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INDEX CARDS

Chickasaw Nation-1868  
Home-Log House  
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J. Y. Bryce  
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Foods  
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Texas Trail

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

Field Worker's name Miss Charline M. Culbertson. Kiowa, Oklahoma.

This report made on (date) June 17 1937

1. Name Mrs. Fannie J. Bell.

2. Post Office Address Kiowa, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) \_\_\_\_\_ City. \_\_\_\_\_

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month September. Day 18 Year 1863

5. Place of birth Atlanta, Georgia.

6. Name of Father W. H. Bryce Place of birth Georgia.

Other information about father Buried in Texas.

7. Name of Mother Francis Merviva Sasoff Place of birth Georgia.

onia (Turner) Bryce.

Other information about mother Buried in Texas.

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 10 Pages.

Charline Culbertson, Kiowa.  
Field Worker.

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"EARLY LIFE IN INDIAN TERRITORY"

I moved with my parents, Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Bryce, to Indian Territory, Chickasaw Nation, in 1868. We moved from Grason county, Texas, having lived there two years after coming from Atlanta, Georgia. Our trip from Georgia was by boat. One instance I remember in particular was when we came ashore it was necessary for us to ride in a very odd vehicle to get into the town. It was pulled on a railtrack by a single mule in center of track. We had to crawl in back of it to get in. It was what we would term a street car.

In moving from Texas we came in covered wagon with horse team and oxen. Our wagon was home made as father was a wagon and cabinet maker and farmed as well as doing his carpenter work.

We located on the farm of Jude Dickerson, an old Indian Judge, across the river from Denison, Texas, in the Chickasaw Nation. An old Indian Doctor by the name of Allen persuaded by father to come to the territory to prove up our rights. Dr. Allen was a very dear friend of my father. He died at the age of one hundred and three. You always saw him wearing a britch clout; he never wore clothes.

He spent most of his time lying around in the creek in the hot summer time.

Our house was a double log house with puncheon floor which was to split the logs and use the smooth side up, then flatten each end that would fit on the sleeper which was an oak log. A phrase in those days was "every one to their puncheon", which would mean all dancers in their places.

My father fought in the Civil War; however, that was when we lived in Georgia. I remember how saving and economical we had to be. One day my grandmother Bryce had made pie and I threw away the crust as I didn't like to eat it but my grandmother scolded me and told me anything that was good could not be thrown away so she made me eat it. The Yankees robbed our house several times taking food and every thing. They came to capture my father several times but he would always hide out. They threatened to burn our house and kill my father if mother did not tell where he was hiding. After the war was over and the Yankees were marching through I saw them and as I was so small I thought they were coming after us so I ran and hid under my mother's chair.

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The only thing we brought with us from Georgia of importance was an old cord bed. I am still in possession of a smoothing plane, foot ads, grooving plane, tongue plane and a plane which was used in marking rounded edges. These are about seventy-five years old and were used by my father.

<sup>QUERTON LOVE</sup>  
Ovington was the name of the Governor of the Chickasaw nation at the year of 1868.

My father had one hundred head of goats, a few milk cows, and some hogs. I remember how I hated to hold the goats while my father chopped their heads off to butcher.

We made our light by twisting rags in a pan of grease and this was burned. Our doors were made of clapboards.

We children made our extra money by taking the cotton and spinning and making ropes and plow lines. We used the old time cane bottom chairs or cow hides and some with hickory splits. We had to carry our water about a half mile from a big boiling spring in a sand bed. We had no stoves but cooked over the fire place. To bake we had a skillet and lid and used the pot racks to boil. Our irons were placed near the hot coals in the fire place. We made our own brooms and what we called our every day brooms

were made from broom weed, however we some times raised broom corn. Our fuel was wood. The Chickasaw Indian man would always let his fire go out and many times they have come to our house to borrow fire. We would never let our fire go out as we had no matches. My father knew how to take two flint rocks and rub them together and get a piece of cotton afire but the Indians did not know how to do this. We could keep our fire by putting ashes over it. We made our fences by taking oak boards and quartering them up. We fed our cows cotton seed but most of the people threw it away because they thought they had no use for it.

The Indians were the dearest people in the world. They would drive up to our place and if father happened not to see them they would set on their ponies in front of our place and never say a word until father would see them. They would ask for some tobacco and would give a venison ham or maybe a couple of turkeys in payment. Turkeys were plentiful. There were several nice orchards and lots of wild fruit. Sob Love had a very nice orchard and would let my father gather fruit and it would not cost him a cent.

In the Chickasaw nation the man would give the girl he wanted to marry a venison ham and the woman would give the man an ear of corn. This would hold them together.

When an Indian man was to be shot for some crime he had committed, the day he was to be there he would always come as it was not necessary to place them in jail. The Indian man was very peaceable until he was under the influence of liquor, then he would be mean.

I have attended several pushoffla dances for the sick. A big fire was made and the patient was laid nearby but they had guards to stand by to see that nothing passed between the fire and the patient, not even a dog. The fire was supposed to be burning up the evil spirit. The Indians would then form in several circles, and dance. When the dance was over, they would have a big pot of tom fuller to eat. I have never known a patient to die after one of these dances.

They made no runs in this part of the territory.

We always traveled by wagon or horseback. My family did not travel around, instead, we stayed in the same place. In order to give us children an education my mother took us over to Denison and stayed with us while



we went to school and my father stayed in the territory and made a crop. This is where my father died at the age of forty-two and within a week's time my mother died at the age of forty. Both are buried at Denison, Texas. We children remained in the Chickasaw nation another year and made a crop before moving to the Choctaw nation in 1873. We came to be near our Uncle, Rev. J. Y. Bryce, who was a Methodist preacher and missionary here to the Indians.

We located two miles south of what is now Kiowa. I worked for one dollar a week and my room and board. The rest of the children lived on the dollar; however, they had cows and hogs to help them out. Later I worked for three dollars a week at the section house where the floating gang were completing the railroad from Denison to St. Louis. You could flag a freight train down any time if you wanted to go to McAlester or Stringtown to trade. The only thing you had to do was get out on the track and flag with your pocket handkerchief. McAlester and Stringtown were the trading posts.

My sisters, brother and I attended school in the Bryce Valley, where Rev. Bryce had erected a school and

church. This was located about three miles south and east of Kiowa; however the building does not stand today.

The deer was plentiful in the valley. On our way to school many mornings we have seen deer playing like little kittens. We have seen as many as fifteen or twenty in a bunch. Most of the children who attended the school were full bloods or half, very few whites. It was a general literary school, and during vacation we had a special session of writing school that I attended. I took a prize for the best improvement.

Our principal foods were wild foods such as berries and grapes and wild meats. Our stock was never kept up and fed--they always roamed the range. The wild meat was much softer meat than the corn fed meat. In the spring we would pack our butter down in jars with about an inch of salt on top and seal it and set it in the cellar for the winter months because the cows got poor in the winter and we could not make butter. I am still in possession of a bowl I made butter in during that time. I also have a quilt made out of my mother's calico dresses, also a quilt made before the Civil War which was made by my grandmother Bryce in Georgia, an old clock of my father's which is about

seventy years old.

In 1883 I married John William Bell. At this time they had built a store and had a post office in Kiowa. We located in a little box room near the section house at Kiowa where I worked while my husband worked on the railroad. This box room is still standing but has been added to. It is used as a residence at the present time and owned by my son, Arch Bell of McAlester. This residence is located just back of the present post office in Kiowa.

We always had our summer camp meetings. They were held at Sulphur Springs near what is now Reynolds. At church we would plan and set a date which would be convenient for everyone as at this time they were beginning to make crops and the date had to be set when we would have our crops laid by. Everyone was fed well at these meetings. Every other day a family would donate a beef and divide it among the campers. The first meeting was led by Rev. J. Y. Bryce, and Rev. C. H. Dickson; then the next year by Rev. Bryce, Rev. A. B. Johnson, and Rev. Requel. We had them for eight<sup>ht</sup> or ten years. Later the meeting site was moved to Adams Spring near Pittsburg; but the people lost interest as they would not let them

know when they were to have it or take very much consideration of the people as they should.

Perryville, some three miles north of what is now Savanna, is remembered as one of the battle fields during the Civil War where the Cox or Custer's army was stationed. We have stopp'd at this location on our way to McAlester for supplies. It was necessary for us to stay all night at this point on our trip to and from McAlester. The trip would take us three days, which is now only a thirty minute drive. This location was also an old stage stand.

Prices were very cheap. Five cents a yard for calico. When we came here from Texas we sold our corn in the field for fifteen cents a bushel.

The old Texas and Kansas trail came near what is now Kiowa. From Lime Stone Gap, it drifted one mile west of Kiowa and straight north. In 1906 I took over the telephone lines from McAlester. The franchise was bought from Mr. W. Cason one year after he had installed it at Kiowa. The lines went as far as Lime Stone Gap and Wardville. By 1908 I had increased my plant and had installed one hundred and seventy-five telephones. I owned this until the year of 1928.

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I have been active in all civic work. I served as chairman of the township fair for eighteen years, also was a member of the executive board for the Pittsburg county fair for eighteen years. I am permanent supervisor of Oak Hill cemetery and of Kiowa City Park.

My son, Arch, served in the World War.