

VAN BRUNT, A. E. (MRS.)

INTERVIEW #8199

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

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Field Worker's name Augusta H. Custer.This report made on (date) August 9, 1937. 193

1. Name Mrs. A. E. Van Brunt.
2. Post Office Address Watonga, Oklahoma.
3. Residence address (or location) West part of town, near grade school.
4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month January Day 18 Year 1856.
5. Place of birth Prairie County, Illinois.

6. Name of Father Joseph Campbell Place of birth Kentucky.Other information about father Never left his native state.7. Name of Mother Mary Campbell Place of birth N. Carolina.

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 6.

Augusta H. Custer,  
Interviewer.

August 9, 1937.

An Interview With Mrs. A. E.  
Van Brunt, Watonga, Oklahoma.

I am the wife of Dr. Van Brunt, a man who practised medicine in Oklahoma in the Territorial days.

Dr. Van Brunt came to Oklahoma before I came with our four children. I came to Kingfisher from Colorado on the train then went to Watonga, a distance of thirty-five miles, in a hack. The hack carried such a load the day I came that I had to sit on a board that was fastened some way onto the back of the spring seat. It was anything but comfortable with the other baggage loaded on the hack. The hack also carried mail and hauled anything that the merchants wanted. Then there was my baggage and all the children and four other passengers.

Mr. Doud, the mail carrier, was crippled up some way but he was strong and carried a gun strapped onto his belt which was full of cartridges and all this looked rather wild to me.

We had many adventures. One of the worst things that law abiding citizens had to contend with was the danger from outlaws. These outlaws were bands of men who robbed small stores and sometimes drove off the cattle or a good horse.

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They would come into a store with handkerchiefs tied over their faces and command everybody present to line up along the wall and then they would search all those present, rob the cash box and clear out.

One time Dr. Van Brunt was in Mr. Yagger's store and the outlaws came in and lined everyone up and told Mr. Yagger to go into the back room and get the cash; he went and came back with \$300.00 but this was not all the money that was back there. One outlaw hit Mr. Yagger on the head with a gun and then they left. They were not caught after this hold up.

The Indians did not give much trouble but one time a young woman was herding cattle and was attacked and beaten by a young Indian named Howling Wolf. Howling Wolf was caught and placed in the jail by the white men. Howling Wolf's wife went up and down the streets of Watonga praying. She would clasp her hands and looking toward the sky she would kneel down every little while and mutter. No one ever knew how Howling Wolf escaped from jail but sixteen hundred Indians surrounded the town beating tom-toms and dressed in war paint and feathers. It was an anxious night for the men, women and children in Watonga. A squaw man got on a horse and rode to Fort Reno to get the help of the soldiers.

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The soldiers came but Howling Wolf was protected by his friends and the officers did not get hold of him. That was many years ago and no one today knows what became of him.

The whole country was excited and on the outlook for Howling Wolf.

The Government used to give the Indians meat. I have seen the Indians drive these b-e-e-v-e-s out and shoot them down with bows and arrows, then skin the cattle and divide the meat and carry it away. The Indians eat all the meat very thin; almost scrape it after it has been dried for some time. They eat this meat with bread.

The Indians like to take medicine from the white doctor but they do not like to pay for the medicine. One time Mr. Path's wife was bitten by a rattlesnake. They tried to get some whiskey from the doctor but he was not at home. The Indians knew some kind of weed and they made tea from this and she drank it and they applied the leaves to the bite and she got well.

The Indians break up bad colds and pneumonia by sweating in a sweat house. One time, Mr. Burdell sent Mr. Dr. Van Brunt to come and see that the doctor must

cross the North Canadian at flood stage. They asked Mr. Bonto how the river was and he told them where to cross. When they were driving across with a buckboard the horses went into the quicksand and all that was sticking out of the water were the horses' ears for a few minutes, but the horses swam and pulled the buckboard after them, although the rig dipped around a lot in that muddy water.

The Indians had much trouble with sore eyes and the treatment given by Doctor Van Brunt helped them but they would not pay him if they could get out of it.

One time Iron Shirt had been riding a bad horse and had been thrown and in the fall he had dislocated his shoulder. He suffered with this and a dislocation was something that the Indians did not know how to treat. Dr. Van Brunt was called and he took me with him. Iron Shirt was sitting up on a bed and he could not get his hand in front of him. It was twisted back as the shoulder was out of place. Dr. Van Brunt told me to get up on the bed back of the Indian and he told me just where to take hold and for me to hold on like my life depended upon it. I did like he said and the best I could and in a while Dr. Van Brunt had the shoulder straightened out and then he banded the Indian. But we were told afterward that we were

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hardly out of sight until they had taken off all the bandages and that Iron Shirt had made the remark. "White man keep big fool". He got well, but when it came to settle for the world the doctor had to take a pony, and was lucky to get that.

A butcher once gave an Indian 25¢ worth of meat for a pony and this butcher was James Baxter.

Working with the Indians is very fascinating. We knew a woman who was a missionary working here with the Cheyennes and Arapahoes for many years. We always called her Mrs. Janes and she lived northwest of Watonga; she visited the Indian homes and taught the women how to cook and to sew. When she died she requested that she be buried in the Indian cemetery at Ponca City and this was done.

Everybody was interested in making a bridge across the North Canadian River. Mr. Burrell and Doctor Van Brunt hauled the lumber fifteen miles from a sawmill located north and west of Watonga. This bridge was just east of where No. 8 Highway crosses the river now.

The women of the community helped to raise money in various ways to help pay for the making and building of that bridge. One way we raised money was to give dances

in the court house. All the money taken in would go to swell the bridge fund except what was needed to pay the musicians.

The court house was torn down several years ago after the new one was built.