



SPRAGUE, Harry A. INTERVIEW

Form A-(S-149)

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

227

Field Worker's name Maurice R. Anderson

This report made on (date) July 20 1937

1. Name Harry A. Sprague

2. Post Office Address Pauls Valley, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) West Paul Avenue

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month \_\_\_\_\_ Day \_\_\_\_\_ Year 1871

5. Place of birth Virginia

6. Name of Father William Sprague Place of birth Virginia

Other information about father Deceased

7. Name of Mother Mary Varley Place of birth Virginia

Other information about mother deceased

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 4.

Maurice R. Anderson  
Interviewer  
July 20, 1937.

Interview with Harry A. Sprague  
Pauls Valley, Oklahoma  
Father - William Sprague  
Mother - Mary Varley  
Born 1871.

I was born in 1871, in Virginia. My father died when I was ten years old, and I came to the Indian Territory in 1887. My uncle got a contract to put up hay for a man who owned a ranch near Durant, in the Chickasaw Nation. We were living in Texas at this time, so my uncle, two more men and myself came to Durant to put up hay.

There was only one store at Durant at that time, and the post office was in this store. We were camped on a creek not far from it.

I helped build the first bridge across this creek. People living on the other side had to ford the creek at the place where we built the bridge, but when it rained and the creek was up they could not get to the store until the creek went down.

I remember one time we were working in the hay near where this ford crossed and one day at noon we were all eating dinner when a man came along in a wagon and crossed the creek. He stopped where we were eating and my uncle asked

-2-

him why he and the other farmers living on that side of the creek didn't build a bridge, and this man said: "When it is raining we can't and when it isn't raining we don't need a bridge." My uncle said he would build one himself, so that evening we all spent our time working on this bridge and before sundown we had a log bridge across this creek and today there is a fine concrete bridge, I believe, in the same place where we built the log bridge about fifty years ago.

My father was a watch-repair doctor and he taught me the trade, so that by the time I was ten years old I could fix a watch as good as he could.

After we were through putting up this hay, I didn't go back to Texas with my uncle. I decided I would stay in the Indian Territory. At that time, I owned a good saddle horse and I had my watch repairing outfit with me. When my uncle started back to Texas I saddled my horse and headed the other way. I first located at old Stonewall. Governor Byrd was in the mercantile business at old Stonewall. There were seven or eight stores there at that time. I opened a watch-repair shop in Governor Byrd's store; I also slept in the back of the store. I remember when I opened this repair

-3-

shop in Governor Byrd's store, he had locks on all of his show cases; I asked him why he kept things under lock and he said the Indians were so bad about picking things up that he had to keep his show cases locked. After I was there awhile, I found out he was right, the Indians were bad about picking things up. I have seen lots of the full bloods pick up things, but I never did catch any of the mixed breed doing it nor the ones who could speak English.

Business wasn't so good there, so I finally located at Old Ada.

Mr. Reed established the post office at Old Ada in 1890. I owned a watch-repair shop there. I did a good business at Old Ada, and when New Ada was established, I put the first jewelry store in the new town.

I remember one night several men with a wagon and a fine span of mules went to Old Ada and loaded up the post office and hauled it to the new town. Next morning the postmistress, Miss Hall, opened the post office for business in the new town, and the government was notified after the post office was moved.

I helped trail and capture the four men who killed Gus Bobett, but I did not help hang them. I was there

-4-

the next morning after they were hung. A mob took them into an old livery stable and hung four of them. There were five in this killing, but the mob turned one man loose after he proved he wasn't there when the killing took place. The man that did the shooting was named Miller, and the best I could learn he was to receive several hundred dollars, for the killing. This money was to be split among the four. Miller said before he was hung that he had killed thirty men for money.

I now live in Pauls Valley, where I own a watch-repair shop.