

ERNEST AND JOSIE MC DANEL

Agnes McDanel

Ernest and Josie McDanel and their two small daughters, Bessie, nearly three years old, and Agnes, a baby of 7 months, along with their household goods and live stock arrived in Oklahoma in October 1909.

The trip from Lawrence County, Arkansas, to Purcell, Oklahoma, took a week because it was necessary to travel by wagon and team and then by train to Purcell.

Ernest had attended Brown University at Siloam Springs, Arkansas, where he studied for the Methodist ministry. After he finished his education, Ernest married Josie Jones on November 4, 1905, in Imboden, Arkansas. Josie was the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. E. A. Jones.

Since the ministry was not a lucrative profession for a family man, and since extra jobs were scarce in 1909 in Lawrence County, the young McDanel couple began to think about a move to a more prosperous area.

Josie's parents, the E. A. Jones, had moved to Cleveland County in the new State of Oklahoma and settled on the old Elvelt farm northeast of Norman. They wrote and encouraged Ernest and Josie McDanel to move to Oklahoma. Their letters were full of the opportunities in the state. They pointed to the rich soil, the minerals, the great pasture land for live stock and to the many streams to furnish water for farming and for live stock.

This encouragement plus the fact that a new land holds a fascination for the adventurous young people persuaded the young McDanels to make the move to Oklahoma. Because of train connections they landed in Purcell, not Norman.

Ernest McDanel needed to get a job the first thing before trying to move nearer to his parents-in-law. He took a job working on the E. B. Johnson ranch near the South Canadian River and near to Norman.

Ernest and Josie were satisfied with the set-up on the Johnson ranch. They lived in a half-dug-out home near the river bank. They had enough land for a garden spot and enough acres to plant grain for food for their live stock. When spring came things changed; a head-rise in the South Canadian River washed away their dug-out home as well as the garden and farm plots.

This disaster caused the McDanel family to move to Norman. Here they were lucky and found a small rental house on East Hughbert Street where they lived for several years. Ernest found a job as a brick-layer and helped build many of the brick business houses as well as the brick buildings on the campus of the University and on the State Hospital grounds at the east end of Main Street in Norman. Many of these brick buildings are still standing.

Later Ernest worked for Mr. John G. Lindsay at the Norman Oil Mill and Cotton Gin Company in Norman.

Ernest McDanel spent the rest of his working days farming and working for the State Highway Department. After many years working for the State Highway Department he retired and moved into Norman. At his retirement from the State Department he was given several merit awards for his long service to his country and to his state.

In 1915 the McDanel family had moved to Rufus Burke's farm northeast of the city of Norman. There was a large white two story house for the use of the McDanels, here they spent many happy years. Today this farm is the property of the Meiser Egg Farm.

While the McDanels were living on this farm their third child, a son, O. Rex, was born. He and his sisters, Bessie and Agnes, went to the nearby rural schools -- (Pleasant Hill, Grotts and Adair Schools). After finishing rural grade schools the McDanels moved into the City of Norman where the three children finished their education in the Norman Public Schools.

Bessie McDanel married E. J. L. Davis and moved to Oklahoma City where they still live. Mr. and Mrs. Davis had two daughters, Sylvia (wife of Dr. Stock, and Ann (Mrs. Tate). Each of the Davis daughters has two children.

With the exception of Bessie all of the McDanel family spent over 65 years in Cleveland County, Oklahoma. Both Agnes McDanel and her brother, O. Rex McDanel, live in Norman, and have been employed in Norman for many years.

In 1950, O. Rex McDanel married Alpha Smalley, the daughter of James Alfred and Genieve Golding Smalley. She and her brother Joe were born and educated in Norman. Mr. and Mrs. O. Rex McDanel have one son, Mike, who is a practicing lawyer in Norman. Mike and his wife, Diana, have a son, Brian.

Ernest McDanel died in October 1962, and his wife, Josie McDanel, died February 1963. They are both buried in Resthaven Cemetery. They had chosen this resting place before they died. Mr. McDanel had helped build the road to the cemetery, and thought it was a restful looking place.