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

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BREWER, W. H.

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Field Worker's name _____ Melvin Stites _____

This report made on (date) _____ 193 _____
April 20 1938

1. Name _____

2. Post Office Address W.H. Brewer _____

3. Residence address (or location) Eufaula, Oklahoma _____

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month _____ Day _____ Year _____

5. Place of birth February 17 1882 _____

Sebastian County, Arkansas

6. Name of Father Brewer Place of birth Tennessee _____

Archibald Willis
Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother _____ Place of birth Tennessee _____

Adeline Bland
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 _____.

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Melvin Stites,
Investigator,
April 30, 1938.

An Interview with Mr. W. H. Brewer,
Eufaula, Oklahoma.

I was born in 1882 in Sebastian County, Arkansas and in 1886 our family consisted of Mother, Father, two sisters and myself. 1886 was the year in which we decided to come to the Indian Territory. The brother of my father, D. T. Brewer, joined us. We had one riding horse. I don't remember whether my father, or my uncle rode it. However, Mother and we kids kept company with our household belongings in two wagons drawn by "Red" Boldy" "Buck" and "Berry", two teams of oxen. Long will I remember them. For years they were my companions in labor here in Territorial days. For no good reason other than that the country looked good to us we settled at Cameron, now known as Bokoshe. My uncle staked on the same claim with us. He and Dad cleared the land up, built our house and planted the first crop. Mother helped them.

After we became established we didn't suffer any privations. It's true as a boy, I thought I had hardships a plenty.

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What boy wouldn't when he had to gather corn in freezing weather? My dad believed as did many others then, that it was best to wait until after a good frost to gather Fall corn. Some old timers still believe this. It was thought that the frost would insure the corn against weevils. Be that as it may, I have anything but fond memories of gathering this late corn. The days would usually be cold and gray. Our oxen would slobber on about every other ear of corn. My hands would get so cold and wet they would chafe and bleed. But, that is the darker phase of my boyhood experience. Besides corn, we raised cotton, peanuts, potatoes, sorghum cane out of which we made our own syrup- molasses we called it.

We had plenty of chickens, eggs, hogs, cows and pumpkins. These pumpkins were gathered with the corn and buried in it until time to make pies out of them. We had pumpkin pies as often as we wanted them the year around. In the Summer time there were blackberries on the prairie galore. Mother had a fifty-five gallon barrel in which she kept her home-made soap. This barrel sat in our smokehouse. One day, in order to get out of reach of one of my sisters, I attempted to climb the wall of the smokehouse. I misjudged my foothold

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on the logs and fell into Mother's barrel of lye soap.

We left Cameron in 1894 and came to Eufaula, not the Eufaula of today but "old" town Eufaula which was situated two and one half miles east of the present Eufaula. We farmed. My parents were devout people. They didn't believe in dancing. Consequently church services, Sunday School, prayer meetings, and singing conventions, all of which were usually held in the schoolhouse were what gave me pleasure as I grew up.

When I was sixteen in 1898 I was converted by a Baptist preacher and immediately dedicated my life to Christ and His cause. I was licensed to preach the same year by the Eufaula Baptist Church. I began to look around for a place to begin my ministry; I decided to come to the locality now known as Hanna. Then, there was no town there at all and only a few dwellings. I had a preacher friend of the name of Will Ford. We were both young; I persuaded him to come along to Hanna. The day we arrived at our new post the Fort Smith and Western Railway was blowing stumps off of what was later to be its right of way. However, it was 1904 before the F.S. & W. rails were laid.

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As a means of support, Will and I leased a forty acre farm and farmed. We preached at various houses; we held a meeting the first summer in 1898. In this meeting thirty people were converted and were later baptized. Our efforts were blessed from year to year until in 1902, we considered that we had enough Christians to organize a church ; so the Mill Creek Baptist Church came into being. The Church was located on the bank of Mill Creek and most of our congregation lived along the creek, too; hence the name of the church. Mill Creek is a small stream on the northern outskirts of Hanna which runs in an eastern direction. We never built a building. The Methodist Church of Hanna was built in 1905.

There was seldom ever a disturbance at any church service. Neighbor men saw that quiet was maintained.

In 1904 the F. S. & . falls -ent through Hanna and the people who followed shaped Hanna into more of a semblance of a town, especially from a commercial angle. A man from California bought up most of the leases and resold them. The town at first formed on the lower side (north) of the tracks. This land was less valuable, being on a lower level, than the

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land south of the tracks- the present site of all present Hanna's business houses and most of her residential section.

Mr. John Depue and Mr. Julian Garrett were the first two men to erect a store building. This store was the first one in Hanna. The Garretts were the first family to take up permanent residence in what is now the city limits of Hanna.

In the years from 1906 to '09, I worked as a clerk for Garrett and Depue. I preached as often as I could. Will Ford had gone to the west of Hanna to preach and farm.

The Garrett-Depue store was a racket store specializing in notions, drugs, and 5 and 10 cent articles besides a general merchandise line.

A drunk-crazed Indian wobbled into the store one day and I saw that he was dangerous. I was unarmed and so I picked up a scale weight intending to knock the Indian unconscious with it. I was easing around to a place where, if I missed I wouldn't break out the glass front to the store. A sober intelligent Indian happened to look in at the door. He slipped up behind the crazy Indian and grabbed him; I tried to get his gun. I only got a hold of the gun when the crazy-drunk jerked loose

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from my helper. The latter ran away leaving me with a more or less precarious hold on the crazy Indian's gun. We tussled the full length of the store until we were opposite a box that was about as wide as my opponent. I saw an opportunity in the fact. I lowered my head and butted the Indian in the pit of the stomach at the same time tightening my grip on his gun. He parted from the gun and sac himself into the narrow confines of the dry goods box; try as he could he couldn't get himself free of it. The "law" came after him.

I recall another typical incident that happened in 1908. I was still a clerk in the Garrett Depue store. The judge of Hanna- Judge Hulse had his office in the back of the store at that time.

At two o'clock one summer Saturday afternoon, a trial was scheduled in the Judge's office. A few minutes before two o'clock the sheriff Walter Abbot, and his deputy, Jack Mouser, arraigned the culprits before the Judge. There wasn't any jail at Hanna then; locking his prisoners to a chain was the only way the sheriff had of holding them. The prisoners whom I remember were locked to a chain. I was in front

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looking after the store, when I heard an awful commotion in the Judge's office. I hurried back to see what was happening. It was the beginning of a "free for all" that fairly rocked the frame building before it was ended.

Someone- not a prisoner, but otherwise connected with the case had said something which another man didn't like; so the fight began. I stood peeping in at the door being careful to avoid all objects in the air. In the very thick of it, the prisoners, still locked to the chain and it clanking as loud as the devil, were doing their best to offend and defend.