

VAN SICKLE, MARY

INTERVIEW #13304

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

Field Worker's name Nannie Lee Burns

This report made on (date) March 1 1938

1. Name Mrs. Mary Van Sickle

2. Post Office Address 54 A-3 Miami, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) _____

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month December Day 5 Year 1878

5. Place of birth Lincoln County, Tennessee

6. Name of Father Lon Bateman Place of birth _____

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Martha Bateman Place of birth _____

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 8

Nannie Lee Burns
Investigator
March 21, 1938

An interview with Mary Van Sickle
524 A-5 W. Miami, Oklahoma.

My father was Don Bateman who died when I was very small. My mother was Martha Bateman-nee McGhee, who died when I was four years old.

I, their younger daughter, was born December 25, 1878, in Lincoln County, Tennessee. My older sister and I were brought to Missouri when I was about eight years old and while I was there I attended school and stayed part of the time with an elderly couple who had only one daughter. They liked me and wanted to keep me as their own but when I was twelve my sister who had married moved with her husband to the Indian Territory and brought me with them though I wanted to stay with my old friends but my sister thought that I was large enough to work. Our first home was on Hudson Creek south of Miami and the folks rented land from Aunt Mary Moore, a Cherokee. I did not get to go to school any more and helped with the work at the house and also in the field. I threatened to run away and go back to my old friends in Missouri but it was not an easy matter in those days to run away as there were no roads and I had no money so I stayed with them two years until I heard that Mr. James K. Moore and his wife, Aunt Sis, as I always called her, wanted a girl so a friend took me to their home which was North and

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and west of Miami. Aunt Sis was a Peoria Indian. They were good to me and I stayed with them for three years.

Aunt Sis taught me how to cook and to do house-work and sew and all the things that a girl should know. Uncle Jim was a white man and had by good management built a nice home and at that time had quite a few cattle and here I met my husband, Frank Barnett, a Cherokee, who was a cowboy and who came with many others to the home of Aunt Sis and Uncle Jim.

We were married in the July before I was fifteen and we had no home. When I had lived with my sister we had a very poor one as it was a small log house with a dirt and stick chimney and to add to our discomfort because of cramped quarters we all had the chills and fever the first year. My husband secured work as the keeper of seven hundred head of cattle and two hundred head of horses belonging to Frank Conner, Ho ley Bell and Mr. La Coyteaux who were grazing them on the range near Bluejacket. That summer we lived in a small tent pitched under two trees. Cattle were everywhere around us and I

was afraid to stay at the tent so the greater part of my time, I rode the range with Frank. There were many negroes living on Big Timbered Hill near us and they would come to the large pond below us to fish. One day, I was staying at home and sitting under the shade piece quilt and hearing a step behind me, I looked up and there stood a big negro. It scared me but he asked me for something to eat. So I got up and went into the tent and while there I stuck a big bowie knife in my belt and then I took him something to eat and he took the food and left. Another rainy morning when I had not gone with my husband when I woke there stood three little negro kiddies in my tent door. When I asked them what they wanted, they said they were hungry but I told them I did not have anything to eat then and told them to go home.

The cattle were more trouble when it rained and my husband would have to stay with the herd all the time. When it looked like it was going to storm, the cattle were likely to stampede and they were afraid of the storm and sometimes the only way that Frank could do anything with them would be to shoot the leader as there were no fences and they could go for many miles on the open range and many would be lost if this was allowed. The shooting of the leader would

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break the stampede and then Frank could control them. They had their troubles with the "cattle thieves" there. Quite often, they would find a cow missing or they would find the head of a calf but they could never find where any cattle had been driven off the range. So finally the men got together and had a detective sent to that part of the country to trace the missing cattle. A search was made and not far away there was found a cellar full of dressed beef so the cattle could not be traced. During the rainy season when my husband had to be with the cattle all the time and the weather was too bad for me to be with him

we got a little girl from Bluejacket to stay with me at the tent. Her name was Ida Downing.

That summer, the negroes living on Big Timbered Hill and those living near gave a big negro picnic. They killed several hogs and had a big barbecue. Many white people went and I was among the number. The negroes served dinner to the white people first and after they had been served the negroes had their own dinner. They had much fine singing and that day preachers from five different denominations preached there. This picnic was held out

of doors under a big brush arbor.

The next year we moved to Hudson Creek and my husband worked or rather farmed for Mr. Weir on the Moore place. After this we bought a little place on the Timbered Hill. A hunter, Mr. Hoach, lived there and he was a friend of my husband and that winter they hunted and sold the game for a living. They made quite a bit of money. There was a big swampy lake not far below us and here they killed many ducks and jack snipes. Also many prairie chickens from the surrounding prairie. They did not dress this game but it was "drawn" and once a week they made a shipment of their game from Chetopa, Kansas, to Kansas City, Missouri. My husband was a good shot and, of course, they killed other game as well. One day firing into a covey of blackbirds, he killed twenty-seven at one shot. He gathered these up and brought them home and asked me to make him a blackbird pie. That winter there was a deep snow and on Christmas Day he went rabbit hunting and killed twenty one rabbits with a club. He brought these rabbits home and we dressed them and packed them in a pig jar and put it on the north side of the house where the

meat froze and so we had rabbit meat until spring.

We next lived on ^a little farm near Bluejacket and then we moved to the Frank Connor home-place north and east of Fairland where Frank worked for him and helped with his cattle. Here he was paid by the month. Next we lived in Miami for a while and then we moved back to the Hudson Creek neighborhood four miles north of Fairland on the place now known as the Follis place. Here we purchased the improvements which consisted of a two-room box house and a old native lumber shed. Here we settled down and my husband allotted this as his home. I was at this time known as an "adopted white Cherokee" and I chose the land lying west across the road from the house as my land. We had two older children both girls and for the second girl to obtain good land, my husband purchased from Mr. A. M. Cooter here in Miami his claim and his improvements for \$130.00. Mr. Cooter like myself was styled a "white adopted Cherokee". Later, we built the present two story home that is there now and made this our home until after my husband's death. After statehood my husband

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who was well known over the county, made the race for sheriff and while on this race, he became well acquainted with John Hopkins who lived at his father's home near Veneca, Missouri.

He knew many strange things and peculiar conditions in those early days. People came to this new country for various reasons. One of our neighbors had come to this country and married a Cherokee girl and they had been very successful financially and had a family of several children. Then one day when the man was sent from home a lady accompanied by a gentleman came to the home and the lady asked for the husband of this Cherokee girl and was told that he was not at home but would return shortly and was asked if she cared to come into the house and wait to see him. The strangers went into the house and waited and when the man returned the strange lady asked him if he remembered her and he said that he did not. She then told him that he was mistaken as she was his wife and remembered him, that he had deserted her when their two children were small. She further told him that she

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had come with the proper papers to prove her claim and had brought her attorney but added, "This woman here is innocent and I do not want to take you from these little children so you may pay me \$9,000.00 and I will release you". The husband protested that it would be impossible for him to raise that sum but the stranger assured him that she was familiar with his resources and knew that he could raise this amount so all he could do was to pay her which he did and she and the attorney departed and this man continued to live here as one of our close neighbors.

My husband's father came from Atlanta, Georgia, and his mother, Samantha Hillen, now past ninety-two, is still living in Fairland. She is a Cherokee and she was born in the Neutral Strip on Shoal Creek near Galena, Kansas. My husband was born near Grand River and after his death I came to Miami with my two daughters and son and some twelve years ago I married John Van Tickle who lived only a few years.