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Field Worker: **Jerome M. Emmons**
June 4, 1937.

Interview with Mrs. S. L. Johnson
621 South Seminole Street,
Okmulgee, Oklahoma.

I made the run into Alva, Oklahoma, in 1893, from Wichita, Kansas. I was 35 years of age. The Government had sent my husband to Alva as postmaster. Mr. Johnson had come down before me with a car load of material to help build a postoffice. On the same lots were to be a jail and a land office. The furniture for the postoffice came from the Wichita postoffice.

I was to come down in the run on the Santa Fe train, which had just one car. When I arrived at Kiowa, on the line, with two small children, I found no place to stay until the opening. The people had wagons, tents, or hotel rooms but I found no sleeping quarters. I then decided to get back on the train and try to go through. When we got to Alva, I got off and the soldiers never saw a woman and two small children-- and so I was a 'sooner.'

I joined my husband and we lived in a shack. When the run began we climbed upon a box-car, containing furniture we had brought from Wichita, to see the mad scramble for land. The people came in wagons, buggies, on horseback, and some afoot. I wanted a town lot and went out with one child ~~in my arms~~ and one tagging to my dress. I just placed my sunbonnet on the stake when I found the one I wanted. However, I believe it was ~~the Annheuser-Busch~~ Brewing Company that finally got the lot I wanted. Some people filed, or rather staked, what was to become the street and so lost their lots.

All lumber for the postoffice was carried up from the railroad, a half mile from the building site. The government trucks couldn't be used except for the soldiers' use and no other transportation was available, so it had to be carried by hand.

Water in town was sold for five cents a cup.

Later, wells were drilled. Most of the water there was ~~was~~ hard or gyp water.

Tents were put up immediately. Groceries, lawyers' offices, barber shops, etc., as well as homes, were in tents. In a short time crude buildings were constructed of lumber for this use.

Very few people had any money, but in a short while everyone was prosperous. Crops, cattle, etc., were the source of their income.

My husband had a family to take care of and I also had a family of five to help take care of. We always had jobs and I could teach school if necessary. We had good times then with our school entertainments, socials, plays and the like.

Our food was shipped in from Kiowa and other places around. We saw quite a few deer and we had quail fairly often. Wild plums were sold us by people wishing to supplement their earnings.

We sold some of the furniture brought there by us. My best table was used in a lawyers' office and my range at a cafe. We used a coal stove for heat and gasoline for cooking purposes.

We purchased a claim from a person leaving, which we stocked with cattle. At one time we had at least three hundred head. For some time we used three sections of school land, which was tax free. We stayed in Alva for seven years and moved to Okmulgee in 1900.

At the fairs in Alva Indians were sometimes invited to give their stomp dances and play the Indian ball game. They were Cheyennes and Arapahoes, as I remember.

We moved to Okmulgee just before the railroad came through in September, 1900.

My husband wanted to start a bank, but as there were no deeds to anything he decided against it. He had brought several carloads of lumber with him, so started a lumber yard, the first in Okmulgee. The people stole so much that he gave it up. He liked the insurance business, so started an agency here. We had sold our cattle when we moved, but rented some land from Captain Berryhill for a ranch.

The first bank, I believe, was the First National, run by a man named McClellan. This is now the Citizens Bank.

The main stores were, Parkinson, Severs, and Horton Bros.

When we moved here my son, Hugh, went to West Point. During the war he set up the draft system. In recent years he headed the N.R.A. setup of President Roosevelt's. They knew he could do it because he put over the draft.

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My other two sons are, Alex and Mead Johnson. Their grandmother on my side was from New York and, I believe, near **Syracuse**; their grandfather's people Quakers from Illinois.

Oh yes, we bought half a lot from Dick Farr, staying with him until our home was finished. We had the first doorbell, window screens, and the first plastered house in town.