

EVANS, FANNIE

INTERVIEW

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Journalist, L. W. Wilson,  
January 21, 1938.

Interview with Mrs. Fannie Evans,  
207 East Oak Street,  
Drumright.

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I am of white descent and I was born January 10, 1863, in Edmonson County, Kentucky. My parents were Mr. William Winfield and Mrs. Sarah Ann Doyle Winfield.

My husband, John Evans, and I lived in Missouri, but could see opportunities in the Indian Territory and with a ~~camp outfit we started to make the journey into Oklahoma.~~

In a covered wagon, drawn by two mules, the trip was started. With no highways, it was necessary for us to travel dim wagon roads and trails. Often times the roads were so dim it was necessary to follow blazed trees.

There were no bridges and all streams were either forded or ferried.

The days and nights on the road were long and dreary. We usually prepared our meals before dark but kept the fire aglow all night to ward off wild animals and "varmint" from attacking our camp. We had read so many Indian stories

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before coming into the Territory about how the Indians would scalp the white people that it made us always on the alert.

The Indians never bothered us nor did any wild animals.

After ten days travel out of Missouri we came to Red Fork, near Tulsa. We were now in the rugged hill country and the Arkansas and Cimarron Rivers had to be crossed and recrossed. It required three days and nights out of Red Fork to reach the village of Jennings.

We traveled to Pemeta, Bristow and other parts in that vicinity for eight or nine years and finally located in the valley between two hills. This is now the city of Drumright. We left Missouri in 1901 and have lived at Drumright since 1910.

My husband died a few years ago.

Oil wells were being drilled in this section and at last a discovery well of the Drumright pool of today was drilled in 1912.

John and I came here in 1910, before there were stores of any kind. We had to drive to Jennings in an old spring wagon to buy flour and other food, and the roads were so bad one could have walked in about the same length of time.

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We owned one of the first rooming-houses in Drumright and maybe you think we did not work. I washed every day. I would get up and have my laundry started before breakfast then I would spend the day washing. I would iron until nearly midnight. Besides, I would bake all day long between times, and I would hardly get the bread baked before somebody would be there to get it. Sometimes I would work until nine o'clock at night before I would have time to sit down and eat. Too, I had thirty-two beds to make up each morning, but I made money.

Besides making my living, I banked \$2600.00 from laundry alone. There were no banks in Drumright and I would drive to Jennings and bank my money.

When I would get up in the morning I would dress just like I was going to town because every five minutes there was somebody at the door and you know a housekeeper had to look her best. Then I would go back to my washings. Why, I have washed in better silk dresses in those days than I have got now.

Then, we got the first telephone system. The switch board was installed in our hotel. The building stood two

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doors east of Max-Lewis grocery where Mary Dennis Cafe is today.

This is Pansy Curr, the telephone operator, on the left. This is I with the large picture hat and my husband John is seated in the chair. (photograph shown)

#### First Telephone Company.

Drumright boomed with telephone companies; there were two phone exchanges in 1913.

Mr. W. W. Oder, who owned the phone exchange in Cushing, built a small exchange in Drumright and opened it, serving only twelve customers. He had previously connected the two towns with a long distance telephone line.

About the same time Mr. C. Bornman, owner of the phone exchange at Tecumseh, built a small exchange on the east side of Drumright. This was on the opposite side of town from the Oder's exchange.

Mr. Oder sold his telephone exchange in 1915 to the Pioneer Telephone and Telegraph Company, formerly the Southwestern Bell Telephone Company. It was that same year that the Pioneer Company bought the Bornman's exchange.

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The first telephone exchange, the Oder exchange, was located in a typical early oil town residence. The floors and walls of the building were made of one by twelve, yellow pine boards. The inside was neither plastered nor papered.

When the Pioneer Company bought both exchanges, the office was moved to the second floor of a brick building, three doors east of the present location.

In June, 1917, the Pioneer Telephone & Telegraph Company purchased both companies with a hundred and ninety-eight subscribers. Today there are a thousand and ninety-two subscribers. The peak of the telephone business in Drumright was when there were twelve hundred and thirty-seven telephones in use.

Mrs. Vivian Sylvester, now chief operator, has the longest record as an employee, with eighteen years of service with the present company.

#### History of Drumright.

Arising from a small settlement shifted about during the early days with the discovery of new oil wells here and there, Drumright is now a live, modern city. As

Drumright looks back over the twenty-seven years of its growth, it remembers days of hardship; when Main Street was a bog, when preachers carried "shootin irons," and when pioneers were establishing oil fields.

Many of the founders of the city still live in its vicinity. The city struggled from a small oil camp, Tuekerson Camp, to become the active oil center of the state. Many cannot realize today the up-hill struggle it was for these pioneers to establish law and order.

#### Wheeler Camp.

The beginning of the city of Drumright dates back to 1911-1912, when an enterprising man named Wheeler established his camp. This camp was only a small community and the houses were only shacks and lean-tos.

This camp or settlement was located northwest of the present city of Drumright. It lived for only a few months because little stores and homes were constructed in the place where the city is located now and families began to move to the present site of Drumright.

This new settlement became known as the Fulkerson Camp, after J. W. Fulkerson an extensive land owner in this

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section at this date.

The people were perfectly satisfied in the Fulkerson Camp and it is possible that the Main Street of the present city of Drumright would have been on the southern edge, had it not been for a man who owned adjoining land to that of Mr. Fulkerson on the north.

This man saw the town growing south from his land instead of toward him. He conceived the idea of having his land platted into lots, streets and alleys and planned to offer certain inducements to have the people take up his bargains.

He built a number of fairly good houses for an oil boom town on his lots. Then, he offered all houses for sale or rent at low prices and it was not more than a month until everyone of his houses and lots were sold or rented.

#### Ragtown.

The settlement was still unnamed but the boomers and workers called the place "Ragtown." There were not as many tents as one might expect but probably that was on account of its shacks and because of the way it was "slung



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together."

Two men, Aaron Drumright and J. W. Fulkerson, both living here, owned nearly all the land where Broadway runs now.

Mr. Fulkerson owned the present Ragtown and Mr. Drumright opened up an addition which was called the Drumright Addition. These two gentlemen were among the signers of a petition, asking that the settlement be given a post office and a name. The settlement was named Drumright as was the post office.

In a short time a building was erected for a hotel known as the "Blue Goose" and was operated by Mrs. Estella Ely, better known to the people as Grandma Ely.

The Blue Goose Hotel was destroyed many years ago. This old building could not feed and house the employees from Slick, who came to work in the oil fields.

The world knows of the Charles Urschel kidnapping case at Oklahoma City of a few years ago.

Many of the citizens of Drumright recall the time that Chas. Urschel and Tom Slick started their career in Drumright.

Urschel and Slick, with their men, camped on a small creek just across the street from the Blue Goose Hotel.

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They finally started drilling and bringing in oil fields.

#### Townsite Chosen.

The townsite was laid out by a committee of persons chosen by the towns people. Mr. L. E. Gibson, then owner of a rooming house where the "Blaze Bar" is now located, was one of the committeemen.

The committee decided on a site for the post office which was to be obtained. A building at this time was situated on Tiger Hill where mail was received and sent out, but this office was very inconvenient and lacked proper facilities.

In order to secure a post office site the committee had to lay out plans for the town and choose a name for it. This was in 1912.

#### The Settlement Named.

Mr. L. E. Gibson, as chairman of the committee, urged that Drumright should be the name of the town, due to the unceasing efforts of Aaron Drumright in the establishment and growth of the village.

Mr. Fulkerson's name was considered but on account of disagreement in various civic enterprises, his name was

dropped. Drumright was the name submitted to Washington, D. C., on the petition and when it came back with a post office grant the national officials had christened the buzzing, thriving, little oil camp "Drumright.

It was six months or more before construction of the building was started.

#### City Mayor Needed.

Before the town had a mayor it was governed by a Board of Trustees, with a president of the board acting as City Manager. This was a man named O. C. Elliot.

It was finally voted to elect a mayor and the Board of Trustees were to advise him. The election was held and W. E. Nicodemus, who has since passed away, became the first mayor of Drumright.

#### First City Marshal Killed.

The first city marshal of Drumright was a man named Cook. Mr. Cook was killed in a gun battle as related by several as follows:

A call was received at the local police headquarters that some hijackers were raising havoc over in the west part of town.

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Cook left to curb the affair and he proceeded west down Main Street to a point where the railroads now lie. When he arrived at the point of trouble the men he was seeking opened fire on him.

A one-armed man named "Hooky Miller" fired the shot that ended the life of Mr. Cook.

There were different opinions as to who killed Marshal Cook. Some thought the telephone call was a frame-up on Cook to get him killed. No court action was ever taken in this killing.

"Hooky Miller" soon left Drumright for parts unknown but in a few months it was learned that he was the city marshal at Three Sands. His term as marshal of Three Sands was short, for he was killed by an Indian whom he attempted to arrest.

Prohibition laws were supposed to be in effect, but they were scarcely observed at Drumright and saloons operated openly and everyone carried a gun.

#### Sky Pilot.

The first Methodist preacher called, by the gambling and liquor element, "Sky Pilot" was threatened several times

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for bringing the Gospel to the people. He was told if he did not leave town the lawless element would horse-whip him and run him out.

This minister of the gospel always carried a six-shooter on his hip and these hoodlums knew he would use it. He defied them and they did not carry out their threats.

After more restrictions were made on the sale of "hard liquors" a group of men headed by a man named Green and known as head of the gang of "Big Six" moved west of the city and established a joint known as the "Hump." "The Hump" became known as the toughest joint in Oklahoma.

#### The First Fire Tragedy.

The first fire chief in Drumright was a man named Jake Marcus. He left the town before the oil boom reached its height.

The first fire occurred in 1913 when a large rooming house owned by C. P. Lewis, located on the present site of the Canfield building, was burned. One occupant, a woman, was burned to death.

During the same year a group of frame buildings on the north side of Broadway caught fire in a way unknown to

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anyone. The city had no water system or fire fighting equipment and all the citizens could do was to stand by. Every individual did all he could to keep the fire from spreading but efforts were all in vain for the fire burned up the business section.

#### Construction of a Water System.

When the fire was over steps were made to fight future fires.

Aarow Drumright, together with the mayor, L. E. Gibson, caused a water tower to be erected in front of Gibson's rooming-house. It was placed in exactly the middle of Main Street, and was a large wooden tank elevated about a hundred feet above the earth. This tub or tank was filled with water pumped from a well by a gasoline engine.

All the inhabitants of Drumright were proud of their water tank and planned how the water from the tank could be best utilized. A three-inch pipe was laid all the way up Broadway and any one who desired to use the water could "hook on."

The present town and water system were built several years later.

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## First City Hall.

The city hall was located on East Broadway in the building just west of the site of the Gibson's Beauty Salon.

This hall served the city until 1913, when the present building was constructed.

## Early Day Merchants.

The first store building erected was that of the Kraker Brothers, which was built in the year 1914. The old bank building was begun in 1915, and completed in 1916. At the present date the "Tomahawk Bar" is operating in the building and is owned by an Omaha Indian named Fred.

Several of the merchants who established themselves in business in the early days were D. B. Brasel, who operated the Marguette Pharmacy; Earl Walker, grocer; Homer O'Dell and P. J. Stephenson, clothiers; Pat Cowley, clothier; Jim Bennett, owner of the first gas company.

## Street Paving.

Broadway was paved in 1917. A brick street was laid from the present Miller Store, westward to Jones Street. People appreciated these pavements and it was only a short time until they caused Tiger Hill, located on West Broadway.

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to be paved.

The hill and the creek nearby were called Tiger because a band of Tiger Indians settled on the hill and another group pitched their tents on the small creek that runs north and south beneath East Broadway.

These were originally Sac and Fox Indians who lived in tepees at one time at what was named Rose Hill. Rose Hill was approximately ten miles east of the town of Cushing.

A store was operated at Rose Hill, now Tiger Hill, in Drumright. It was owned and operated by the father of Mrs. Jack Cook; his name was J. E. Cargill. This store handled a complete line of general merchandise. The most of the trade at Cargill's store was with the Sac and Fox Indians, who came from their village of tepees.

The reason the hill was named Rose Hill at that time was because John Arnold, a white man who owned the land, was so fond of flowers that he planted many roses.

John Arnold was the father-in-law of the brother of Mrs. Jack Cook. Mrs. Jack Cook is living at the present time in Cushing.



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Railroads were not started through Drumright until 1917. A controversy arose with an older town, Pemeta, which caused considerable delay in railroad construction. Pemeta, which was rivaling Drumright for a townsite and post office, stopped the railroad in its construction when it reached that community. A group of Drumright people began to push the project to get the railroads and within a year the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad was established.

Drumright is located on good highways. State Highway #33 enters the town from Tulsa, which is fifty-one miles away. It is a concrete road and is in excellent condition. Highway No 1 joins No. 33 immediately south of Oilton. This highway was formerly one of the main arteries into the city but is of little use at the present time.

The road leading to Sapulpa, which was known as the old Ozark Trail, was very rough and had many abrupt curves as it wound through the hills. Today this Ozark Trail has been transformed into a State Highway surfaced with gravel and hard asphalt.

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## The First House.

This small, log hut is the first house ever built in Drumright. It was constructed by J. W. Fulkerson on what would now be South Ohio Street near the site of the First Baptist Church.

## Comment.

The same city marshal has served Drumright for the past twenty years or more. His name is Jack Ary. Ary is the second city marshal the city ever had and he is the first ever to be elected.

He was at first appointed to complete the unexpired term of Marshal Cook, who was killed in a gun battle as previously told.

Mr. Ary excelled in bravery, toughness and lead absorbing qualities which he displayed when in a fight with "Blackie" Thompson and his gang.

Mr. Ary received five wounds from rifle slugs but managed to live and later to see those bandits on the road to prison.