

CROCKETT, J. H. (Dr.) INTERVIEW

#12186

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

12186 **16**

CROCKETT, J. H. Dr. **INTERVIEW.**

Field Worker's name Lula Austin

This report made on (date) November 15, 1937

1. Name Dr. J. H. Crockett (white)

2. Post Office Address Durant, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) North 1st Street

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month July Day 15 Year 1871

5. Place of birth Mississippi

6. Name of Father J. D. Crockett Place of birth Mississippi

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Mamie Rutledge Place of birth Alabama.

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.

An Interview with Dr. J. H. Crockett, Durant, Oklahoma.
By - Lula Austin - Investigator.
November 15, 1937.

In 1897 Mrs. A. N. Wilcox, who had been a neighbor of mine in Bonham, Texas, wrote me from Durant and told me that there was no dentist in Durant. Dr. Lamon who was the only dentist in town had been drowned in Blue River while attending a picnic.

I had recently returned from college and was anxious to start my practice, so I loaded all my belongings into a wagon and started to Durant. On my arrival here I called on Dr. Lamon's mother and asked to buy the dentist's equipment, which I did.

My office occupied a small part of the building used by "The True Light", a newspaper then published here.

Another part of the same building was occupied by Will Durant and W. H. Richey, then young attorneys. This building was on the south side of Main street near what is now the 200 block. My office was separated from the law office of Durant and Richey by a cotton sheet hung for a partition. I paid \$4.00 a month rent

and my only furniture was a kitchen table to work on and one chair.

I sat around many days before a patient came in; my first patient was Aunt Mandy, the mother of Tandy Fulson. A traveling salesman had made her a set of teeth and they were burnt in a fire which destroyed her home.

I made the impression for Aunt Mandy's teeth and told her to come back in a week. I picked up the impression the next day and it looked as if someone had handled it. I pitched it across the table and thought I would have to get another impression later. Then I picked it up and thought I would make them just to be working. I took great pains to see how nice a job I could do. When Aunt Mandy came I showed her the teeth and she put them in her mouth and they were a perfect fit, as her jaw had been broken by the kick of a mule. She was very pleased with them and said; "they are not little white teeth like other dentist made me, but big and broad like my teeth used to be". I charged her \$18.00 and two bushels of corn.

I watched J. F. Jones jump the lot where the Durant National Bank is now located. Mr. Jones drove up with a load of lumber and with two other men began to build a house on the lot. Dixon Durant ordered him off, but he refused to move. Someone put a stick of dynamite under the foundation and it went off like a cannon but did little damage.

Judge R. L. Williams caught a freight train and rode to Atoka to take out injunction papers against Mr. Jones but when he returned with the papers the building was finished and occupied. Mr. Jones had moved pianos and organs into the building and someone was playing the organ.

W. T. Sprawles, one of the early lawyers of Durant, had an old chestnut horse which roamed around the main street of Durant. Mr. Sprawles kept a cedar bucket with drinking water in it on a table in his office. The horse would walk in the door when no one was in the office and help himself to a drink and walk out.

Jim Fox, who had a little eating place next door to

Mr. Sprawles' office, would put drinking straws on the fence to dry so he could use them again, and the old horse would eat them.

Will Durant was educated to be a Presbyterian Minister. I often recall a sermon he gave on temperance one evening, the best I ever heard and he was so drunk I had to assist him from the pulpit after his lecture.

People here in early days were like one big family. Our social life consisted of church meetings and occasionally a dance when musicians would happen by with fiddle and banjo. We would hitch up the livery horse to a spring wagon that had three seats and send around for the girls and have a dance and next morning we would put the benches back in the building in time for church.

We also put on home talent plays for church benefits. I always played the part of the villain. One day I had a patient in my chair and after looking at the tooth that was paining him, before I realized what I was doing I "reared back" and in a villain's

voice said, "Ah! 'tis a nerve, I will kill it".

(We early comers often played pranks on new comers. This story is told about a young man by the name of Ed Spears, who came from Kansas to work at the M. K. & T. Depot with Mr. Cotton, the agent. Horace Marshall, Fred Harte and others came into the Shannon Drug Store where this young man was and told him that the Indians were on the warpath in Caddo, killing everybody, and some of them were on their way to Durant. They gathered a crowd and borrowed guns for everyone, giving Ed Spears a gun with blank shells. Half the crowd rode north to give the alarm if the Indians were seen coming. In about thirty minutes after leaving town, they rode wildly back into town shooting and calling, "The Indians are coming"! The young man jumped on the first freight train out of town. Six months later Mr. Cotton had a letter from this Ed Spears which read, "If you were lucky enough to survive the fight with the Indians, please send my belongings".)

I went to Fort Sill to the opening of the Kiowa-Comanche reservation. Thirteen of us went from here, taking two wagons and traveling about fifty miles a day. Among those in the party were; George Harrison, Dr. Smith, Pat Looney, Ed Spears, Tom Hunter, Buck Tinsley and Mr. Ricks.

We all registered on our arrival. The way we were registered was that a paper with one's name was put in a big barrel and a number in another barrel. A name and a number were drawn out of the barrel at the same time.

Mr. Ricks was the only lucky one in our party. He drew a hundred and sixty acres of land.