

- OLIVIE, W. J. (Mrs.)

INTERVIEW

#4736/6

OLVIE, MRS. W. J.

INTERVIEW.

Form A-(S-149)

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BIOGRAPHY FORM

4726.

WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION

Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

Field Worker's name Merrill A. Nelson.

This report made on (date) July 3, 1937. 1937

Name Mrs. W. J. Olvie.

Post Office Address Enid, Oklahoma.

Residence address (or location) 223 South Third Street.

DATE OF BIRTH: Month August Day 7 Year 1879.

Place of birth Bunker Hill, Illinois.

Female - white.

Name of Father Albert Jones. Place of birth Bunker Hill, Illinois.

Other information about father See Story.

Name of Mother Mary Drummond. Place of birth Bunker Hill, Illinois.

Other information about mother See Story.

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 14.

Merrill A. Nelson,  
Interviewer.  
July 3, 1937.

An Interview With Mrs. W. J. Olvie,  
223 South Third Street, Enid, Okla.

#### SETTLING THE NEW LAND.

I was fifteen years old when I came to Oklahoma from Illinois. The children caught lice on the train and I was sick when I arrived, otherwise the trip was uneventful, and the prospects were small for much adventure, but as soon as we hit Oklahoma things began to happen. When I reached Hennessey, accustomed to the settled ways of Illinois, I thought I had reached the end of the world. But as soon as I reached the homestead in Old Oklahoma, I saw a deer peering at me through the trees. I thought it was a rabbit. I was to see more of these beautiful creatures and others not so pleasant as my story will show.

My father had tried to secure a homestead near Enid, but failing in this, he secured one near Ames, with very little trouble. He did find a man on his homestead but he and Father had a conference and the man left without any trouble. Soon we filed. This could be done for fourteen dollars at Enid or Alva. But the time of proving up was difficult.

My uncle had a place seven miles southwest of Enid. Coming there I saw a snake as big around as my arm, soon after my arrival. Also on the way from Drummond I crossed a prairie dog town, which was an interesting sight to me.

Settlers had funny outfits. With tubs tied on to the bottoms of wagons, skillets and coffee pots hanging from the back, kids with heads sticking out along the side and a cow tied to the rear, they made a picture. One wagon of this type had a coffee pot dangling from the rear.

#### SOCIAL LIFE BEGINS.

A young, active girl of fifteen was not going to be idle and so when I was adjusting myself to the situation with lots of interesting things to do. I had a pony called 'Snip'. We used to ride three miles after the mail. The preacher's daughter would go with me and we used to race our horses, 'Badge', a bald face, was hers. One day when "Snip" was eating out in front, I saw him jerk his head. I ran in the house screaming for the men and women to come out for he had been bitten by a rattler. I did not want to lose that horse, for I rode it to Sunday School. A big knob formed on the end of his nose like a

bail, in a jiffy, but we gave him treatment and medicine and he soon recovered. Our horse would also pull water from our deep well. I would tie a rope on to the saddle horn. We lifted barrels of it this way. One girl rode a mule on the parties but I never did.

One time, a herd of five hundred cattle came along. On each side were cowboys, singing and shouting. These cowboys not very busy when they came by our house as we had a large unfenced wheat field we were afraid the cattle would get into. They were wisely handled however and did us no harm. The way they first made roads ~~was~~ to plough the furrows in the direction they wanted to go. Sometimes there were stumps in the furrows and when you hit one of these it would almost throw you out of the wagon.

We had a Dunkard church down by Ames. The Dunkard women wore long flared skirts and tight bodices and little black hats. When they prayed they put white lace caps on their heads. They used to baptize converts in a way that seemed queer to us. Stating that Christ never did anything backwards, they would baptize forwards, first asking the candidates to kneel. Their men, of course, wore long whiskers.

## A PIONEER ROMANCE.

My father lived a mile south of the home of the parents of my future husband. One day I heard a wagon and saw Dr. Olvie driving by, as the main trail went close to our place. He was going to see his brother who lived on south. He went often after that to see his brother, and perhaps to see me also. It was natural for us to get interested in each other.

One day he went to Alva and bought me an engagement ring. He then went to Enid for there was no place closer to get a marriage license. We were married in this room in this little old log cabin. (Shows a picture). I used my engagement ring for my wedding ring.

They had a charivari for us shortly after. They shouted 'prosperity' to the Olvie family and banged on plough shares. My husband told the crowd if they would leave us alone he would treat them. They did so and the next morning we found a shingle on the chimney where they had tried to smoke us out.

We settled in a little log cabin two and three quarter miles west of Ames. Then shortly after we built this frame

shanty (shows picture), one evening a herd of deer ran through our place. There were about fifteen of them. They made a beautiful picture. The way we built the roof, we would lay small log rails over the roof, then lay hay on that then some sod. Then more sod crosswise, and then loose dirt and more hay on top of that, with dirt on top.

Sometimes it would rain. If it rained hard, small pieces of mud would fall on our faces and we would duck quickly under the covers. We had paper curtains, cupboards of boxes, and a table made of two logs jammed into the wall, upon which rough boards were laid and a brace to the floor from the end farthest from the wall.

Almost a year later when I had my first baby, Dr. Mathis took the case. There was no hospital and no highly trained staff. He used to visit his patients on horseback and had a medicine chest fastened to his saddle. My baby, Henry, was the second one he had delivered, as he was just out of medical school. However, he became a good doctor, and even a banker. His relatives helped him spend his money, which preyed on his mind so that later he committed suicide. A sad ending for a good man.

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We were always afraid of fire. Two of our houses burned down. One contained an eight hundred dollar piano. One of these houses was my parents' home, made of logs. Sometimes there were prairie fires, also. The men would plough a circle around our houses. They would whip the horses to make them circle the work as soon as possible. We would also get axes and try to beat out the flames.

One time our fence which was made by cutting down trees and putting the branches so close together that they turned the top, caught fire. The blue stem grass grew so high that when it caught fire it would be dangerous. One time the river bank caught on fire. The flames shot so high in the air that you could see to pick a pin up at our place which was some distance away. But in this case there was so much cultivation and so many roads between that we felt no danger.

There were all kinds of wild animals in our neighborhood. One day we saw panther tracks. Wild cats were not uncommon. There was an old black wolf that they cornered in our corral. A grey wolf also came up to our chicken park a number of times, and with the help of my dog, who



would not venture too close, I managed to kill him.

Another time, my husband saw something. "Don't move, bring me my gun," he said. I did so and he fired killing a big bull snake as big as my upper arm with still larger places along his body where he had swallowed eggs. Sometimes the men and women would go hunting for coyotes.

Another time I found a snake in the hen house, lying on a nest. We both beat hasty retreat. When we went to pick broom corn, the corn lice would get on us. One time I heard a funny noise like a fice dog barking. I looked and saw a coyote looking longingly at some chickens up in a tree. Buffalo, too, had been there before us. They would make a circle as big as a house, protecting their young.

There were friendly animals, too. One time I saw a mother deer with a little deer on each side of her and it was a lovely sight. Another time we shot an old squirrel in a tree. It turned out that the creature had young ones, which we kept for pets. One of my boys still wore dresses. One of the squirrels would climb up his dress, and onto his shoulder, and take little marble candies or cookies.

away from him. We also had little green lizards and grey swifts.

The goat is a peculiar animal. He will get up so high he will break his leg jumping down. If you want to get in a wagon, he is anxious to help you as I saw one about to do one day. A rocker was in front of the dresser. The billy-goat climbed in this, saw another goat in the mirror and was about to finish him when I came in. At another time, I found a goat on the bed. Again, one tramped on and overturned a pan of my biscuits. When we came in the screen door, the goats would jump out the window, even if they had to take the window frames with them.

Cooking was quite a problem. My husband's mother would take peanuts and parch them and use them for coffee, as we were unable to purchase coffee. He would mix pie melons and sand plums and make a tart pie. We would pickle small melons. Even goat meat and doves were parts of our fare. We would mash sweet potatoes and use them as filling for pies. We would call these pumpkin pies. We would fry green tomatoes and bell wheat.

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To go back to coyotes. We could often hear them till their howls would make your hair rise. I discovered that they would bark more than usual because of a wind coming up. Their barking would often be followed by a rain.

When our husbands' pants wore out, we would take the back sides and sew canvas onto them and make moccasins for ourselves. We would also make gloves out of these pieces and we made baby shoes from the upper parts of high topped shoes which were then worn by all.

For a mattress, a tick of prairie hay covered by a feather bed was considered good. One morning when I was making the bed I found a big long centipede, under the bolster, just where my head had been.

I also had an old fashioned washing machine with a cross bar across the top, cupboards of boxes and other home made furniture.

#### INDIANS AND OUTLAWS.

One day, my husband and I visited the country north of the North Canadian River west of Canton. There were Black Wolf, Scabby Bull and other Indians there. Scabby

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Bull had two wives. They invited me to stay for supper, but when I saw what they were serving and how they were serving it I declined. They had something which looked like soup and they were stirring it with the tail of a cat or something that looked like that.

We attended some of the Indian dances. These were dances in which the men and women dance separately.

They played on instruments resembling babies' rattles. Indians used to go by our place in caravans. Out there in the western part of the state I saw some Indian graves. One, I recall was under ground. There was a kettle, a skillet, and a horse bridle near the grave. I also saw one buggy top in a tree. They would stop at our place for fodder and they would eat unpleasant things.

We used to attend white dances also. The men would move all the furniture out in the yard so that there would be room. I used to ride behind my husband on a little black pony to these affairs. Calico was considered very good and sunbonnets were no disgrace. Sometimes we went bareheaded.

Dick Yeager and Black were two outlaws about the time of the opening of the Strip. They were really horse thieves.

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Some of those men like Ranicky Bill were not really out-laws, just a little tough. My uncle George Jones was in a fight with Black. He managed to get his shoes and hat. I saw the horse of Yeager. He stopped at our place, two and three quarter miles east of Ames. Father and I were driving in a wagon, near home. A posse came by later and was looking for him and they frightened me. A few days later he was caught.

This uncle George was the oldest of us settlers. He had settled in Old Oklahoma earlier than we did. Yeager had it "in for him". He had it in for Yeager, as he was an officer and was a United States Marshal. His boys turned out to be preachers. This may be due to the fact that his grandfather was a minister. There was a little church at Lacey but most of us would go to arbor meetings and sit on stumps. We would drive along way to attend these meetings and to a dance on a platform in the black jacks.

#### TRAILS.

The Cantonment Trail came out from a point a little south of Pond Creek to a point near the three lone cotton-

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woods from which my husband made the run into the Cherokee Strip. Another trail, a little farther south was the Tuttle Trail. There was still another trail from Kiowa to Woodward. I forgot what they called that.

Near Watonga is a canyon where my father's second wife used to live. Outlaws would lie down on top of this dugout, while she cooked for them, and she drew water out of that spring. It was a beautiful place.

WORK.

From Southard where the gypsum mills are, we would drive over to Canton. At one place in the road, when we rolled over it, there was a hollow sound. We were riding over a cave or the course of an underground river perhaps. The lady with me called attention to it.

One of the first places where gypsum was discovered was on a farm we were cultivating which was two and three quarter miles west and one mile south of Ames. The gypsum there was soft and bluish. It had not turned to rock. We took it to the house and plastered with it. It made a good wall finish when mixed with water. Later they began to grind up the hard gypsum and make commercial

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plaster. This was after they found out that gypsum is valuable.

In the fall of 1901, my husband worked on the Frisco, from Enid to Aurika. The bridge across the Cimarron was on this place, where we found the gypsum. My husband's father worked seventeen or eighteen hired teamsters.

Negroes laid the steel rails. In those days, the women often helped the men in the fields. I have cut Kaffir corn, pulled maize, run a hayrack, ridden a lead horse for the binder, ridden a cultivator and ridden a riding plough. I have also done other farm work.

We were among the first to bring a thrasher into this district. It was a horsepower affair. You stand in the center and keep the horse moving in a circle with a whip.

My husband and I farmed for some time. Then, he was undertaker in Ames for seven years and after that he was grain buyer, three years at Ringwood and fourteen at Ames, but he lost his health and had to quit five years ago, when he came to Enid. Muskogee was our other trading point. I have five daughters and two sons. One of my daughters

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keeps up the traditions of the pioneer woman in her activities in a modern way by sowing wheat with a tractor on a six hundred and forty acre farm.