

Notice of Copyright

Published and unpublished materials may be protected by Copyright Law (Title 17, U.S. Code). Any copies of published and unpublished materials provided by the Western History Collections are for research, scholarship, and study purposes only.

Use of certain published materials and manuscripts is restricted by law, by reason of their origin, or by donor agreement. For the protection of its holdings, the Western History Collections also reserves the right to restrict the use of unprocessed materials, or books and documents of exceptional value and fragility. Use of any material is subject to the approval of the Curator.

Citing Resources from the Western History Collections

For citations in published or unpublished papers, this repository should be listed as the Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.

An example of a proper citation:

Oklahoma Federation of Labor Collection, M452, Box 5, Folder 2. Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.

BRUNK, STEVE (Mr. and Mrs.)

INTERVIEW

#8913

337

BRUNK, ~~STEVE~~ (MR. AND MRS.) INTERVIEW. 8915.
 BIOGRAPHY FORM
 WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
 Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

Field Worker's name Zaidae B. Bland

This report made on (date) October 11, 1937

1. Name Mr. and Mrs. Steve Brunk

2. Post Office Address Altus, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) 509 N. Main St.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month February Day 9 Year 1875

5. Place of birth Virginia

Mrs. Brunk, June 22, 1888, Arkansas

6. Name of Father G. E. Brunk Place of birth Virginia

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Lucy Simms Place of birth Same

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 12.

Mrs. Brunk's parents:

William H. Medearis	Tennessee
Sardenia Crawford	Arkansas

BRUNK, STEVE (MR. AND MRS.)

INTERVIEW.

8913

Interview with Mr. and Mrs. Steve Brunk

We grew up in Arkansas going to the same school, but Mr. Brunk got the roving spirit much earlier than I did. . . . When he talked Texas I would not listen, so he came out alone and it was nearly ten years before I came out with my parents and settled near the present town of Mangum; while Mr. Brunk and his brother were nearer the river to the south, closer to the present town of Tipton. It did not take long for Mr. Brunk to find out that we were out here and to come up to see me about living in a home of my own with him. I had refused to come West with him, but since I was here, it was not hard to persuade ^{me} that I could keep house in a half dugout of my very own, ^{well as} help Mother in hers.

Society.

^a
Sunday School and social occasionally, with picnics on the Fourth of July and fish fries were all the public gatherings we ever had.

In the summer, the preaching was always under the trees or in a grove, and no matter what church

BRUNK, STEVE (MR. AND MRS.)

INTERVIEW. 8915

2

you planned to join the baptism was usually by immersion. I have gone to a baptising when the candidates would all take hands and wade out in the stream together. The preacher would go down the line ducking them under the water one at a time, and the whole line of a hundred or more would have to wait until the last one was ducked for the last prayer before they could wade out.

When I was baptised the ice had to be broken on the water for us to be dipped. I think there were about forty baptised the day I was. The weather was so cold that as many as could pile into a hack were driven out into the water. We got out one at a time and were baptised singly. As soon as one hack full was through, those who had been baptised were driven to the nearest house to change into dry clothes. There was a fire place and a big fire roaring and we did not take cold. I do not remember

BRUNK, STEVE(MR. AND MRS.)

INTERVIEW.

8913.

3

to have been cold at all, although my clothes were so frozen I could hardly get them off, they were so stiff.

Mr. Brunk had his land and cattle before we were married, so I did not have as many of the hardships of pioneer life as the women who accompanied their men folks when they came.

Of course, living in a dugout was bad, but I did not do that but one year. The very worst hardship was having to drink "gyp" water out of a barrel. There was no water nearer than a mile and the water had to be hauled in barrels. There was no ice and that first summer I thought I would starve for a good drink. "Gyp" water is bad enough at any time, but when it is fresh and cool from the well it is not so bad as when it has been in a barrel in the sun for two or three days. We thrived on it, however, for we were seldom sick.

BRUNK, STEVE (MR. AND MRS.) , INTERVIEW. 8913

4

Mr. Brunk said: When I was a young buck, of course I wanted to come West,^{al} though I lived in Arkansas, but the girls I was raised with would not listen to any talk about this part of the country. They thought only prairie dogs, wild Indians and outlaws lived in the Red River Country, so Brother and I came out alone. We came to Vernon, Texas, on the train, caught a wheat wagon and came on north. We bought a horse and saddle apiece, hired out for a little cow punching, and, looking around, fiddled away about a year. ^{le}filed on a claim, dug our hole in the ground, and went back to Arkansas for a few housekeeping things, and with a hope that maybe some of the girls would listen when we talked now, for we knew about the country from having lived in it. But alas, we were doomed to bachelorhood from necessity for another five years; for our girls would not listen and there were no extra girls out here in those days.

BEUNK, STEVE (MR. AND MRS.)

INTERVIEW.

8913.

5

It wasn't much fun, being out in any kind of weather after your stock hunting, building fence, or going into the Indian country to steal wood and coming home to a cold hole in the ground and having to make a fire and cook a bite to eat.

When we went back to Arkansas we got a new Springfield wagon, loaded it with a "bachelor" stove, a bedstead, two chairs with hickory bark bottoms, all the bedding that we needed, iron cooking vessels and a chuck box so full of home cured meats, canned preserves and jellies, that we had to take the hind gate of the wagon out and build the box out ^{in order} to hold all we brought back. We drove a three mule team. One mule was hitched to the end of the tongue of the wagon, and two back on each side of the wagon. The extra mule had to be driven with rigged uplines, so we made them of cotton rope. Our outfit got us here without getting stuck in the river or mud either.

BRUNK, STEVE (MR. AND MRS.)

INTERVIEW.

8913.

6

The quicksand was a hard problem for us first settlers. You would drive up a stream and the water would look so shallow and clear you would think that the crossing would be all right and you would drive in when without warning, your wagon wheels would go down to the hubs and two or three teams would not be able to pull you out, if the suction happened to be just right. I have had to take my wagon to pieces and take it out of the quicksand a piece and a wheel at a time. I have seen people leave their wagons in the river for weeks at a time, before they could get them out. You cannot prize them out; you must dig the sand out from around them.

This whole country was covered with grass taller than the head of a man on horseback, with bare spots where prairie dogs had eaten the vegetation. It is said that dog owls, prairie dogs, and rattlesnakes all lived in the same town and I have run all three

BRUNK, STEVE (MR. AND MRS .) INTERVIEW. 8913

7

into the same hole, but whether they really lived in the same hole or not I never could make sure.

No matter where you wanted to go for supplies you always had to cross Bad River, and it was always a bad river. The first land I owned was two miles south, and three west of the present town of Altus.

I raised everything, Kaffir corn, maize, millet, wheat, oats, rye, ^{and} cane, but no matter what you had to sell, you had to take it to Vernon, or Quanah.

We always stayed at the wagon yard and heated our food on the stove in the wagon yard. We never thought of leaving our team. or of going to a hotel to eat. Three fourths of all the men in that country were bachelors from necessity. We all knew each other and each one was always ready to help a man across a bad stream or to lend anything the other fellow needed and did not have.

BRUNK, STEVE (MR. AND MRS.) INTERVIEW. 8913.

8

The most fun we had was hunting. There were plenty of polecats, coons, possums, skunks, squirrels, deer, antelope, wild cats, wolves and an occasional bear and panther cat.

The best hunting was over in the Indian Reservation, but we always had to watch out for hostile Indians over there, although we were really never molested but were always expecting to be scalped in our blankets.

One night we went over into the Otter bottom to hunt, having with us two men who had never seen a coon. Both were very large men. We were sitting around our camp fire when we heard the dogs give tongue and we knew that they were on a hot trail. We lit out. I climbed the tree but still could not shake him out. I told the boys to take the ax and cut the longest pole they could find. This big new man pulled off his overcoat and put his arms into

BRUNK, STEVE (MR. AND MRS.) INTERVIEW.

8913

9

the sleeves so that the back of the coat was in the front and he picked up the skirt of the coat like a woman does her apron and said, "I am going to catch that coon and see what he looks like." Brother handed me the pole. I put my hat on the pole and advanced it toward the coon. A coon does not like the smell of man. I had to put the hat right into his face before he would jump. Sure enough, he landed right into the spread out coat upsetting the man who fell down on top of the coon and the dogs piled on the top of the man. Such a scramble as we did have. The coon got away and jumped into the deepest hole of water he could get ahead of the dogs. A coon can whip a big pack of dogs in the water, for he takes one dog at a time. He will jump up on the dog's head, take hold of his ears and dive for the bottom of the water and stay until the dog is dead. After losing a dog or two, we hit the coon

BRUNK, STEVE (MR. AND MRS.) INTERVIEW. 8915

10

on the head with our pole and finished him. As we were going on up the creek, the big new man in front, we met a skunk. The man stopped and jumped at the skunk, but the skunk just hoisted his tail and came spraying right at him. The man came back to us, hollering, "Boys, here is a wild cat on wheels. I just tried to scare him and he just rolled himself into a ball and came at me, and my, what is that I smell?"

You can have more fun hunting badgers than most any other animal, they are so cunning. They are not worth anything though. Their flesh is not good and their hide is seldom good for anything. I do not think they do any harm except to make such big holes, that if you are running your horse and he steps into a badger's hole there is always a spilled rider and most usually a

BRUNK, STEVE (MR. AND MRS.) INTERVIEW. 8913

11

broken leg for the horse.

I would always rather go duck hunting at night. You can see the ducks in the sky on the darkest night if you know how to look.

When I took our son on his first duck hunt I think he was about six years old. I hid him on one side of the stream in the grass and told him to watch and I would go on the other side. I shot a duck and he fell right beside the boy where I had told him to hide in the grass. He was ^{so} frightened that it was a long time before I could get him to go again.

Would you know how to get across a stream of water if you came to one that was too deep to wade and you did not know how to swim? Get a big iron wash pot and turn it over your head and walk in and there will be enough air in the

BRUNK, STEVE(MR. AND MRS.) INTERVIEW. 8913

12

pot to do you until you get across and the water will not come up into the pot more than an inch.

I have been living in town for twenty-five years and have lived on three different streets in three different houses and each one has been numbered 509. I have a standing offer to twenty-five dollars to give to anyone who has had a like experience.

I still live off the proceeds of my farms. Although I live in town in my comfortable brick home and sit by a gas fire and have running water in the house and a Frigidaire to keep my water cool, we are not as healthy as we were when we drank out of cattle tracks in the mud and from a barrel at the house.