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CANTRELL, AR.

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

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CANTRELL, MARY V,

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Field worker's name Nannie Lee Burns

This report made on (date) April 20, 1938

1. This legend was secured from (name) Mrs. Mary V. Cantrell

Address Commerce, Oklahoma

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

If Indian, give tribe _____

2. Origin and history of legend or story _____

3. Write out the legend or story as completely as possible. Use blank sheets and attach firmly to this form. Number of sheets attached 8

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Nannie Lee Burns,
Investigator,
April 20, 1938.

An Interview with Mrs. Mary V. Cantrell,
Commerce, Oklahoma.

My parents, Mr. and Mrs. V. Shipley, were Tennesseans and I, Mary V. Cantrell nee Shipley was born in McMinn County, Tennessee, August 29, 1861. My first memory is of my negro mammy and our life at home was that of a typical Southern family with weaving and spinning done in the home by the darkies. I never saw my mother do much of such work until after we came to the southern part of Missouri but she knew how it should be done and watched the negroes work. When young I attended the academy at Calhoun and we had to cross the Hiwassee River. We had the habit of walking the ties on the railroad bridge until one day one of our school mates was walking along and was caught on the bridge and as the end of the ties did not stick out long enough for him to stay on while the train passed him, he had to drop into the river and that broke the rest of us of the habit.

Mother's father, Grandfather Shelton, gave her a farm that he owned near Seneca, Missouri, on the Burkhart Prairie and

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when I was about fourteen we came there to live. Life here was different from what we had been accustomed to as we did not have the darkies to work for us as we had had before we came here. We now walked two miles to school and the horses worked through the week and it was only occasionally that Father would let us ride the horses on Sunday. There were few roads and no bridges in this country and if the streams were "up" why you just had to wait for them to run down. Mother saw that her supply of linens was running down and being thrifty she traded some bed quilts to a lady in Joplin, Missouri, for a loom and we girls now helped with the weaving in the home.

In 1881, I married Fate Cantrell, a widower, who had a farm in Greenwood County, Kansas. We thought that we were keeping the marriage a secret and when we arrived that evening at the preacher's house to be married, the house and yard were full of people. The next morning I went to housekeeping on my husband's hundred and sixty acre farm, taking care of his six-year old son, cooking for three hired hands and milking twenty cows. We have always had lots of people around us and lots of

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company and plenty of work but with it all I have always found time to get those who came something to eat. The Reverend Henry Gable married us and we lived that summer on my husband's farm on Fall River. The next year we sold out there and went to Canyon City, Colorado, where my husband worked for seven months as guard. Then we came to Seligman, Missouri, where he entered the saloon business and it was a bad business venture for after some time there we left there and my husband rented the Lewis Ralston place on Horse Creek not a great ways from Hetchum. Here I got my first experiences in early Territorial life. I had been used to comfortable houses and surroundings but here we had only a small box house, one room, without any of the other improvements such as good outbuildings, barns or orchards. I found plenty to do for my family was increasing in size and I had neighbors who had no more than I had and many calls were made on women for time and assistance in sickness, and I always tried to respond even if my own work went undone. Then, too, we always kept a large number of milch cows and I have always prided myself on the butter that I made and the merchant always was ready to buy all that I could bring to him. We stayed here

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until we could get on our feet a little for I earned all I could with my butter and chickens and my husband was a saw-mill man. He had a mill on Fall River when we were married and also had one on Horse Creek.

By now the towns of Miami and Fairland were beginning to grow and after looking the situation over, Mr. Cantrell decided that this would offer him a better opportunity for the sale of lumber than where he was located. People would not have to haul it so far. He purchased one-hundred acres north-east of Miami. Two miles north and two miles east. Lykins and his family had been adopted by the Peorias and so they could even now sell a part of their land.

Again we began to make a home. There were no rural schools and every morning I would send a wagon load of children to the home of Mrs. J. C. Lykins who taught a school in her home just about a mile east of Miami. Later my husband sawed the lumber for a small one-room building which was placed near us and known as the Cantrell School. With the help of the neighbors the building was put up and then I came to Miami and told all of my acquaintances that we were going to have a box supper

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there on Saturday night to raise money to buy seats and the other needed things. A large number of the Miami people came out; some on a hay-frame. We had a cake for the prettiest girl and the Miami people put up Miss Ann Berry from Miami and she got the cake against a girl from our neighborhood and as the folks from Miami were leaving some one told them to come again but added "You won't get the cake next time unless you pay for it."

My husband having the sawmill we had the first telephone in the neighborhood and it was the place that all of the folks came to call a doctor, and they would always add that they would like to have me come over and help the folks. "Fate" drove two horse and I had one that I drove named "Gyp". One day a neighbor called for a doctor from our house and asked me to go over to his house which I did, leaving an incubator that I had setting in care of those-at ho and when I returned the eggs were cooked. I continued my milking of

numerous cows and raising of chickens but I purchased a loom and began weaving and since then I have woven many yards and have made more than \$1,000.00 with my loom.

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During the summer months, my husband would take the engine from the sawmill and run a threshing machine but would always leave some one in the shanty at the creek to watch the saw set. One summer the couple that he left there, Alice and Louise Veal, canned for me one hundred half gallon cans of wild blackberries. Much of the lumber that went into the early buildings of Miami came from my husband's mill and during the months that the mills were in operation, each day would see a string of wagons there for the lumber. Often some would have to wait until theirs was sawed. This hauling gave several men employment.

The thing that remains vividly with me was the time when the cloudburst struck Seneca one night. You know that Seneca is built in a valley surrounded on all sides by steep hills. One of my friends, Lizzie Livingston, was spending the night with Eva Bell Lemon. The storm struck just after dark and it sounded like a great roar as the water poured down on the town from all sides and the Lemon home was turned half around by the swirling waters. Before Lizzie and Eva Bell could get out of the house and start up the hill they were in water waist deep. Mr. Lemon stopped to cut the cow loose and had to

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swim a part of the way. The two girls were upstairs and boats came by twice to take them out but both times the girls told them they would wait and for the boatmen to go after the other folks first and all through that night Lizzie and Eva Bell sat in the upstairs window while the water reached the floor of the second story. Guy Lemons swam with his wife to a tree and put her in a tree for safety. I do not remember any one being drowned but one lady died from exposure. This wall of water is still recalled by many of the older people as it moved down Lost Creek, spreading out over the country.

My husband was one of the early Masons in Miami. After we "went broke" and his health failed, he entered the Masonic Home and as our children were all grown, a year before he died I went to the home and secured part time employment and the privilege of caring for him. When I returned with his body to Commerce after the funeral I lacked \$15.00 of being able to pay the expenses. I was past sixty years old as this was in 1916 and I had to begin over again, which I did by securing the laundry work of some of my friends and I paid up the

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balance of his expenses on the weekly installment plan and when I had saved enough to make a payment on a little place, I did so. Later, when I could, I bought another in this way; and today after sixteen years of this I no longer wash and iron. I have \$4,000.00 invested in Commerce property that I have earned myself. I have had good friends and those whom I was once able to help have shown their appreciation of it and after these years I find that it still pays to be a good neighbor.