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Field Worker: Chester A. Lamb,  
June 16, 1937.

Interview with F. F. Davis,  
Anadarko, Oklahoma.

Born Illinois

Parents F. F. Davis, father,  
Illinois.  
Emily Rody, mother,  
Illinois.

Mr. Davis has been a resident of Anadarko since the Opening and is one of the pioneer business men.

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A group of us left Kansas City, Kansas, in July, 1901, to come to Oklahoma to draw land in this new country. Not anyone in our bunch was lucky enough to draw.

We first went to El Reno, Oklahoma, where the drawing was to take place. My wife and I started up a tent restaurant in El Reno. We had just run this restaurant a short time when we all decided to come down to the Opening at Anadarko. The main reason we chose Anadarko, was that very nearly everyone around El Reno seemed to be going to Hobart and Lawton. So we thought we would have a much better chance if we would all go to Anadarko.

It took us very nearly all day to come from El Reno down to Anadarko on the train. There were trains all along the tracks full of people, and by the time we had switched around it was night when we reached Anadarko. The train we were on was crowded to capacity.

On arriving at Anadarko, we went directly to Ragtown. This part of town was located where the Fair Grounds now stands. There were tents all over the pasture. We had no place to stay as we had left our tent and equipment at El Reno. There were two women in our group, my wife and a girl we brought with us from Kansas City, by the name of Theresea Solman. There were several tent rooming houses with cots in them, but there was no place for a woman to stay. I asked one man who ran one of these places and he said they had plenty of room for men but that no provision had been made for women.

I finally began to get hungry so I asked my wife if she wanted anything to eat. She said she had not thought anything about it. The girl who was with us said she was hungry, so I went to a little tent restaurant and we ordered something to eat. I asked the fellow if he had a place where the woman could stay and he said No.

And then he remembered having a tent, and I asked him if I could borrow it, and he said I could. So I took this tent and put it up. We had no bed clothes nor the bed, so I went up on the hill where they were selling hay and bought a bale of hay. I rolled this bale down hill to where our tent was located. I then took it apart and spread it out so that we could sleep on it. That was our first night in Anadarko, and our first bed. The fellow I borrowed the tent from was Tyre Baker, and he later was one of the first sheriffs of Caddo County.

Sale:

On the day of the lot sale I did not buy any lots, but two of the fellows who came with us from Kansas City did. They bought two lots. They later got into quite an argument as to who had the best lots. They later got into quite an argument as to who had the best lots. Their names were Gregory and Burkson. Mr. Burkson had bought a lot on what is now Broadway, and Mr. Gregory bought one on Main Street. They bet one another \$25.00 as to who had the best lot. The way they were going to prove this was by offering me one of these lots on which to put my

tent restaurant. The lot I chose was to be the best lot, and I was to know nothing of the water.

Just as soon as the lot sale was over, there was a proclamation issued for everyone to get out of Ragtown. Well, I started to move down where the city now stands. I remember how tall the corn was when I started down town to find me a business location. I believe it was the tallest corn and the best corn I have ever seen. Well, when I got to town I met these two men and they offered me their lots to lease. I took the lot belonging to Gregory, so Burkson paid him off the \$25.00 bet. I remember when I first started to clean off the lot so I could put up my tent, I didn't have a hoe, but there was a fellow across the street who was cleaning off his lot. He had some beer equipment and whiskey, and was going to start a saloon. I went over and asked him if I could borrow his hoe, so that I could chop the corn off of my lot. He said, the hoe did not belong to him but he would loan it to me. It seemed to me that there were thousands of people in Anadarko at that time of every kind and type.

My restaurant was full all the time. Just a few weeks later I received word from Kansas City, that the place where we had stored our furniture before coming to the new country had burned down. So I had to go back and get things straightened out with the insurance company. I told my wife we had better close up the restaurant and go back to Kansas City, and then return when we had everything adjusted. She refused to do this. She said she was making \$25.00 a day clear running the restaurant, and she was not going to return to Kansas City. I decided before I left that I would build a more permanent structure for our business. So I got some clapboard to use instead of the tent. I did not like to leave my wife here, as things were pretty wild at that time. There was much gambling and drinking going on. But nothing to do but what she would stay. I returned to Kansas City that fall and did not get things straightened out until spring.

I remember the first bank that was ever in Anadarko. It was called the First National Bank. They kept the money in a tool box, and this box set upon a platform, outside of the tent. There were guards on duty all night and day, guarding the money. People who wished

to deposit their money could put the money in this box, and they were given a receipt, and it was run just like a bank.

Note:

Mr. Davis was quite active in the business and civic affairs of the city in the early day. He is a past vice-president of the Oklahoma Bottlers' Association. He has been in the bottling business here since 1905.