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BRYANT, SUSIE

INTERVIEW #4552

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BIOGRAPHY FORM  
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION  
Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

BRYANT, SUSIE.

INTERVIEW.

#4552.

Field Worker's name Zaidce B. Bland.This report made on (date) June 24, 1937

- 
1. Name Mrs. Susie Bryant.
  2. Post office Address General Delivery, Altus, Oklahoma.
  3. Residence address (or location) Northwest of Altus.
  4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month January Day 21 Year 1878.
  5. Place of birth Independence County, Arkansas.
- 
6. Name of Father Henry Jones Place of birth: Missouri.  
Other information about father \_\_\_\_\_
  7. Name of Mother Virginia Sawyer Place of birth Unknown.  
Other information about mother \_\_\_\_\_
- 

Notes or complete narrative by the field worker dealing with the life and story of the person interviewed. Refer to Manual for suggested subjects and questions. Continue on blank sheets if necessary and attach firmly to this form. Number of sheets attached 24.

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Zaidee B. Bland,  
Interviewer.  
June 24, 1937.

Interview with Mrs. Susie Bryant,  
Altus, Oklahoma.

I was born in the Ozark Mountains of Arkansas. We were so high upon a mountain that you had to walk or go horseback for a half mile to get to our log house. If you went down off our mountain north you would be in Missouri. If you went down west you would be in Indian Territory; if you went south or east you would still be in Arkansas. I lived with my father; my mother was dead and all the other children were married and had homes of their own. We only stayed home through part of the year. I do not know how much land Father had cleared up on this mountain. We had an orchard, a garden and a little patch of corn for the horses. Father would make baskets and chairs and would dry a great deal of fruit. These things would be carried down to the base of the mountain from time to time until it was all down there and then Dad and I would ride down, sell all this stuff and either spend

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the winter in Missouri with an aunt or with a brother in Indian Territory, until my aunt moved to Indian Territory. When we were at home on the mountain we did not have a neighbor near enough to hear a chicken crow or a dog bark. We got our water from a spring that flowed out of a cave. The water was pure and cold and I have sat in the door of our house and counted the "varmints" that came to this spring to drink in the early mornings or late afternoons. I have seen deer, bear, catamounts, wild cats, coons, possums, mink, and civit cats around this spring. Dad would never let me go to the spring for water until late in the morning and then he always sat where he could see me all the time.

Dad would trade his chairs and baskets to the Indians for blankets and money. I remember one fall when we came down off the mountain that Dad traded our horses to a man for a flat boat. We loaded everything upon it and Dad set my little rocking chair on

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the boat and told me to sit in it and he took a pole; we drifted down this stream, tying up at night to the bank and making camp just as we did when we were in the wagon. Dad always tied up near a settled place if he could. I think we started out on White River and drifted into Arkansas. He would sell his wares as he went along. We had two dogs with us. One night we got tired and tied up near a big cane brake and you could not see any signs of people living anywhere near. We had supper and fed the dogs and Dad made a big, big fire for that was the way you made yourself safe from "varmints". He made my pallet on the side of the fire next to the cane brake and we were asleep when the dogs gave tongue; they came full tilt right toward our camp; we could not tell whether the dogs were in front or not but when they burst out of the cane brake, two bears ran right across me on their way to the river. I was not hurt but I was surely frightened.

In 1892 while we were in Missouri with my aunt, she and her family decided to move to Indian Territory

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and take up an Indian lease. We had a prairie schooner with four horses hitched to it. Sometimes the road was good and we would lead two of the horses but mostly we drove all four. There was aunt, uncle, five cousins and myself in the party. One cousin rode on horseback. We were more than a month on the road for it rained a great deal. There were no bridges and sometimes we would have to wait two or three days by a stream before we could cross it. Roads were not much to go by and once we were lost in the hills and spent several days wandering around.

When we came to the Canadian River we could not <sup>away</sup> cross it at all. A wagon had just been washed; the horses and some of the family had been drowned. We waited two days and nights before the ferry man would ferry us across. We crossed the Canadian River near Bufaula as we were bound for Stonewall where my brother lived.

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We brought with us in our chuck box sugar, flour, meal, coffee, soda and salt but killed squirrels and deer on the way for our meat. When we got to Brother's house Aunt and Uncle soon leased land from an Indian nearby and moved to their lease but I stayed with Brother until I was married, never going back to Arkansas again.

Brother leased his land from a Chickasaw Indian. He had a four room log house on an island. I mean there was a creek on all four sides of his lease and you could not get to his house at all without wading water. These creeks were never dry.

I helped my brother and wife in the field just like a man. One day we decided we would keep a count of all the things we had to kill while we were grubbing stumps and cutting out sprouts. Just during that one day we killed fourteen lizards, four civit cats, three ground squirrels and ten snakes; that was a fair average of what we had to do every day



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to get the land ready to plant to cotton. Just the corrals, garden, house and orchard were on this island, running water was not a mile away from the house any way you started. The cultivated land was all across water from the house.

One evening my brother said to his wife, Minnie and me, "Sue, you and Minnie go on to the house and get up the wood to get supper and I will come directly; I'll work a little-more."

We always left the children at the house to play and the girls would get every scrap of calico they could to make doll dresses. When the creeks were low we could go across by stepping from rock to rock that had been placed in the stream for that purpose. As I jumped from one rock to another I looked down and said, "The kids have been down here; look, what a big scrap one of them has dropped!" I stooped over to pick it up when Minnie screamed, "It's a rattler, can't you see? You are crazy!" I stood on the rock too

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frightened to move while she hurried to the house, got a hoe and handed the hoe to me and said, "Hit him with the hoe". I struck at the snake but only made him coil.

We had a big black dog with us and a little white dog which we called Pennie. Pennie had four little puppies. The black dog ran in and grabbed the snake and shook it, threw it down and went on out through the water onto the bank and died. Pennie ran in, grabbed the snake and shook it until I could cut it in two with a hoe. The snake bit Pennie, too, but it did not hurt Pennie. If a dog or cow, or any animal, is suckling its young a snake bite will not hurt them.

#### Marriage.

I lived with Brother and Minnie until I was twenty-five years old. Courting in those days was fun. We always went to church or Sunday School or to singing every Sunday. Then we girls would gang up, four or five or six, at each other's house for

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dinner and sometimes some of the boys would go home for dinner with us, too, and those boys who did not go for dinner would ride over in the evening. Everybody went horseback, nearly.

Then we would pair off and walk in the woods, sit on logs or bent over trees and talk or maybe sit by some stream and throw pebbles into the water and talk and talk.

I don't think anyone ever thought about "necking" then. We would hold hands a little when a boy would take our hands to help us over a log.

There was a widower in the country who was considered rich because he had a buggy and there were very very few buggies in the country. I had been told that he wanted to meet me but I was not very much interested for he was twenty-five years older than I was and had one son who went with our crowd; anyway, it was generally believed that this widower was engaged to another girl and we girls would no

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more go with an engaged man than we would with a married man if we knew it.

Brother decided he would put some moreland into cultivation and asked me to help him move a fence. It was an old time worm rail fence. There was a trail that came round that end of the fence and we built the new fence right across it. We were only down a little way from the trail when up drove the nicest looking buggy with a fine horse and a good looking mule hitched to it. In the buggy were a man and a woman. The man got out, took down the fence and drove through. Brother was mad but would not say anything, but I did; I stepped out and told the man what I thought of him and commanded him to come right back and help me put the fence back, which he did. The man turned out to be Mr. Bryant and the lady was the one he was going to marry; they were going to get married right then. They did get married. She only lived eleven months and five days after their marriage.

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After waiting a year, as was considered decent, Mr. Bryant sent his boy to make a date with me one night or rather to ask me if he might have a date. I said, "No." The next night at preaching (there was a protracted meeting going on) Mr. Bryant gave the boy who was with me the wink and he took Mr. Bryant's horse to hold the bridle while Mr. Bryant walked home with me. I was mad. It was only a quarter of a mile home the nearest way and that was the way I took. The next night Mr. Bryant did it again but we took the long way home that night and that was two miles and a quarter. When Sunday of that week came a bunch of girls came home for dinner with me and we were hurrying to get through the dishes so we could be ready to go to the woods when Brother came through the kitchen and said, "Susie, someone is coming across the creek." I stepped to the door to look out and it was Mr. Bryant and I was mad again. He would walk with me though and as we walked and talked we came to an old bent over tree and sat down on it; he

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proposed. This was June. I said, "Yes, I'll marry you but I won't till October?"

You haven't forgotten that I told you he was the only man in our neighborhood who had a buggy and I thought, "Now I'll have a great time this summer", but I was married to him August 30th; I was never sorry.

#### Wedding.

My dress was sky blue satin and contained fifteen yards. It was trimmed with lace. My sister-in-law made it. The dress had a long train about three yards long. I wore high topped shoes and had a white hat trimmed with blue forget me nots. This one outfit cost \$65.00. Mr. Bryant wanted to take me over into the Creek Nation after we were married to keep them from charivaring us. I did not want to do that but did consent to go to my uncle's house to spend the night. It was seven miles away and I did not think the crowd would find out where we were or if they did

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it would be too far for many to come.

Mr. Bryant gave me a horse, bridle, saddle and a great long riding skirt for my wedding present. I called my horse Maud; she was a bay horse with a star in her face.

Well, the crowd found us and I can hear that terrible noise and din to this day. Uncle had a six-room log house with a long porch on two sides of it and a great long hall with three rooms on each side of the hall. The crowd rode horses and oxen across those porches and through that hall. One boy went three miles to a sawmill to get a buzz saw to make more racket; they had trace chains tied to the horns of the oxen to drag and had tin pans and iron kettles. There were whistling, blowing of horns and cat calling. I want you to know the crowd kept that noise up all night.

The next day we went home and they let us alone.

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Home.

Mr. Bryant had a good Indian lease and many things around him but the house had only two rooms.

He had many head of cattle; thirty milch cows, forty or fifty yearlings and steers, a hundred and twenty-five hogs, forty head of horses and mules besides chickens, turkeys, guineas, ducks, geese and pea fowls.

Few people have pea fowls and I learned to hate pea fowls; they were so prideful and mean to kill anything smaller than they. I have pulled the cock's tail out lots of times to make him ashamed and he would slink away to hide so as be out of my way a while; but one day I got so mad at him that I had one of the children help me lay his old proud head across a log and cut it off; I threw him away into the woods to keep Mr. Bryant from knowing what became of him.

This old peacock must have been fifteen or twenty



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years old. I guess their tails are pretty but it is awfully bad luck to have the peacock feathers in the house. They say they are the watch dog of the farm but I would just as soon have guineas any time to give an alarm.

All around us were thick woods. We had little cleared patches where we planted a little corn, cotton or cane. Our first house was in a big pasture with a hand split picket fence around it.

We slept in the yard in the summer. One night the pigs began to squeal and run against those pickets.

A cougar lion was getting his supper and caught his pig right by the fence.

We had to go seven miles to church. We always went on horseback until the children began to come. I had five children and raised them all; they all are living to this day but Mr. Bryant is dead. Lots of times I would pack a lunch and Mr. Bryant and I would get on our horses and ride through the woods

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all day looking up lost stock or for new pigs. We get some Hampshire hogs and thought a lot of them. We brought the sow up and put her into the garden to farrow for we wanted to save all her pigs. A cougar get to her any way and we thought that every pig was eaten up but I was down in the garden the next day and found one under some bushes.

I carried the little rascal up to the house and we raised him on a bottle. We kept him running around the house until he would weigh about 50 pounds. He kept eating my little guineas. I got mad and told the children to take him to the lot, I was tired of him. They took him down there and put him in a pen. That night I gave them a bucket of milk and told them to feed him. We called that pig Billy Buncum. "Now, children," I said, "give Billy B. all he wants before you give the other pigs any." They poured milk into the trough and watched Billy B. drink it all. They picked him up and shook him and then poured him some more. They kept this up until he had drunk most all

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the milk. They poured the balance into the trough and put a cross tie over it, thinking that Billy B. could not get to the milk until in the morning. The next morning we found the tie routed out and Billy B. in the trough with his four feet turned up to the sky, bursted wide open. "Greedy as a little pig" I am sure you have heard that expression. We had a good many pigs to drink so much they would burst.

Sometimes we would have several pigs in the yard because something had happened to their mother and I would have to raise them by hand. I had a pan in the yard in which I would give them milk and the children would drink with the pigs; they thought the milk tasted better. We had two shepherd dogs to help us with the stock. One was called Colda, the other Grover.

Late in the evening I would go out in the yard and call Grover; when he would come I would hold up my finger and say, "Listen, Grover." In a few minutes we would hear a bell. I would say, "That is old Fresty's bell; go get them." Away he would go and bring all the

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milch cows home. Golda was best for horses.

Once Mr. Bryant was about a mile from home plowing corn. It was cool that morning when he left home and he wore his coat. Later in the day he got warm and pulled his coat off and hung it on a bush. In the evening he came home without the coat. That night there was a storm and he did not go back to work. Old Grover did not come home.

Three days and nights passed and we said, "Well, I guess the cats or something got Grover at last? I cried for I loved that dog. The fourth day Mr. Bryant said to me, "Susie, I am going over to the corn field. Do you want to go along for the walk?" I said I did and got my sun bonnet. When we got over in the corn field there lay old Grover by Mr. Bryant's coat guarding it. I never was any happier in my life than I was to find old Grover alive.

One day a stranger rode up to our gate and offered Mr. Bryant \$44000.00 for all our stock and Indian lease; we would not take it.

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Lots of times I would take one of the little boys and drive to Ada fifty miles away to the mill and leave the other little fellows at home with their Dad.

Mr. Bryant would have something he wanted to do that I could not do and I could go to mill. I would never get home before eleven o'clock and sometimes it would be later. Mr. Bryant would have the milking all done, supper over and all the children in bed.

As I would drive through the woods I could hear the panthers scream and wolves howl. I don't know why I was not afraid; I would be now.

We got a lease across the road from our first lease after five years. This lease had a six-room log house on it and one of the rooms I did not use much to live in. Mr. Bryant was away from home and I had to get up and run wolves out of the cow lot. A blue Norther came up. An old cow had twin calves. They were the cutest little spotted things you ever saw. I did not want the wolves to get

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them so I took them to the house and put them in my spare room. As long as I was making a barn out of the room I decided that I would bring all the young things in so I would not have to go out in the cold. When Mr. Bryant got home I had the twin heifer calves, six little pigs, an old hen and chickens, a bunch of little guineas, and an old duck with her brood, all in that spare room.

I was anxious for some white guineas. I had a neighbor who had some. I traded her a setting of Indian Runner duck eggs for a setting of white guinea eggs. We never had hen houses in those days; all the fowls roosted in the trees so I nailed a box up on a tree and set my guinea eggs under a hen.

One day we were at dinner and I heard the old hen squawk. "Oh!" I said, "that's my old hen with the guinea eggs; I just know something bad has happened to her."

When we raised the old hen up there was a big

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old snake and he had swallowed every one of those eggs. I began to cry. Mr. Bryant said, "Now, Susie, don't do that. You go in the house and get me a pan of warm water." I did and when I came back Mr. Bryant had the snake dead and was stretching him out on the ground. He took his knife and split that snake's belly right open, took out every one of those eggs and washed them off in that warm water and put them under the hen again. Every one of those eggs hatched and I raised the prettiest bunch of little guineas you ever saw.

Our house did not have a yard fence around it. We were sleeping out in the yard with the baby in a cradle near us when the dogs started something in the woods near the house and here they came full tilt; a big bear ran right over our bed. We had not more than gotten to sleep until here the dogs came again. This time it was a cougar. The next day we built us a protecting fence for our bed.

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One night I got in bed first. It was early fall and we had not had our beds in the house but a few days. I stretched my feet out and said to Mr. Bryant, "You spilled water on this bed." He said, "I never neither." "Well, it feels like ice down here where my feet are," I replied. He grabbed the covers and jerked them off. There was a big rattler coiled up under those covers. I did not need any help getting out of that bed.



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The woods were full of wild berries, plums, grapes and a dozen different kinds of nuts. I put up jelly and preserves in five gallon jars, tied clean rags over the jars, put them in the cellar and never thought of the jelly and preserves moulding for they never did.

We made our own syrup, wine and beer. We would store syrup in forty-four gallon barrels as we did our wine and beer. We liked persimmon beer best. In the bottom of a forty-four gallon barrel we would place some stalks of cane, put in a bunch of persimmons and cover all with water. We would bake a half dozen sweet potatoes to put in and on top of that we placed a pan or two of good baked corn bread. Then we would tie a cloth over all and wait about six weeks before opening the bung; then placed a tap in and any time we wanted it, all winter, we could draw the clearest and nicest beer to drink with our cakes or puddings or serve to our neighbors when they would drop in.)

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Apples, turnips, potatoes, collards and such things were hilled up in trenches in the ground. We always made a barrel of kraut, a barrel of grape wine and a barrel of peach brandy.

I was so used to Indians that I took them just as I did my white neighbors. The Indians would show me how to do things and I would show them. We neighbored with each other just as the whites did.

I had a white woman neighbor who had married a full blood Creek Indian. He was a converted Indian and tried to preach to his tribe. We could see the patch of corn where he was plowing from our house. One day the mule stayed in one place all morning and about the middle of the afternoon the mule was still standing there. Over to our place came the Indian's wife. She asked, "Where do you suppose John is, he did not come home to dinner?" I said, "His mule has been standing in one place all day, let us slip around and see." We found John down in a little draw gambling

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and drinking with a bunch of white men and Indians.

We did not disturb them. Carrie went on home.

Late in the evening John came up to our house and showed me a badly lacerated arm. He was so drunk that he could hardly talk. "Susie, dress poor old Indian arm. Indian go home, Carrie beat hell out of him, no help arm".

I took a look at his arm; I did not know the arm was blistered but thought it was only a bad scratch so I got the bottle of turpentine and poured some on the arm. The Indian screamed and ran yelling, "White woman try to burn poor Indian up; pour fire all over". I think he really thought I was intending to burn him up.

Indians were always trying to buy jelly from me, also quilts. I did not like to sell either for I always wanted to keep all I had. One morning some Indian squaws came up and found me down in the cellar so down they came. They never talked or bothered anything but just looked around. A squaw picked up a little

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glass of jelly and grunted, patting her pouch. I said, "Twenty-five cents." She handed me the quarter. The next day I went to Ada and when I came home I did not go to the cellar for several days and when I did I was surprised to see how bare my shelves looked; when I began to look around I saw wherever a jar or glass of jelly or preserves was missing there lay a quarter. Then I knew that while we had been away the Indians had come. I had a particular quilt top that an old Indian had tried repeatedly to buy. This quilt was very gaudy and gay with colors. I never would sell it.

One day a neighbor came and brought her quilt to work one of the same pattern of mine. I said, "I have finished mine and it is ready to quilt." I went to the box where I kept it to get it to show her. Well, it was not there. I could not imagine what had happened. In a little box in the corner of the big box, I kept thread, thimbles and needles to use when I was piecing quilts. I raised



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the lid of this box and there lay a \$5.00 bill. I knew then that the Indian had taken advantage of my absence and gotten the quilt top she had long wanted.