of a scout as was Ranicky Bill.

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The ranchers who lived east of Cherokee used to go to the Salt Plains for their salt. They did not evaporate it, they just shoveled it up.

The Indians would eat beef mostly but also other things which are unpleasant to us, such as dog meat. The Cheyenne-Arapahoes had an agency near Canton. There was a fort there, too. As a rule there was a fort near every Indian Agency.

I used to enjoy watching an Indian ball game. The Indians were not rough in these games, not like they are at their present football games, where recently the smallest man on the Indian team weighed a hundred and eighty pounds.

The cowboys lived on beef and biscuits which they would make in a dutch oven. They would sometimes suspend a kettle over fire dogs and stew things in this way.

It was unusual for United States Marshals to make their homes in Oklahoma. While they were frequent visitors, they generally made their homes elsewhere. I heard ^{of} one

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who lived for forty-eight years before the opening at a point seven miles from Blackwell but this was unusual. The marshals never told their business.

I have seen Indians making beads. I think they used hairs to string them on. I was frequently at the Ponca Agency and had considerable dealing with the Indians. I made a number of friends among them. The ones I recall were Scabby Bull and John Starr. They were Western Indians. The old Ponca Agency was just a large wooden building twenty-five by forty feet in dimensions. Old Rabbit was another Western Indian. I gave him a wagon load of melons which he appreciated as he never had seen or tasted any. I also gave them roasting ears with which they were more familiar.

Dick Yeager and Black were horse thieves. They were here at the time of the opening and just after. They had^a hideout in the Glass Mountains. They held my brother up on Turkey creek, west of Waukomis. We had

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been over to Enid to get a load of lumber in December. We were building a shack before he went back to Kansas. We had twenty dollars and sixty cents. They took the twenty dollars and left ^{my brother} the sixty cents. Both went on. My brother saw Yeager on his death bed and they recognized each other. Black was killed in the Glass mountains. Yeager was caught in Chisholm Creek east of Waukomis. I never heard of Ranicky Bill in Jungle Caves.

The Chisholm trail went where Grand Avenue is now. There was a southwestern trail which commenced at a point north of here and branched on toward Anadarko. There may have been a cut off from here to Enid.

Government Springs Park, when I first saw it, had no ravine, no lake, no springs. I saw it ^{from} about where the Rock Island tracks are now. The trail did not go right to it as it was merely a spring. There is a monument there. A bunch of cottonwoods marked the place. There was only a ^{half} barrel sunk down in the ground. Water seeped

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in and overflowed the barrel. This was in 1888.

I never was much of a hunter. I did hunt and kill a few deer.

The Sante Fe got a franchise to stretch a line southwest through western Oklahoma, through Woodward. They got very little for this. The more generally used road went from Arkansas City to Purcell.

My father made the run into the Cherokee Strip but secured no claim. I started at the same place, the Three Lone Cottonwoods near Lacey, and managed to secure a claim near Ames. The place I started from was about ten miles west and a little north of Hennessey. We had a tent in which we slept the first night. My brothers and brother-in-law also secured claims. I built a log house and they built little shacks, the lumber running vertically.

We came back in the spring making quite a caravan. We made the trip in three days. There were four or five wagons, forty head of cattle and twelve persons in the

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outfit. The country was fit for nothing except grazing.

We started a church on my place that fall in a brush arbor. Later it was moved to a nearby school house. We also started a county fair.

I made improvements on my farm, building it up till I had one hundred head of logs, forty to fifty head of cattle and from ten to twelve horses.

One of the finest characters and best known of that country was old Judge Hughes. He was a banker, and his judgeship included all of Good County which in those days included Major and a lot of other territory. He served at Alva, and was ^a just man and also ran a store.