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BRACKETT, ALICE McCANN. INTERVIEW 13657

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Journalist, Hazel B. Greene,
April 22, 1938.

Interview with Mrs. Alice McCann-Armstrong-
Brackett,
Boswell, Oklahoma.

My father, J. H. McCann, was a Tennessean and I was born February 24, 1890 in Nashville, Tennessee. I was just a little thing when we went by wagon from Nashville, Tennessee, to Chicota, Texas. Papa had always "sawmilled" and had good teams and maybe we had more than one wagon, but about all I remember about the trip was driving the wagon up on the boat to cross the Mississippi River. We stayed over in Texas a few years and I was still little when Father decided to move over into the Indian Territory. So he loaded up about two wagons with us and another family and our household goods and five more wagons with lumber and hitched oxen to them and we struck out for the Indian Territory. I remember we had a little Jersey cow, our milch cow, and she would not lead behind the wagon, so Papa yoked her with an extra ox he had and put them to one of the wagons and she walked right along then. We came over on a log wagon. It was in the late summer and the grass

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was as high as the wagon bed. It was the prettiest sight I ever saw. All that tall grass waving and the trees and flowers. We were thrilled ecstatic. We had to camp out one night, then we children got scared. We just expected the Indians to come and scalp us any minute. We could hear the owls hooting and the frogs hollering, but after a while when nothing had happened we got over our fright and sat around the fire and roasted peanuts until late bedtime. We were too excited to think of going to sleep for a long time. But in the day time we had the most fun riding in the log wagon drawn by oxen. I cannot recall the name of the other family. But anyway we came on over and put up two tents and a smoke house and lived in those until Papa got our house built. You see he had brought five loads of lumber with us when we came and he put up the first residence that was ever built in the town of Boswell. That house is standing today. A story and a half high. I guess there were hundreds of tents. There were restaurants in tents, rooming houses in tents, or so they called them. They were simply cots put up in tents and rented out, mainly to workers on the new railroad that was being

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surveyed for and the dump being built for it. Papa put up his house a little at a time so that it was cold weather when we got moved into it and in that house Brother John Crain, a Baptist minister, organized the first Baptist Church in the town with twelve charter members, and they met there regularly until a little boxed church could be built. The barber shops and stores were in tents.

I remember when we first came over here, there were trees and lots of underbrush, or small bushes, just thick, and one day out close to our tents my little sister and I were making a play house. There were so many toughs that our parents didn't let us out of sight for very long at the time. So Papa called me. Klinor answered and said, "Here we are, Papa, out in the bushes but we have not found any money growing on them yet." That was what we had heard our older folks say, that money just grew on bushes over in the Indian Territory, and my father and my mother's brother, Mose Wilson, came over here to make money in the furniture business. They put in a furniture store and did make

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money for a while, then Papa went back to "sawmilling" near Shaky Springs about three miles south of Boswell. Shaky Springs is the wonder spot of Choctaw County. One can stand and shake the ground around a large area close to the springs and one can take a chunk of wood and put it in some places in the sand and it will gradually go clear out of sight. There is a dance pavilion there now and people go there picnicking.

We lived in a couple of tents and in the smoke house until the house was built and I remember one night a dance was going on about two blocks away from us and we heard a commotion and shots and some fellow running his horse and shooting and yelling. The dance was on the bare ground floor of Bill Downings blacksmith shop and a fellow was killed there that night and the man running off was the killer but nobody dared to go after him. We didn't attend any of the dances. And killings were of almost weekly occurrence. They were so common that I don't even remember the name of that man who was killed that night, but I remember seeing the streets laid out and

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trees cut and stumps being blasted out. Now that was before the railroad reached Boswell. That was in the Fall of 1900. The first doctor in Boswell was Dr. Lynch. He came from Mayhew there. I remember when a little girl twelve years old died, she was Katie Downing, daughter of Bill Downing, the blacksmith. They just took her out and buried her in a nice spot and that was the beginning of the cemetery. The city bought the plot after she was buried there.

The first justice of the peace was Sam Downing and my father, J. H. McCann, was the first mayor and Miss Core Simmons, first post mistress. I cannot remember who the first city marshal was. I do recall dimly Papa taking us down to see the first train come through the town. Everybody in town was there. And once a rumor was out that the Snake Indians were going to raid the town and run the white people out and burn the town. And that very night fire broke out. Those days the signal or fire alarm was the shooting of guns. Some one began shooting guns as a fire alarm but nobody went to that fire. That house simply burned to the ground because everybody

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was at home hiding because they thought it was the Snake Indians. The Snake Indians never came on a raid though. Williamson & Blocker built the first brick building and put in a general merchandise store. S. C. Boswell went in with them and it was called the Boswell store then.

In 1903 Mrs. Tom Yeager started a subscription school in her home and she had so many pupils that they had to take turn about sitting at the desks while others sat on the stair steps. They sat at the desks to rest after sitting on the stairs. I finished the Seventh grade and got married at fourteen. I became a mother when I was fifteen and a half years old and went back to school and finished the Tenth grade. I married Louis Armstrong. He was killed in an automobile accident in 1918 near Whitesboro, Texas. Our son is Ralph Armstrong of Vinita. He is thirty-two years old. My present husband is Dan Brackett, a druggist here.