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Western Movie

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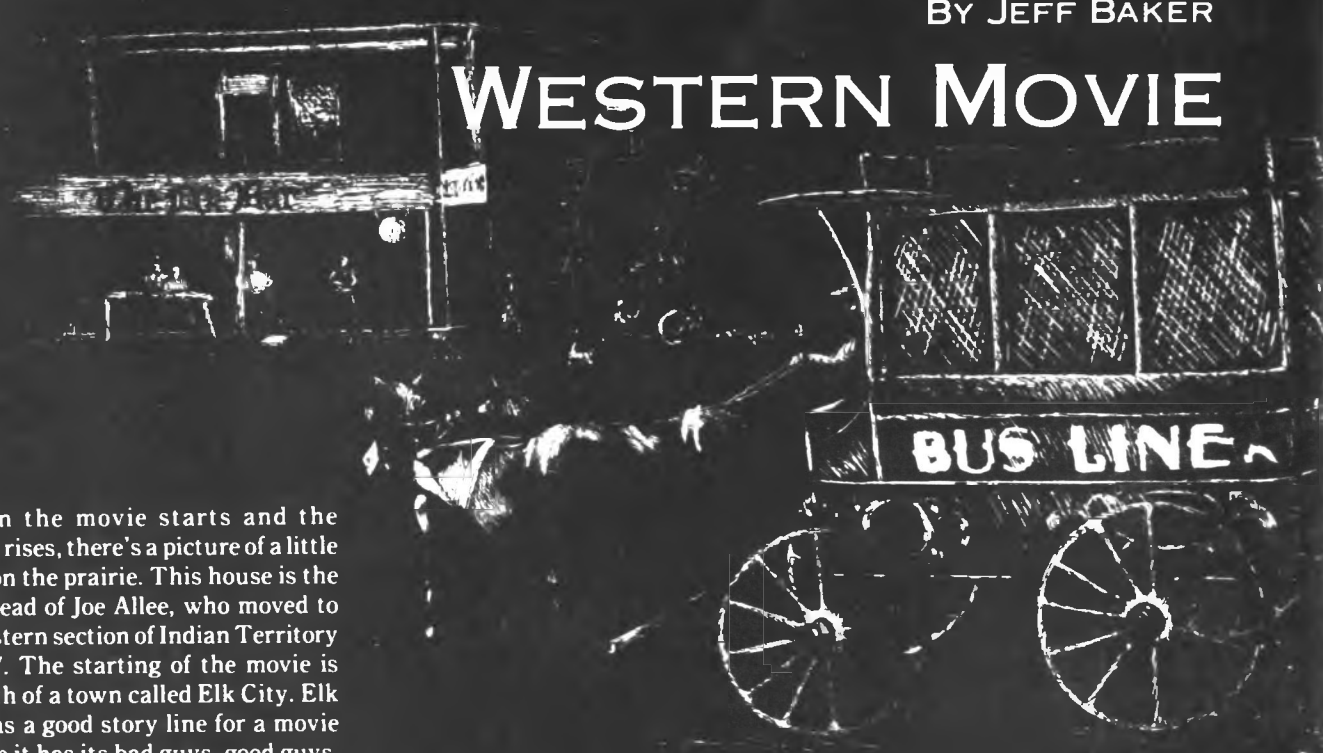
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BY JEFF BAKER

WESTERN MOVIE



When the movie starts and the curtain rises, there's a picture of a little house on the prairie. This house is the homestead of Joe Allee, who moved to the western section of Indian Territory in 1897. The starting of the movie is the birth of a town called Elk City. Elk City has a good story line for a movie because it has its bad guys, good guys, and even a railroad. The history of Elk City began when Joe Allee sold the entire townsite for \$2,500. Little did Allee realize that in 1900, M. G. Robinson would make a deal with Beeks Erick, a Weatherford banker, to buy the Elk City townsite from the Choctaw Townsite Company, knowing that the Choctaw and Gulf Railroad was coming soon; but Allee didn't know this when he sold the land. Then on March 18, 1901, Elk City officially became a town. And on March 20, 1901, "the most important day in the history of Elk City," was the day the lots were sold. Hundreds of prospective buyers had built a "tent city," and the growth of Elk City was just beginning.

If a town is going to get started in the right direction, it must have a good city government. S. A. Elliott, according to a 1901 issue of the ELK CITY DEMOCRAT, was elected as the first mayor on August 4, 1901. However, there are other reports to indicate that R. T. Keen was the first official mayor. In 1902, a story in the DEMOCRAT reported the election of three city officials: W. C. Ernest, town clerk and treasurer; D. T. Johnson, police judge; and J. C. Colwell, city marshal. After a few years had passed, Elk City had set up permanent city positions through a City of First Class resolution signed by R. T. Keen as mayor. The resolution set up a permanent election and an active government in Elk City.

Joe Allee was Elk City's first active

developer. He dug the first water well on the location site where the Elk Cleaners now stands at Third and Madison. Early town settlers depended on his well for their survival. Since the time of the first water well, Elk City grew with a population of 1,000 and some 60 businesses. The development of any city depends on banks to finance businesses, and the first bank was started in Elk City by E. G. Thurmond in 1901, and it's still there today. After the banks came other businesses such as the Story Hotel. In the early days, it was a good resting place for tired, weary travelers.

The economic development of Elk City flourished because of two oil booms. The first one occurred in the late forties and early fifties. It helped many of the downtown businesses because the Shell Company built a plant south of the city and employed thousands of people, many of whom became wealthy overnight. After the first boom was over, many people thought that was the end; but it hit again in the late 70's and early 80's. The new boom further developed Elk City into what it is today.

One of the most important aspects of a city is how well the people support it. Elk citizens have always felt a strong sense of pride toward one another and toward their country. For instance, on December 4, 1941, Tex Davis was Elk City's first casualty of World War II,

and Elk City answered to the war call by sending its boys; then the community took action by doing what it could to help the war and the boys overseas. The people are also often involved in helping others. When in 1984 Kimberly Fuller needed a heart and lung transplant, many residents donated money to help with the cost of the operation. Kimberly soon had enough money for the operation; and while she was waiting for a donor, the people of Elk City stood behind her and her family. Considering such a spirit of cooperation, it's no wonder that Elk City is so successful.

Elk City has gone a long way since the early days when the townsite was Joe Allee's homestead. With the development and the support of the people, Elk City has become one of the major cities of Western Oklahoma. And the people will never let anyone forget what it took to get there. Elk City has three museums and several historic locations to remind everyone of the town's heritage. The citizens want everyone who passes Elk City to see more than just a few buildings. They want everyone to see the true Elk City like a Western movie, but never ending even after the sun sets. ■

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