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BROWLER, SALLIE.

INTERVIEW

10189

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

BROWLKE, SALLIE

INTERVIEW

10189

Field Worker's name Don Mason, Jr.

This report made on (date) March 9 1938

1. Name Mrs. Sallie Browlke

2. Post Office Address Guthrie, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) 509 E. Grant

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month May Day 4 Year (?)

5. Place of birth Trenton, Kentucky, on a tobacco farm where she was born in slavery.

6. Name of Father Louis Gorth Place of birth Virginia

Other information about father Irish-Indian, Captain in army.

7. Name of Mother Mynie Woods-part negro Place of birth Kentucky

Other information about mother Her grandfather was an Indian. Does not know what tribe.

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 4.

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Don Moon, Jr.
Interviewer
March 9, 1938.

Interview with Mrs. Sallie Brownlee
809 E. Grant, Guthrie, Oklahoma.

I was born at Trenton, Kentucky, and grew up on a tobacco farm. The Mammoth Cave is partly on this farm. We children loved to play there, but nobody else paid any attention to it. After while people began to come out from Nashville and Clarksville, Tennessee, to see it. They would come on Friday and bring food and stay over Sunday to look at the cave.

There were no schools, but sometimes the Boss-man would have a teacher come and the children would be taught wherever it was handy. If the Mistress's house had just been cleaned up and she didn't want to be bothered with the school, it would be held in one of the houses of the colored people. I never saw a real school till I got to Kansas.

I went to Kansas City and later to Newton, Kansas. Lived there about five years just before Oklahoma was opened. People in Newton talked a lot about coming to Oklahoma, and when they came I came with them on the same train. Indians used to come to Newton and bargain with white men to guide them to good land when the country opened. I used to see

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them talking together on the streets. Then in the "Run" an Indian would grab the hand of the white man who had paid him and they would ride off fast as they could go towards the land the Indian had settled.

There were a lot of houses shipped in flat, on flat cars. He called them "hooked up" houses because it didn't take very long to put up the sides and fasten them together.

I paid 50 cents for a lot on West Mansur and built me a house out of old barrels. It was a kind of pen with a roof of brush and a quilt over the brush. I dug a hole in the ground for my stove and began to take in washings. I burned grass and buffalo chips to heat the water. There were lots of buffalo chips here. I had to buy the water from a man who hauled it from the Cottonwood. That river was bank full, and as red as blood. Most people did not know how to wash in such water, so I got plenty of washings to do. I charged 25 cents each for washing men's shirts, and that didn't mean ironing them either.

This is the way I cleared that red water: At night I made a big ball of stiff dough just out of flour and water and put it into the barrel of muddy water. In the morning

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all the red mud would be sticking onto that dough ball, and I could pour off the clear water.

I knew Houghton when he lived in a place just big enough to spread a pallet down. His wife was dead, and he had two little girls at that time. He had a little store, but it wasn't much of a store. He kept a little candy and sold flour by the handfuls. Then people began raising cotton here and he built a gin and began making money. He married the girl his mother-in-law had hired to take care of the two little girls, and they had a large family of children.

There was some talk of hanging a man named Spencer who had jumped some lots west of the river.

Joe Dwinnell (hardware store owner) Dr. Blest (Dr. A. L. Blest, surgeon, later moved to Oklahoma City and died there about three years ago) and Ed Birch (owned E. J. Birch Grocery on S. Drexel until his death and his widow still runs the store) were my neighbors. Dr. Vandevort and Dr. Barker were my first doctors.

Then I bought two lots across the street from Cassidys on Mansur and built me a two-room house. I later sold it to Cassidys.

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The first Mrs. Lillie used to drive a "Clay-bank" or cream-colored horse. I liked horses and could drive well. I bought a fine trotting mare and trained her for the fair, and drove her myself, down here at the fair-grounds. I still have the weights that I bought to put on her feet while I trained her.

Besides the post office in a little shack about where ours stands now, there was another one down by the tracks in a hole in the ground covered with rocks. A man named Tutt and his wife, Mary Tutt lived there and kept a post office a little while. I knew them well, and washed for them.

One Sunday night when about everyone was at a big church meeting, Mr. Ragsdale (a banker) and another man came to my house with a keg. Mr. Ragsdale asked me to take care of it until he came back. In maybe an hour he came with his big carriage loaded the keg into it, and drove away. I never saw him again. I guess he went back to Newton. Anyway the bank was broke and all the money gone. He had been one of the richest men in Newton, and I had worked for the family for years in their beautiful

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home there. His wife had died before Oklahoma was opened, and there were two little girls.

When Tohee, now a ghost town, was settled I went out there with a lot of people I knew. I was there maybe two months and when the Iowa lands were opened I made the run driving my fast trotter and took a claim. One place a bunch of us had to cross a stream. Several white women and I decided to wade it. We had to hold our clothes up just under our armpits.

I marked my claim by striking the bark off trees, hired some logs hauled to build my house, paid down my \$14.00 and filed on this land which was between Tabor and Chandler, and slept there in the open for three weeks with my mare chained to my wrist. A white man called "Cateye" (I have forgotten his real name) contested me, and I was taken sick and could not stay on my claim so he got it. A friend of mine wrote to the Governor and the Governor wrote me a letter telling me to go and take my choice of the land that was still vacant, but I was sick several weeks, so got nothing. I never even got my \$14.00 back.

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I ran the Palace Hotel in Guthrie for three years from 1913-16 and white people came there. I have done a good deal of nursing in white families, as well as housework, washing and ironing.