

WILLIAM G. BRUNER, MEMBER OF THE HOUSE OF KINGS, CREEK NATION

*By Orpha B. Russell**

William G. Bruner, former member of the House of Kings from Lutchapoga Town, Creek Nation, and one of Oklahoma's old and unforgettable Indian characters died on Easter Sunday, April 13, 1952. Born at the outbreak of the War between the States, he grew up in the postwar period when factionalism, along the same lines of cleavage engendered in that conflict between the northern and southern sympathizers, brought strife and bloodshed to the Creek Nation. The northern division, mostly full bloods who had sided with the Union, were opposed to changes in the old tribal customs and laws, particularly to any movement toward the breakup of the tribal land tenure. Conservative in tribal matters, they developed bitter and open opposition to the political dominance of the southern division that reached a climax in the well known "Green Peach War" in 1881-2.¹ Young Brunei, affectionately called "Billie Bruner," by his tribesmen, did not have an active part in the political intrigues of this time yet the members of his family were identified with the northern division under the leadership of Isparhechar who finally rose to power and was elected principal chief of the Creek Nation in 1895.

The Bruners were members of Lutchapoga (misspelled "Loker Poker") Town, a branch of old Tulsey Town, located where the City of Tulsa is today.* The people of this town were among the followers of the noted Creek leader, Opothleyahola, who remained loyal to the Union during the War between the States, and whose followers fled to Kansas in a bitter winter storm after their defeat in battle by the

* This article had been adapted and edited for *The Chronicles*, from an extended manuscript by Orpha B. Russell covering notes taken in interviews with the late William Bruner and with his daughter, Billy Lee Tuttle, and some of his old friends; and also, including a complete transcript of testimonies in Case File #2895 in the aid files of Judge Isaac C. Parker, United States Court, now stored in the basement of the Federal Building at Fort Smith, Arkansas.—Ed. (M.H.W.)
1Angie Debo, *The Road to Disappearance* (Norman, 1941), pp. 249-84.

While Tulke Pucha (misspelled Tulka Butcha) was chief of Lutchapofia Town, Chief S. W. Brown's father, S. W. Brown, Sr. (So-Pathlo), often visited the Bruners and attended their town dances which were held in a large square ground at what is now Fifteenth Street and Denver, in Tulsa. Brown recalls that there was a spring of water there, and the dance ground was called "Notcup-Tolofa" (Nucka-P'ute-Halo'fa). Lutchapoga Town covered all the territory shown on the accompanying map in this article, several acres* lying north, south and east of the areas shown. The camping site for the square ground extended north from Fifteenth Street and Denver to where the Frisco Railroad now lies, east as far as the Midland Valley R.R. tracks. The old Town cemetery was removed from the blocks lying between Second and Fourth streets and Denver and Friaco avenue* to allow extension of Tulsa's city-building program after World War I.

Confederate forces in December, 1861.³ Billie's mother told him the story of how she had made the tragic march through snow and ice to Kansas soon after his birth. His father, George Bruner, served in the Union Army, and many years later during the troubles in the Creek Nation, he was murdered by one Casa-Te-Ho who died in the 1890's without ever being brought to trial under the law. Billie's mother, Annie Brunei, was the daughter of Casa Hadjo, and was enrolled (No. 923) on the Creek tribal rolls at Sapulpa, Indian Territory, on October 9, 1899. She died January 31, 1912, at the age of sixty-five, and was buried in the Old Tiger Bone cemetery, twenty miles southwest of Tulsa.

There is a difference of opinion among William Bruner's survivors as to his exact age: Some say he was 90 years old, others, "108 years." He himself told the writer early in 1951 that he did not know how old he was. The final roll of the Creek Nation (1902) lists him as William Bruner (No. 7530), full blood, age 40. Stones marking the graves of members of the Bruner family indicate the age of 40 in 1902 is very probably correct. When Bruner was enrolled for allotment, at Muskogee, his 160 acre homestead was selected west of Tulsa, on the Sand Springs road, a location that was later the site of a railroad switch named for him on the Sand Springs Railway. He clung to eighty acres of his allotment until his death despite all efforts to persuade him to sell the land. It is valued at \$80,000 today.

In his active life as a man, William Bruner was a kind, honest and respected rancher whose word was as good as gold. Once his family doctor told the story of sending him a bill in the routine of office accounts for having performed an operation for appendicitis on Bruner's daughter. At the time of her illness, Bruner anxious to save her life had consented to the operation and said that though he had no money then to pay the doctor for his services, he would pay. Sometime later, Bruner appeared at the office and handed the well worn bill to the doctor who looked at it, remarking with a laugh, "Why, this is my bill. What I want is the money." Bruner who generally spoke in Creek this time said, "I have money." He then proceeded to pull out a roll of money and paid the doctor the full amount due him.

The writer was introduced to the venerable old Indian through the Euchee chief, S. W. Brown, who had known Bruner most of his life. He said that "Billie" was a good man but he had a "self-persecution complex." He reported that Bruner had run into trouble with white men early in life. Billie had acquired most of what little "book learning" he had while attending Wealaka Mission

³ Joseph B. Tlioburn and Muriel H. Wright. *Oklahoma: A History of the State and Its People* (New York, 1929, Vol. I, pp. 325-29

when the Reverend Robert Loughridge, was superintendent.⁴ To learn to speak and write English was one of the primary objects in the early day Creek mission schools, and any Indian youth who used his native language in school received a whipping. There was a six-foot man named Porter at Wealaka Mission whose chief duty was to administer the whipping for the infringement of this rule. One time Billy Bruner was up for a whipping for speaking Creek in school. He resented the punishment, and with three other boys turned on Porter, gave him a severe beating and left school.

Chief Brown has carefully preserved an old ledger of daily accounts that lists Bruner and members of his family as customers at the trading post operated by the chief's father, S. W. Brown, Sr. (So-Path-La). This location was on the south side of the Arkansas River near Wealaka Mission, and the site, or one near, is shown on maps of the Creek Nation of the 1880's as "Fairfield". Wealaka Mission was a mile or so north of the trading post, and a post office called We-a-la-ka was established at the mission site on April 8, 1880. with W. T. Davis as Postmaster.

Medicine men were Billie Bruner's instructors after he left the mission school, and many hills and prairies in the old Creek Nation were his school grounds. He recalled the old days of instruction in the area surrounding the four mounds that marked the big caves built by Opothleyahola's men when they set out for the north in 1861.* Bruner enjoyed recalling one excursion in particular because he had killed four deer near the mounds while his instructor, the Medicine Man, had killed nothing. "While reminiscing, Bruner stated that he had lived all of his life in Tulsa and Creek counties except for six years in prison. It was hard for the writer to believe that the quiet, unassuming Bruner had cut "five notches" on the handle of his pistol. Some people have credited him with eight killings, all justified under the laws of the Creek Nation when he took a stand with the appointed

* Rev. Robert Loughridge was Superintendent of Wealaka Mission from 1881 to 1894. Established by order of the Creek National Council in 1881, a handsome three-story brick building was completed here and the school opened in January, 1882. Billy Bruner must have been among the older boys in attendance.—Ed.

⁵ It was probably through a lapse in memory that one informant stated that Brown's trading post was called "Fairland." Another informant who knew this location stated that the name was "Fairfield," as shown on maps of the Creek Nation in the 1880's. No post office by either the name "Fairland" or "Fairfield" was established in the Creek Nation, according to records of the Post Office Department in Washington, D. C. Sometimes the name of a location would be given another name when established as a post office to save duplication of names already on file in the Department. The post office We-a-la-ka was established about the time the Creek Council provided for the school there, and before the building was completed. (For reference to the post office, see George H. Shirk, *First Post Offices within the Boundaries of Oklahoma, The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. XXVI, No. 2 (Summer, 1948), p. 234.)—Ed.

⁶ Orpha B. Russell, "Ekvn-hvnwuice, Site of Oklahoma's First Civil War Battle." *The Chronicle of Oklahoma*, Vol. XXIX, No. 4 (Winter, 1951-2), pp. 401-02, fn. 2.

tribal officers **on the aide of law and order during the troubled** times of the late 1880's. But when Billie killed a white man, "Uncle Sam" entered the ease.

The years immediately after the "Green Peach War" saw the conservative full-blood Creeks beginning their last stand for their ancient nation and the ownership of

their lands. Railroad building in the Indian Territory brought an influx of white people to the new towns along the railroads. Congress passed a law in 1887 providing for allotment of Indian reservation lands in severally, and it was only a question of time that such a law would provide for the allotment of Creek lands to individual owners and the breakup of the tribal government. In 1889, United States Courts were established in the Indian Territory with jurisdiction in all offenses against the Federal Government except cases involving capital punishment. The same year saw the run opening of the Oklahoma Country to white settlement. These changes on the Last Frontier were accompanied by great pressure in the background) brought to bear on the character and integrity of any Indian who resisted to preserve his old tribal rights. Some influential inter-married white men in the Creek Nation who took advantage of their wealth and prestige ruthlessly and secretly marked for death anyone who was in their way. Many white traders were notoriously irregular in business. The whiskey traffic flourished against the Federal prohibition laws in the Indian Territory. These chaotic conditions were similar to those in the life of the Creek people that had brought war between them and the United States seventy-five years before back in Alabama and Georgia, resulting in the enforced removal of the Indians over the "Trail of Tears" to the West.

Early in 1889, Billie Bruner was arrested on a liquor charge by United States Deputy Marshal W. A. Moody but he was allowed to go free for a time, or until his case was called and reviewed in the court, for he was well known as a full blood of his word. Strangely enough, Bruner even helped Deputy Moody in some of his work as an officer of the law. A few weeks later, Moody and four other deputies sought the arrest of Jeff Berryhill, a young Creek, for larceny. Without warning or making themselves known, they made an attack on the Berryhill home where Billie Bruner happened to be visiting. In the gun fight that followed, Moody was killed. Bruner was arrested for murder and tried before the United States District Court at Port Smith, Arkansas, and Judge Isaac C. Parker sentenced him for ten years imprisonment on a manslaughter charge in the killing of Moody. During his long years as Judge of the

7 All cases involving capital punishment arising in the Cherokee, Creek and part of the Choctaw nations were tried as heretofore by Judge Isaac C. Parker, in the United States District Court at Fort Smith.—*Oklahoma: A History of the State and Its People, op. cit.* Vol. II, pp. 717-19; Harry P. Daily, "Judge Isaac C Parker," *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. XI, No. 1 (March 1933), pp. 673-90.

United States Court at Fort Smith. Isaac C. Parker was known for meting out justice with dispatch and heavy sentences in the many criminal cases tried before him. The testimonies of "WilHara Bruner's case are in Judge Parker's Case File #2895 in the old files of the United States Court now stored in the basement of the Federal Building at Fort Smith, Arkansas.

On March 15, 1889, United States Deputy Marshals 13. Cox, B. Heady, B. Burgess and Grant (or "Grat") Dalton went before United States Commissioner James Brizzolara at Fort Smith, and sought a warrant for the arrest of William Bruner and "one Berry" for the felonious, willful, premeditated and "malice aforethought" murder of "W. A. Moody, a white man and not an Indian."⁸ (it may be noted here that Oral Dalton later died in an attempted raid on the Coffeyville. Kansas, banks in October, 1892.)

On March 20, 1889, William Bruner and William Berryhill appeared before Judge Isaac C. Parker with their attorneys, "W. S. Wolfenberger, M. M. Elmson, and heard the testimonies of Grant Dalton., J. B. Heady and William Burgess. Grant Dalton being duly sworn deposed and said:

"I reside at Fort Smith, Arkansas. This is my headquarters and I know the defendants in this cause; that is, I know defendant **Bruner**— never seen Berryhill until we arrested him.

"Knew deceased—he had a warrant for Jeff Berryhill for Larceny. Defendant Berryhill's son—and we went to arrest him. We started up the river bottom towards defendant Berryhill's house and we searched all the houses on road going up there, and never found Jeff, so we went to the last house in which defendant Berryhill and his son, Jeff, lived. When we got within 600 yards about of house we decided to make a run on **house,**

"Our party consisted of five—myself, William Moody, Robert Cox. B. Heady, and William Burgess.

"Bob Cox and Moody were in the lead. Cox ran to house and circled to right of

house so as to lake in the back of house and not let them get into pasture.

"I and deceased ran straight to door that opened to the south of the house. We were all a horseback. I pulled to the left about 20 feet and ran in about 20 or 25 yards of the house. By this time the deceased was in the house.

"Moody ran fast, right straight on to the door, about two feet, you might say, to the right of the door. Moody checked his horse to get off, and at that I stopped my horse and jumped off my horse, t
"Just as I got off my horse there, were two shots fired. Seen smoke strike deceased in the breast. I went to front of my horse, stepping two

^{fi} The writer wishes to make grateful acknowledgment to Chief Deputy E. A. Riddle and Clerk Truss Russell, United States District Court in Fort Smith, Arkansas for granting permission to examine and transcribe the original document's on William Bruner's trial, in Judge Isaac C. Parker's Case File #2895 in the old Files of the United States District Court, stored in the basement of the Federal Building at Fort Smith.

steps about, and shot at the door. I kept on shooting and running on up to the house. I got up to the house. I could not hear anybody in there, so I stood at the corner of house—to the right of the corner a little bit—holding my gun up against a crack I seen there to the left of the corner.

"While I had my gun there I kept my head turned to the door to my right; the door being wide open and somebody shot me through this crack.

"I moved around a little further to the right, after I was shot, about a foot. My gun fired when I was shot. I had my finger on trigger and bullet struck me in that arm I had on trigger, and gun went off.

"I tried to use my gun again, but I could not use my left hand. So I spoke to Cox, who was standing at corner of house to the right of me. I told him to step out a little and shot in at door by me. I told him to shoot quick and fast in there so that I could get away from there or they would kill me.

"So, he did. I ran straight back south about 20 feet, then I ran east about 15 yards. I then took out my pistol and shot in at door in east of house. Having loaded my Winchester before I did so, I called to deceased to come over and get my Winchester; that I was crippled and could not use it. First time he raised his head and looked at me. I called to him the second time and he laid his head down, and he made no move or answer. This was before I fired in the house with my pistol.

"I fired one shot and ran right over where deceased was—right behind him at his feet I told him to take my Winchester and use it; told him this two or three times. I then fell down right behind him, behind him, thinking that he was trying to dodge the shots. I spoke to him again telling him to take my gun. He made no answer and I thought then he was killed. I got up then and stepped to left of him about 10 feet, behind a tree. I called to Heady to come down and get my Winchester and use it. He said, no, he was all right with a shot gun there.

"Then I called to Cox to set house on fire. Kept calling to whoever was in house to come out or we would kill him. Just then defendant Berryhill came out of house and surrendered.

"I called again to Cox to tell him to come out and surrender, and Cox called back that he had already come out and surrendered. I told him to send man down to me and to hold house that there was another man in it.

"Cox told me that the old man said there was nobody else in there. I told him I knew there was. To set house on fire. The women had come out at this other door on the east and come down, passing by me—one of them—and crossed the hollow going up to another house close by. I turned around and called to the women to come back or I would kill every one of them. So they came back by me. I told them to make that fellow surrender in there or I was going to burn house and kill the whole outfit.

"I called to Cox again to set house on fire and kill this fellow.

"Then, soon after this, Bill Bruner told Cox that if we would not kill him he would come out and surrender. He came out and Cox spoke to me and said they were both here.

"I told him to march them down there to me. So, he fetched them

down to me and I handcuffed them. Then Cox and Burgess went In and searched the house.

"Heady was waiting on deceased while they were searching the house. I told Heady to go and get team that was standing by house and be got team and we brought deceased to Tulsa. While we were loading deceased on wagon the women brought Bruner's hat and they put it on his head. He stood there humming some kind of an Indian song and stamping his feet a little bit. Cox called my attention to this.

"After we loaded deceased In wagon they went back again and searched house, and they brought out a pistol und a Winchester. Cox brought them out and William Burgess.

"Deceased was dead when we loaded him in wagon. There were three shots fired from house that I heard. Defendants and three women that I seen were In house. When we ran up no one looked out or came out.

"I was a deputy. United States Marshal Moody was deputy, also. Heady was a deputy, the others we took along as pilots to assist us.

"I fired eight or ten shots. Cox about six. This was all the shots fired by our party. I fired first of my party, as the two shots from house were fired out of door.

"I kept firing as fast as I could an I ran up to the house. Cox fired the other shots when I told him to. I had shot about six or seven times between the time the shots fired from house until the third shot hit me.

"When the shots fired from house he (Moody) was making a motion With his leg to get off his horse. His horse kind of reared up and wheeled to the right and went around house. Moody being still on horse. Deceased was shot right below heart. One wound I seen—never made any examination of his clothes. I had a Winchester and pistol.

"Cox had a Winchester and pistol. Heady had a double-barreled shot gun and pistol. Moody, pistol—Burgess, a pistol. I examined pistol that was brought from house. It was a 44-cartridge pistol-Colts. There were two empty hulls and an empty chamber out of it. Two shots seemed to be recently fired. Did not examine Winchester.

"This was In the Creek Nation It occurred on March 15, 1889 about 11 o'clock in the day time. Deceased was a white man. I am white man. Had not seen defendants on that day.

CROSS EXAMINATION

"We did not have time to ask party to surrender before they shot on us. Horse's head of deceased was in three feet of house when he was shot. I was 25 yards at the time from the house when deceased was shot and on same side of house Moody was on.

"Deceased lived from five to ten minutes after he was shot.

"I was about off my horse when shots fired from house. Deceased was 26 yards from house on ground when I found him. The pistol and Winchester I brought down here. The door was wide open from the time we seen the house and stood wide open all the time. There were no empty chambers In deceased's pistol. Did not know there was any women in house until they came out. There were two rooms in the house.

The other deputies told **practically the same** stories, but **William Burgess'** testimony may **have been what caused Judge Parker to sentence Bruner to imprisonment instead of to the gallows. William Burgess** duly sworn said:

"I reside at Tulsa. there. Knew Moody.

Know defendant. Am Indian Police stationed there. Knew Moody. Dalton and Moody came to me and asked me to go and show them the way to where Jeff Berryhill lived, I went with them.

"We went on up there until we got in sight of house and as quick as they seen house they all broke in a run to it. I was behind them, my horse not being as good as theirs.

"Dalton and Moody were the first ones that got to the house, and there was a shot fired out of the house, and It was fired at Moody, I suppose. He was *shot*, and he just turned and rode away from the house.

"The next fire they fired Dalton was shot, and Dalton wag firing into the house. Then Dalton walked off. Then I went to where Cox was. He was at corner of house.

"Cox, when I got to him. was shooting at the edge of the door. I seen Berryhill in house; he was jumping around In there, and I called to him and he came out of house and right up to me, and asked me what I was doing there, and taught my horse by the bridle and told me to get off."

On March 26, 1889 Bruner asked the court to subpoena witnesses;

"Comes defendant and states that Mary Berryhill, Lester Berryhill, and William Burgess live in the Creek Nation, about 175 miles northwest from Fort Smith near Tulsa.

"Defendant states that said witnesses' testimony is material in their cause and cannot safely go to trial without said witnesses.

"Said witnesses will prove that defendant was in defendant Berryhill's own house when Moody and his posse came up into his yard, and shot into the house before defendant Bruner fired on said Moody.

"Will prove by said witnesses that defendant Bruner was a prisoner, that he had gave himself up to the marshal about three to four weeks before the time he (Moody) was killed, that the marshals ran up into defendant Berryhill's yard and fired on defendant Bruner without telling him anything about what they had come for. Will prove by said witnesses that defendant Berryhill did not shoot a shot or offer to shoot, but the deputy marshal and posse kept up firing till Indian police came up and called defendant out.

"Same witnesses will prove that before the marshal ran on the house, Indian Police told marshal to let him take one man and go in front and make the arrest and they would have no trouble.

"Will prove by said Police that the marshal refused, but as soon as they came in sight of defendant's house they formed themselves into a line and charged the house.

"Will prove that defendant was not asked to surrender himself to the marshal, but the marshal had his pistol in hand and fired into the house before defendant Bruner ever fired on him."

On April 9, 1889, Bruner again asked for witnesses:

"Comes defendant Bruner and states that Gen Owen, L. C. Perryman, George Perryman are material witnesses for him this cause, and cannot safely go to trial without the above named witnesses. That said witnesses live in and around Tulsa, that said witnesses will prove William Bruner had given himself up to Mr. Moody some four to five weeks before he was killed. That Bruner aided the marshal in finding out where some parties lived in that country," On August 15, 1889 Bruner and William Berryhill filed an amended application for witnesses; on August 22, 1889 it was filed:

"Now come the defendants in the above cause (United States vs. William Bruner and William Berryhill Murder) and state to the court that they can not safely go to trial upon Indictment No. 2895, charging them with the crime of murder, without the additional testimony of Annie Partridge, Louisa Bruner, Mary Bruner, Maleeah Adams, Che Pana, Note-te-cha, Jane Owens, Cornelius Perryman, Nace Seper, material witnesses for his defense, four of whom—the first three and Note-te-cha, are present in Fort Smith. The others live at or near Tulsa, I.T.

"By Mrs. Partridge, Louisa and Mary Bruner, defendants can prove that the dead and the other officers charged the house of Mrs. Partridge, rode their horses around it several times, and acted in a very disorderly manner on the day of said killing, and on the way from Tulsa to defendant Berryhill's.

"By Mrs. Adams, that they acted in the same way at her house, and frightened the children away.

"By Nace Seper that their conduct was similar at his house.

"By Che Pana, whose house was the last on the way to Berryhill's that they acted in the same manner at his house.

"By Note-te-cha and Jane Owens that said marshals had a case of liquor at the house of Mrs. Owens, and were drinking during the night before and on the morning of the day of said killing, and left Tulsa under the influence of liquor.

"Berryhill being a few miles distant—by Cornelius Perryman, defendants can prove that he has been to the house of William Berryhill and examined the door of the room where defendants were at the time of the shooting of deceased, and that the shutter of said door shows plainly that it was struck by two balls from the outside, which defendants state were fired before the fire was returned, without any previous demand of entrance or surrender or announcement as to their purpose or business.

There is nothing in the case file to indicate that any of these witnesses were allowed to testify, but there are subpoenas showing that they were served, and on October 1, 1889 Bruner was sentenced on a manslaughter charge to serve ten years in the Ohio State Penitentiary at Columbus, Ohio, and fined \$1,000.

When Bruner recalled the incident for the writer he did not deny killing Moody. He

said that the manner in which the posse rushed the house, without warning of any kind, caused all occupants of the Berryhill home to believe they were cattle rustlers that had been giving the ranchers of that area trouble. The fact that Judge Parker gave Bruner such a comparatively light sentence indicates that he thought that Bruner was not altogether to blame.

Inquiries seeking Bruner's prison record have received no replies from the Ohio State Penitentiary but Bruner himself said that he served there six years. It has been reported upon good authority that Bruner became a trusty soon after entering the penitentiary and that some years later the attention of the Governor of Ohio was called to his case. The Governor on an inspection tour one time met the full blood Indian prisoner, was impressed with his character and became convinced upon reviewing his case that the shooting of Moody had been accidental. Shortly afterward, the Governor, William McKinley was elected President of the United States, and one of his first acts as the chief executive was to pardon William Bruner of the Creek Nation.

After his return home from prison, Bruner was elected "Town King," the highest tribal office other than Principal Chief and Assistant Chief of the Nation. A Town King represented his tribal town in the House of Kings, his office being similar to that of a United States senator, for the House of Kings was the upper house in the National Council or legislative body of the Creek Nation.

As the years passed, Bruner's career became a legend in the old Creek country, his appearance adding a picturesque note for he wore a "ten gallon" hat and one set of gold rings in his ears that had been pierced for three. And he lived with zest to the last. Two years ago,

two of his grandchildren asked the Tulsa County Judge to declare him incompetent and appoint a guardian over him to protect him from the designs of a woman who wanted to marry him. Some had credited him with eight wives but that was a part of the legend. The guardian was appointed but he fought the guardianship with the spirit of his youth. On May 17, 1950, the District Judge after an all day hearing vacated the County Court order and declared William Bruner competent. Though now free to marry, he decided against it.

The general consensus of opinion among his old friends was that Billie carried a chip on his shoulder through life and drank too much. One can understand this after tracing the history of his people and weighing all the facts. Bruner survived a period that might well be labeled "the survival of the fittest" because he never hesitated to meet a situation with courage. Life gave Bruner no breaks from the time of his birth at the beginning of the tragic march north during the cold winter of 1861 until his death on* Easter Sunday in 1952. Bruner fought all the way, and he will long be remembered by Tulsans and residents along the Sand Springs road.

In February, 1952, the venerable old-time Town King, William Bruner, waged his last contest with man: He drew his final will duly witnessed, after a difference of opinions concerning the leasing and disposal of his eighty acres of land. To date (July, 1952), the courts have refused to recognize this will because it was not witnessed by a County Judge, and as Bruner foresaw, the three persons who were devoted to him during his last years and whom he trusted have been forced to appeal to a higher court in an effort to have his last will recognized.

"William Bruner, old-time Town King, rests in the Tiger Bone Cemetery near other members of his family including Annie Bruner, his mother; his daughters, Esther Bruner Reno and Stella M. Goodwin; his sons, Lewis and Emanuel Bruner; his sister, Jemima Rodgers and her daughter, Lucy Rodgers; Flora Bruner and several other unmarked graves. He asked to be buried there among his people and near the Old Coyote Trail where he had hunted when a youth, twenty miles southwest of Tulsa.