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BROTHERTON, ETHEL

INTERVIEW

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LEGEND & STORY FORM
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

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Field worker's name Nannie Lee Burns.

This report made on (date) March 24, 1938. 1938

1. This legend was secured from (name) Mrs. Ethel Brotherton.

Address 511 First St. Miami, Oklahoma.

This person is (male or female) White, Negro, Indian,

If Indian, give tribe Quapaw.

2. Origin and history of legend or story Told as she recalls it.

3. Write out the legend or story as completely as possible. Use blank sheets and attach firmly to this form. Number of sheets attached 9

[Handwritten scribbles]

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Hannie Lee Burns,
Investigator,
March 24, 1938.

An Interview With Mrs. Ethel
Brotherton, Miami, Oklahoma.

My father, Henry Crawfish, is a full blood Quapaw and I think was born near Lincolnville, and is about seventy years old. My mother was Helia Van Horn, a white woman, but I know nothing more of her as she died when I was very young and I with my two younger sisters lived mostly with our grandmother Crawfish. I was born here in the Quapaw Nation near the Devil's Promenade, January 13, 1892.

After Mother's death, we were taken to live at our grandmother's house which was only a small Indian home of those days. I was the oldest and could cook and wash dishes better than the younger ones so I had more to do than they had and often, after we had eaten, they would run away and when grandmother would call them to wash the dishes they couldn't be found and they would not come back until they were sure that I had the dishes washed. My sister, Alice, and I were first sent to the Wyandotte Mission to school where we stayed for some time. We got home-sick and my father came after us to go home. He came on horseback,

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riding a roan pony and when we started home he would let my sister and me ride a while and he would walk and then we would get off and walk and let him ride and rest and this is the way we went home, a distance of eighteen miles. Later we were sent to the Catholic Schools.

I do not understand all about it but I was given to Maud Thompson, my god-mother, at this time; my grandmother took a skillet and placed a plug of Star tobacco in the skillet and this was wrapped up in a large white cloth square like a tea-towel. Tall-Chief and his wife were there and Tall-Chief blessed it and gave the skillet and tobacco, still in the cloth, back to my grandmother and she put it away and kept it.

We always had Stomp Dances and my first dance was with my father when I was a small girl. For different dances we used the rattle and for some the tom-tom. The Indians used to camp near the Promenade and have good times but those good times were different from the ones they have now. The men went hunting then and brought in the meat which was cooked by the women in great big iron kettles and then divided. Now they buy beeves and kill them and then

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about five-thirty in the evening you hear a signal and then you come and get your share of the meat, bread and coffee and take it to your tent and you have to prepare it yourself. A long time ago they would cook the things then everything would be placed on tables and sometimes there were five tables and if you came to eat at the Indian's place and you liked him you must eat something from each of the five tables. We had races, games of ball, etc., during the time that we were gathered together. Once in a race among the girls, I won four yards of white ribbon and a silver dollar. My sister was so fat she gave out.

Our church would begin about five-thirty in the evening; we had church in a round building and the people seated themselves on the ground which was covered with a tarpaulin in the shape of a horse-shoe with the opening at the door. Facing the door and the center of the room at the head of the shoe sits the leader. On either side of him sits a man who sings and sometimes they use the rattle but in the center at the fire is the man who beats the drum. When you enter, you look up and then you cross

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yourself and then the hands move from the shoulders in a downward movement. You are not supposed to talk during this service but you can pray silently. At stated times, cedar is thrown on the fire to drive the evil spirits away. Usually this service lasts all night with a special service at sunrise which may prolong the service until well in the forenoon.

We had our sweat-houses. They are also round and these sweats are to cure rheumatism, dropsy, and other diseases. In the center of these sweat-houses are two large rocks which become very hot from the fire. The person taking the bath undresses and enters the house which is very hot from the hot rocks. Across the rock have been laid some sticks cut from certain things. He remains here until he has had a good sweat and then he comes outside and drinks a large cup (at least a quart) full of a mixture that has been prepared and is standing handy in a large container. This mixture produces a rapid elimination from the body as well as vomiting. After this, the person takes a bath and dresses in clean clothes and then is ready to eat. This treatment is

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supposed to rid his body of all impurities and to insure him good health. This bath and treatment is most generally taken in the spring.

It used to be that when a man died, he left a horse and a blanket to someone who was to bury him and this person was always a relative. If it was a lady the women folks got her things. After the body has been placed in the grave, then the chief or the speaker standing at the grave, while he talks, throws some powdered tobacco to the right, then to the left across the grave and then straight across and some cedar is also placed in the grave. Sometimes, at the request of the dead person, things that they have thought a great deal of are placed in the coffin with them. After the grave is filled up it is marked with a stick or post painted red. Our funerals are always held in the morning with the feast at noon of that day. Now, we have the funeral as soon after the death as they can get ready, which is usually the following day and sometimes the second day. A saucer containing two eggs is placed on the grave near the head. The spirit is supposed to come back in two days and should have something to eat.

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At first, the feast was held in the woods, out of doors, and the food was cooked there. The meat and things would be cooked in four or five iron kettles over the fire. Then they would lay down wagon sheets and if they wanted to they would place their table-cloths over the sheets and would set the kettles a little way apart, down the sheets. Everybody helped and brought things and the folks brought the dishes, etc., but now all this is changed and the feast is given at the home of some person, usually a relative, and the person giving the feast furnishes and prepares everything and the folks just come and eat and listen to the leader talk, and nothing must be left on the tables as the food which is not eaten by those present must be taken away by them.

The men used to give ponies for their wives. I remember when Alex Mudd went to Solomon Quapaw and traded his black horse to him for his daughter, Bertha. But soon Alex did something that Bertha did not like and she would not marry him. Later he tried to make friends with me and one day he wanted me to go over under the shade of a tree and talk to him. We went and I sat down and he lay

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down and put his head in my lap and began to talk to me and tell me that Bertha had not treated him right and that he wanted me. Bertha saw us and came over and he told her to go back as he did not want her as she had not treated him right. I told him I was too young but he said he would wait and get another pony to give my father for me and wanted me to promise to talk to him and told me that he would be seeing me. By this time, we began to have fiddle dances at the Chief's home but these would always stop at ten o'clock.

When I was seventeen, I ran away and married Charlie. He took me to live at Galena and one day I was in a store there, I saw my father coming towards the store with two other of the Quapaws and I knew that he was coming for me, and I knew that he would take me back, so I slipped out of the store by the back door and hid from them. They did arrest my husband and take him back with them but he came back and we lived near Galena there on the county line for several years.

Lover's Leap stands on the west bank of Spring River, just north of the bridge over that river, east and a little

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south of Lincolnville. - A part of this has crumbled off and has fallen into the river but there is still a high castle like rock or mound of rock that protrudes from the bank out into the river. The story is that two young lovers who were not allowed to marry threw themselves from the top of this rock into the river below and were drowned. I have heard John Crow say that one morning he was returning home about five-thirty in the morning, just at daybreak, and when he came to the river. he saw a woman with long hair rise above surface of the water three times and disappear each time and he did not see her again after the third time.

Just a little way above the Lover's Leap, and in sight from the bridge, is the Devil's Promenade which is an "S" shaped curve that bends down to the water, possibly a hundred and fifty feet in length. The bluff projects out over this promenade and the promenade itself is covered with round biscuit like projections which looked to be a part of the rock ledge itself. These biscuits are about two inches across and this promenade faces the east. Just above this a little way is the Devil's Washboard and Tub.

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This looks like a big hole back under the bank and on one side the rock slants down towards the bottom and this slant is covered with the same biscuits. There is always water in this place. I started to crawl back into it to look at it once and I was told not to do it. Nearby, above, is the Devil's Hollow or Crossing. Our people used to avoid this crossing at night; they were afraid of it. The crossing is rough but not very deep and is not used today. Below the bridge is another place that you have heard of, Blue Hole. The water is very blue and not very far from the old Stomp Ground and many used to go swimming here. Just how ^{many} I don't know but many people have been drowned here and the bodies have never been found; they just disappear where they go under the water. My father lives east of Spring River not very far from here and I have grown up near this part of the river but we were taught not to play nor loiter near it.