

WADDLE, DELTA.

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

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Field Worker's name Nannie Lee BurnsThis report made on (date) February 5 19381. Name Mrs. Delta Waddle2. Post Office Address Miami, Oklahoma3. Residence address (or location) 106 C Southwest4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month June Day 3 Year 18805. Place of birth Indiana6. Name of Father Niles Brown Place of birth Indiana

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Mary Brown Place of birth Indiana

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 18.

Nannie Lee Burns,
Investigator,
February 3, 1938.

Interview with Mrs. Delta Waddle,
Miami, Oklahoma.

My father, Niles Brown, was born in Indiana, April 2, 1849. My mother, Mary Brown, was born in Indiana, June 3, 1849. I, the oldest girl in the family, which consisted of five older brothers and three younger sisters, was born in Indiana, June 3, 1880.

In the fall of 1887, my father decided that he would bring his young family to the Indian country, hoping that the new country would offer in its development opportunities to his family better than the older state did in which they were living. We made the trip in wagons drawn by oxen and were accompanied by a young man besides the family. We were six weeks on the trip. We left Indiana the latter part of October and camped along the way, and soon we children grew to look forward to the great roaring fires that father and the older boys would build at night. One of the children was sick on the road and that delayed us. One cold rainy night in December of 1887,

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Father drove up to an empty log cabin not far from Harlan's Ferry and found that the family that had been staying there must have moved out that day for there was still a fire in the fireplace. The building contained a homemade table and a few worthless things, but to us it was home that night. Mother cooked our supper that night over the fireplace.

The next morning as we were having breakfast, a negro man by the name of Jack Let came to the cabin. We children had been taught to call flap-jacks, "negro-ears." My father winked at one of my brothers and he asked, as big as you please, "Pass the negro ears." Jack proved very helpful to us and did us many favors. We stayed in this cabin for a few weeks until Father could lease a claim near Harlan's Ferry. This place was at the edge of the timber and so on one side we had the prairie and behind us the timber. This house consisted of one box room and a log kitchen banked around the sides and with a dirt floor. This room was warmer than the other room and how we would scamper to the kitchen when we would get up on cold mornings. We lived here that first year and here we children

had many adventures and narrow escapes, for we were unused to this country.

My father and the boys were in the woods one day and as I was the oldest girl, Mother sent me at noon to tell them that dinner would soon be ready. I was small and had never had anyone tell me about an echo and so I had not gone very far into the woods when I called, "Oh, Hank, Oh, Lew", my brothers' names. The echo came back clearly and I thought that they were teasing me and that the sound came from the hill (just across the hill), so I started that way. When I did not find them, I called again, and with the same response. In this way I followed and called all afternoon. As I was going down a path down a hill I looked back and saw what I took to be a big hoop rolling down the path after me. I stepped out of the path and as it passed I thought they were still teasing me and hiding from me. Later I learned that this was a hoop snake. Soon I came to a spring that I recognized and there in the earth around the spring were the tracks of a panther. I had been crying for some time and now I broke into a run and reached

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home completely exhausted. We had been told not to go into the woods alone, but as we had come from a country that did not have any wild animals, we knew nothing of the danger.

We three older girls had three kittens. The boys killed them one day and at a little distance from the house, they hung the kittens by their tails to a tree. We found them and each day we would slip away and go look at our dead kittens hanging to the limb. One day when we visited the tree our kittens were gone. When we came closer and looked we saw what we thought was a big calf lying on the limb where the kittens had been. Later in a show I saw my calf and learned that it was a panther.

My youngest brother Arthur would follow Hank to the field where he was ploughing. One day he lay down on Hank's coat and went to sleep. When quitting time came Hank did not think of his coat and came on to the house. Every one was busy with the evening work and as it would be after dark before we would have supper sometimes, some of the children would be asleep so he was not missed. That night there was a severe storm and the lightning was so severe

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that Father got up to look around and as he was standing in the yard, my mother joined him and Father said that he thought that he heard a child crying. Mother thought that he was mistaken, but he was not convinced and went into the house and checked over the children and found one missing. He returned outside and went in the direction of the sounds he had heard until he met his little son, who had been aroused by the noise of the storm. Fortunately in the darkness he had come towards the house.

Another day while living here my brother Hank went hunting. He saw an animal in the hollow of a tree and he fired twice at it. The animal bared his teeth at him and Hank turned towards home. When he reached home he did not have his gun and had not missed it in his fright. He returned with company, and found the gun where he had dropped it.

The second year we leased a place up at Big Timber Hill and here we had a comfortable two-story four room house and not so many narrow escapes as we had had in the wooded section farther down. The third year, we lived on the Smith

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farm, four miles northwest of Miami on the Neosho River.

By this time, I was larger and would work very hard to get Mother to tell my father in the evening when he came home of something that I had done that day.

One Saturday morning, my parents left us children at home for the day. After I had done up the house-work, I decided that I would pick a mess of fresh peas from our two long rows that were along the river bank and have them ready for supper when they returned home that evening. I was alone and had quite a bit gathered when I noticed a large snake's face right in front of my face and could see his fangs darting back and forth right in front of me. I was scared and my peas fell to the ground and as I looked at the snake, I could see his eyes increase in size until they looked to me to be an inch or so across. Screaming, I turned my head from him but it seemed that I would be forced to look back at him and then would turn my head from him again. My screams reached the ears of a man, John Fatton, who was fishing in the river near. He had been asked by my father at any time that he heard any of the

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children scream that he would see what was the trouble, so he came to where I was and as he neared me and the snake saw him, turned and ran out on a tree that was hanging over the bank near and dropped out of sight. I collapsed and John picked me up and carried me to the house, bathed my face in cold water and sat with me in his arms on the porch for quite a while. When the folks returned that evening I could not talk to them of what had happened and if the man had not been there to have told them, I could not have told it. The snake had crawled up to where I was standing and I just thought that the hissing noise that he made was the wind whistling through the trees and he had raised himself to my side without my noticing him. The following day, Sunday, all of the neighbors came with their guns and looked for him but he could not be found but they stayed around and that afternoon about four o'clock, the snake came crawling up from under the bluff. The men shot it and when measured, it was found to be over eight feet long.

Here we had more people closer to us and better trails but where we had lived the first year there were no roads.

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The trails that we used as roads were blazed by cutting a notch on a tree on either side of the trail and when this one got too muddy to travel you just found another way around and then you blazed that one.

After three years of farming, my father decided he would move to the Horseshoe Lake just northwest of Miami and work for Al Cook, who had a sawmill there. All went well until the spring rains and we were surrounded by water. As the waters rose, they raised the floor of our tent until we were surrounded. Now our flour and meal gave out and the second morning my brother Hank started to get us something to eat. He took off his clothes and swam out carrying them and returned that evening with a twenty-four pound sack of flour and for a large part of the last mile he had had to carry his clothes and flour and swim the low places. That night Mother mixed us up some biscuits with water and we thought them the best that we had ever tasted.

Father realized that it was not advisable to keep his family here in this low section. He heard that they were planning to start a town where Miami now stands, so he took

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his oxen and moved his family and located south of West Central and west of E Street, Southwest, between the spring that then was near D Street, Southwest, and First Avenue, Southwest, and the river on the southwest. This was May, 1891. Knowing that he did not have the money to build a house, Father fixed our tent for a permanent home by flooring it and then siding it up. Above the siding he made a framework for the roof. The sides and the top he covered with a thick layer of hay and then on the outside of this as far as it was boxed, he put up another wall of boards but the roof was covered with our wagon sheet. I have often heard it said that Father built the first house in Miami and also that he built it out of baled hay but we did not have baled hay then. We lived in this until after Father purchased the land at the corner of C Street and 1st Avenue SW where he built our home on the lot north of us here.

HOMEBUILDING.

Father did not have the money to buy the lumber^{all} at one time. He bought it at Chetopa, Kansas, and he and others would float the lumber down the Neosho on rafts and then

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Father hauled it from the river bank to the site of the new home with his oxen. He was a carpenter, and he drove the first nail in Miami, laid the first brick and had the first lime kiln. He worked for others and built the new home a little at a time while we continued to live in the hay-lined tent. My mother was the fifth woman to come to Miami for then the tented city consisted of six tents. The tents were occupied by the families of J. C. Nichols, Tuttle, James Connor and his mother, Steve Dristie and my father's family; George Nicely, the pioneer mill and elevator man, was a single man and lived alone in his small tent. Father assembled his lumber and shingles and kept the lumber piled up for a year before he started the house. In all we lived in the tent about eighteen months and during the second winter a sleet storm broke the roof of our house. The new house had the walls up and the roof on but no doors and windows, so Father moved the tent and set it up inside of the new house and we lived in it a while this way. The Connor home, a large one-room building across the street, was completed with

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its windows and doors about ten days before we got ours in. This one room has been added to and is still a part of the house that James Conner now lives in.

EARLY LIFE.

While we were living in the tents, George Nicely had the fever in his tent and as anyone passed they would stop and see if he wanted anything and get him a drink and set a bucket of water by him. Mrs Connor baked him biscuits and while he had the fever, carried him buttermilk. His tent was near the bluff.

I was only eleven and then there were only four little girls here, my two younger sisters, Nettie Miller, the daughter of Dr. Miller, and myself. We had only three ponies counting the two that my father owned, so when we would find the white one that belonged to George Nicely staked out we would take it and ride it so that we could each have one. The first grown girls to come here were the present Mrs. Sam McCoy and Mrs. W. S. Milligan.

George Nicely bought a half interest in the mill that

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Al Cook moved here from Horseshoe Lake and afterwards bought out Cook.

While Father was working at carpentering, bricklaying, etc., he received \$1.25 per day and out of that he had to keep his family; he had to pay \$1.00 per month each to send his children to a subscription school. He could not have made ends meet but Sam McCoy loaned us wheat and corn until the boys could make a crop on some nearby land that they had rented.

During the first two years here you could count fifty small haystacks on the present townsite. One day I was sent to find the cows and in hunting for them I got lost about where the South Methodist Church stands at the corner of A and 1st Avenue NW. I could see the woods along the river so I started to that and when I reached the river, I was not far from home. Going along the top bank I cried, for there were centipedes, cactus, etc., and on the lower banks I was afraid of the wolves.

THE FIRST STORE.

In June, 1891, G. W. Bigham of Chetopa, Kansas, purchased a log house of one room belonging to an Ottawa

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Indian by the name of Tiwah which stood at the corner of now B Street, SW, and 2nd Avenue SW, and John Cheyne came from Chetopa to run the store for him. Cheyne came to the tent settlement one morning and asked if anyone there could drive a nail and my father said, "That's me." So he put in some shelves and built a box room for storage, etc., for the store. One day shortly after that, Mother put three dozen eggs in a basket and gave them to my brother, Arthur, and told him to take them to the store and get himself some goods for a shirt. He took the eggs to the store and when Mr. Cheyne threw down some pieces of goods Arthur grabbed up one piece of several yards and ran for home. The clerk came soon after for the balance of the goods.

Miss Claudie Orr is usually referred to as the first teacher but we children attended our first school in the front room of Mrs. Cavinaw's three room house which stood where the Cooper Funeral Home now is. She was our teacher. Miss Orr taught next.

Well I remember the first funeral procession I ever saw. Some one had died northwest of town and the procession came through the now Miami from the northwest going to the

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ferry at the foot of Main Street and in front of the spring wagon that was carrying the body were two people on horseback, both ringing cowbells as they rode. Following were five or six other vehicles. I then thought that they must ring bells and asked why the next time that they did not ring them.

Mr. Page had the first butcher shop and my brother Hank helped him. They would kill a beef the first of the week and sell what they could during the week and then the last of the week my brother would take the unsold beef to Chetopa, Kansas. I went with him on one of these trips. We traveled in a northwesterly direction until we came to the Nailor pasture. We opened the gate, drove in and had not gone very far when the cattle scented the fresh meat, and here they came. My brother handed the lines to me and said, "When I tell you to lay whip to the ponies you do so, and when I say to hold up, don't whip." He got back in the hack and cut off a piece of fresh meat and as he threw it out to the cattle he said, "Lay Whip." I stood in the front, reached over, and did as he instructed and continued until I was told to hold up. The cattle had milled over the meat thrown them and had

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started after us again. Again brother threw them a piece of meat and I urged the ponies on. We continued this until we reached the northwest gate. He opened the gate and I drove through. I dreaded the return trip that night but as we returned late that moonlight night with a load of apples not a cow was to be seen as we drove across the pasture.

Each fall we children would gather all the hickory nuts that we could and hull them and fill our sacks. Then Father would come with the ponies and haul them home. When we got a wagon load our parents would haul them to Joplin, Missouri, where they got fifty cents a bushel for them. This money was put into the tobacco sack and used in building the new house. Across the river, the hickory nuts were more plentiful and one morning Mother gave three of us our sacks and told us that we should find lots of nuts that day as the wind had been blowing hard. The river was low and we got across easily. We filled our sacks and piled up a large pile and then we decided that it was time to go home. When we came to the river, it was up too high for us to

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cross so we went on down to the ferry at the foot of Main Street. The water looked deep but we were hungry so we took hold of hands and waded out and we were some way from the bank and weaving with the current when Mr. Breedlove saw us and came to us on a horse and took us up with him and brought us across. Had it not been for him, we would have drowned.

BILL WEST.

Another hardship fell on the family, though no fault of ours. When Link Keeny arrested Bill West, he could not manage it alone and he asked Father to help him but Father stood until he said, "I deputize you," then Father helped him and after the arrest of West, Keeny took from him a watch belonging to a sweetheart and his guns. West escaped and sent back word that he was coming back at a certain time for the watch and his guns and to kill Keeny, W. C. Lykins and my father. He had been arrested for shooting the windows out of the Baptist Church. Father, wishing to avoid further trouble, decided that he would be out of town at that time and one morning, with a little bundle

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done up in a big red handkerchief, he started up the river about. Mother went with him a little way and then she came back. For six months, Father stayed with a family by the name of Gobin and worked for his board. One evening while there he had just come from the milk pen with the milk when from behind the door where he was standing, he saw Bill West drive up to the gate and stop. Father kept out of sight and when West came to the door he only asked for a bucket of water and stopped in the lane. Later West was arrested at Afton where he had gone into a store to purchase a shirt. But before this he had returned to Miami and killed Keeny. West was looking at a shirt when a Federal officer from Vinita stepped up and arrested him. West very coolly turned to the merchant and said, "I won't take the shirt now." West did not have to serve time for his misdeeds as he died of tuberculosis shortly after he was arrested.

I have lived since then in Miami and have seen it change from a hillside covered with high grass to the present city with five and seven-story buildings and handsome schools

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and churches and many miles of paved streets.

In October, 1901, I married William Waddle who is also an old-timer in these parts. He was born in Bates County, Missouri, April 8, 1872, and came with his parents and settled near Vinita in 1888. He came to Miami later and helped close the trestle work on the Frisco south of the river bridge here on Saturday before we were married on Sunday. Here we have raised two boys and a girl and today live on the lot adjoining the one that my father built our home on many years ago.