

PURLEE, VERNON (MRS.)

INTERVIEW

18945

324

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

325

PURLEE, VERNON. (MRS)

INTERVIEW.

13845.

Field Worker's name Mary D. Dorward.

This report made on (date) May 5, 1938. 1938

1. Name Mrs. Vernon Purlee.

2. Post Office Address 1923 South Florence Street.

3. Residence address (or location) Tulsa, Oklahoma.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month _____ Day _____ Year _____

5. Place of birth _____

6. Name of Father Joseph Martin. Place of birth Georgia.

Other information about father Cherokee.

7. Name of Mother Lucy Rogers Martin. Place of birth _____

Other information about mother Cherokee.

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 _____

PURLEE, VERNON (MRS)

INTERVIEW.

13845.

Mary B. Dorward,
Investigator,
May 5, 1938.

An Interview With Mrs. Vernon Purlee,
1923 South Florence Street, Tulsa, Okla.

Victoria Martin Rogers and her daughter, Ruth Alice Rogers Purlee, are descended from ancestors distinguished in American annals since before the Revolutionary War. Of Cherokee blood, Mrs. Rogers was, through her father, Captain Joseph Lynch Martin, descended from Joseph Martin who came to the colonies from England early in the first quarter of the eighteenth century. Joseph's father was William Martin, a wealthy merchant of Bristol, England, who furnished his son Joseph with the ship "Brice" and sent him to Virginia.

Joseph settled in Virginia near Charlottesville in what is now Albemarle County, and married Susannah Childs. Their son, Joseph, was elected a Captain in the Transylvania Militia in 1776, became a Major February 17, 1779, and Lieutenant-Colonel in March, 1781, his activities being directed against the Royalist (Troy) English, the Cherokee Indians and others allied with the English who were killing

PURLEE, VERNON (MRS)

INTERVIEW.

13845.

-2-

the women and children of the Revolutionists. On December 15, 1787, Joseph was made Brigadier-General of the North Carolina Militia by the legislature of that state, and on December 11, 1793, was commissioned to Brigadier-General of the Virginia Militia by Governor Henry Lee (Lighthorse Harry Lee).

General Joseph Martin married Susannah Fields, nee Emory, Cherokee Indian. Their son, John Martin, married Lucy McDaniel, also a Cherokee. John Martin became the first treasurer of the Cherokee Nation and judge of the first supreme court of the Cherokee Nation in 1819. He was a member of the constitutional convention of the Cherokee Nation which convened at Washington, D. C., a member for the Coo-wee-scoo-wee District.

In the spring of 1838 Judge John Martin came west to Indian Territory with the Immigrant Cherokees and settled along the Grand River near the Grand Saline. With him came his family including Joseph Lynch Martin who had been born near Atlanta, Georgia, August 20, 1820. Judge Martin died October 17, 1840, and is buried at Fort Gibson, Oklahoma, in a grave which has been marked by the Historical Society of Oklahoma.

FURLER, VERNON (MRS)

INTERVIEW.

13845.

-3-

Joseph Lynch Martin, son of Judge John Martin, attended school in St. Louis, Missouri, and married Julia Lombard in 1845. They settled in what was known as the Greenbrier Valley between Pryor and Spavinaw, named Greenbrier because of the profusion of greenbrier which grows in the valley; and from that time on Martin became known as Greenbrier Joe. Greenbrier Joe owned all the land from Greenbrier Valley to the Grand River, and at one time had a postoffice at Greenbrier with himself as postmaster. It was a star mail route with the mail arriving every other day.

After the death of his first wife, Greenbrier Joe married Lucy Ann Rogers, daughter of John Rogers, who drilled the first salt wells in the Territory. The wells were drilled near what is now Salina in 1820, the salt water being piped from the wells in huge pipes made by hollowing out the trunks of trees. A sample section of similar pipes may be seen in the museum of the Oklahoma Historical Society in Oklahoma City.

Greenbrier Joe Martin and Lucy Rogers Martin established their home along Cabin Creek where they lived until the

PURLIE, VERNON (MRS)

INTERVIEW.

13845.

-4-

Civil War broke out in 1861. Greenbrier Joe was an extensive slaveholder and entered the war on the side of the Confederacy. He organized Company D of the 2nd Cherokee Mounted Volunteers serving under General Stand Watie, by whom he was commissioned Captain of his company.

Captain Martin saw active service at Fort Wayne, Indian Territory, Fort Gibson, and along Cabin Creek.

Captain Martin returned to Greenbrier in 1866. His family had fled from the family home, going on foot to Texas where they remained until the spring of 1865. Returning at that time to the family home they stopped en-route at Boggy Depot to rest for a few days, and it was while resting there at Boggy Depot that on June 2, 1865, a baby girl was born to whom they gave the name Victoria.

Greenbrier Joe died November 9, 1891, and was buried in the old cemetery at Greenbrier Valley. During his life he at various times contributed articles and poetry, under the nom de plume of Greenbrier Joe, to the Vinita Chief-tain, The Cherokee Advocate, and the Cherokee Orphan News. He was interested in the preservation of the Cherokee language and traditions and, in order to make sure that his

PURLIE, VERNON (MRS)

INTERVIEW.

13845.

-5-

children should learn to speak Cherokee, had only full blood Cherokees for household servants. However, the result invariably was that, instead of the children learning to speak Cherokee, they taught the full bloods to speak English, thus defeating the father's purpose.

Victoria Martin grew up to be a beautiful girl, receiving her education under private tutors and at Willie Halsell Academy at Vinita. When she was about fifteen, evangelists Moody and Sankey came to Vinita to hold evangelistic services. So impressed were the visiting evangelists with the high degree of culture found among the Cherokees that they planned to send a selected group of young Cherokee girls to school back in the East, choosing Victoria Martin to head the group.

The Martins not long before this had lost their oldest daughter under rather tragic circumstances. Lumpie, as she was known, had been attending school at the Cherokee Female Seminary at Tahlequah and had just returned to school in the fall apparently in the best of health. Not long after she had gone her father, seemingly for no reason at all, suddenly became uneasy about her welfare, so much

PURLIE, VERNON. (MRS)

INTERVIEW.

13845.

-6-

so in fact that he started his oldest son off for Tahlequah to learn if all was well with her. Before the son had proceeded far on his journey he met the school authorities on their way to the Martin home with the body of Lumpie, and that was the first intimation the family had had that she was ill. Her death had really been the result of a fall she had had before returning to school, but her parents, still grieving over her loss, were unwilling to let Victoria go so far from home, so the group of girls went without her. So disappointed was Victoria at not being permitted to go with the other girls that she resolved to marry at her first opportunity. Accordingly, when she was sixteen, she was married to Joseph Robert Rogers at Vinita, July 22, 1881.

Joseph Robert Rogers was a son of Dr. Oscar Rogers of Laclede, Pineville, and Lebanon, Missouri, whose father was a brother of old Bob Rogers, grandfather of the late Will Rogers. Dr. Rogers served in the Civil War as a surgeon for the Confederacy. He was captured by the Union forces who took him into the Northern Army. He, however, would not fire on his own people, so he made bullets from pills.

FURLEE, VERNON (MRS)

INTERVIEW.

13845.

-7-

and fired those instead. Two letters written by him are in the possession of Mrs. Purles, one dated June 20, 1865, the other dated August 21, 1865, both relating to incidents happening in Rolla, Missouri.

Joseph Rogers was born in Missouri February 7, 1858, and attended school there during his early days. Some time later he ran away from home and came to the Indian Territory where he finished his schooling at the Cherokee Male Seminary near Tahlequah. His marriage with Victoria Martin took place as mentioned above July 22, 1861. He became one of the first peace officers in the Territory, serving as United States Marshal at the time when the Jennings, Dalton, and other notorious gangs were active.

When the Frisco pushed its way across the Territory, Joseph Rogers opened a store at Catoosa. He assisted in building the railroad bridge across the Verdigris River, he and Mrs. Rogers living in a boarding house nearby while he worked on the bridge. While they were living in the boarding house the Rogers were witnesses of an early-day tragedy. One day a drunken full blood went on a tear and caused great excitement for a while. The sheriff tried

F RLEE, VERNON (MRS)

INTERVIEW.

13845.

-8-

to arrest him but the drink-maddened Indian resisted. The sheriff shot at him several times but was unable to stop him, and the Indian was running with blood gushing from the tops of his boots. Finally the sheriff had to seize him with one hand while he shot him with the other, killing him almost instantly. The man had been a close acquaintance of the sheriff who said he would rather have shot his own brother than that Indian.

Later, the young Rogers moved to Adair where Joseph established a drug store. While they were living there the Dalton gang once held up a train. Knowing they were in town Mrs. Rogers took what money she had and hid it in the bottom of the flour barrel until she was sure the Daltons had gone.

While acting as United States Marshal Mr. Rogers was once shot. He was in Claremore with several other men who were guarding money to be used for an Indian payment, when during a friendly card game the gun of one of the men accidentally went off striking Mr. Rogers. He carried the bullet to his grave.

PURLEE, VERNON (MRS)

INTERVIEW.

13845.

-9-

In 1899 the Rogers family moved to Nowata where they established a farm home on Mrs. Rogers' allotment, about one-half mile west of the Nowata corner. It was probably the first modern farm house in that community, being equipped with gas for illuminating, telephone, and a water system for watering the stock long before any other house in the vicinity had such conveniences. The gas was produced from a well on the Rogers' farm.

Mr. Rogers, while a leader in the community, never sought political office, but was elected to one or two minor offices. His advice was frequently sought, especially when the constitution for the new state was under consideration, and many of its progressive ideas were advanced by him.

When the World War came, Joseph was too old for active service, but he did patriotic work in the munitions camp at Muscle Shoals. He died July 4, 1920, and is buried in the family lot at Nowata cemetery.

Victoria Martin Rogers always interested herself in the affairs of the community in which she happened to be living and was instrumental in establishing churches in

FURLEE, VERNON (MRS)

INTERVIEW.

13845.

-10-

the small towns in which she lived. She was a member of the Tulsa chapter, U. D. O., and was a charter member of the Indian Woman's Club of Tulsa.

Always intensely proud of her Cherokee blood, Mrs. Rogers interested herself in the preservation of Indian lore. Before her death she had started the compilation of an English-Cherokee dictionary, as well as a scrapbook which contains an interesting collection of articles including specimens of Cherokee printing, a hymnal in Cherokee, an ancient legend of the Delawares, a copy of the constitution of the Cherokee Nation, and a copy of a Cherokee Advocate. There are also many clippings covering many topics relating to Indian affairs, but unclassified.

Mrs. Rogers opposed statehood, but took no active part in trying to prevent it. Her husband, feeling that Statehood was inevitable and that this was probably the best deal that the red man would be able to get, favored it and took an active part in getting it established.

The collection of Mrs. Rogers is now in the possession of her daughter, Mrs. Vernon Furlee, of 1923 South

PURLIEE, VERNON (MRS)

INTERVIEW.

13845.

-11-

Florence Place, Tulsa. There are also one or two old photographs of interest, including one of John Rogers who established the salt works near Saline. The photograph of John Rogers was probably made at Fort Gibson at a time when a payment was made to the Old Settler Cherokees.

INDIAN SUPERSTITIONS.

At the time when Victoria Martin's oldest sister died at the Cherokee Female Seminary, the night before her death occurred, the family being in complete ignorance of her illness, her father made the remark that "the dogs are howling too much". The next day her body was brought home.

During the Civil War, when Greenbrier Joe was encamped with his comrades along Cabin Creek, the night before the battle of Cabin Creek a white deer appeared not far from the encampment. The soldiers all felt that it foretold victory for their forces, and sure enough they were victorious in the engagement next day.

FURLEE, VERNON (MRS)

INTERVIEW.

13845.

-12-

Following is a copy of a document found among the material of Mrs. Victoria Martin Rogers which may have some value.

HISTORY OF SALINA.

The following letter was taken from the early files of the Pryor Creek Clipper, reprinted from an 1890 issue of the Orphan News, published at the old Cherokee Orphans' Home at Salina. We came into possession of the files through the courtesy of S. H. Mayes, Sr.

The letter was written by Joseph L. Martin of Greenbrier to the editor of the Orphan News, and gives a good idea of the early history of Salina and neighboring country. The old Cherokee Orphanage mentioned in the letter was destroyed by fire in 1903, and the ruins remained standing untouched for years. It is now replaced by an up-to-date and modern high school building, but some of the old ruins can still be seen about the place. The site of the old salt works is now occupied by the Radium Springs resort.

PURLEE, VERNON (MRS)

INTERVIEW.

13845.

-13-

The country east of the Grand River is rich in history of the early French and Indian settlers, and many of the names mentioned in the letter below can still be found among the people across the river.

Following is Mr. Martin's letter:

"Editor Orphans' News:-

"The place on which your home for the Cherokee Orphans stands is rather historical. I would like to and may some day give you a detailed history of the place, and the different changes that have taken place since the first man settled at the Asylum spring. I will give you an abridged account, however, at the present.

"The first settler at the place was Joseph Revard, a Frenchman. Revard married an Osage woman and was a trader among the Osage Indians. The Old Settler Cherokees and the Osages at that time were on the warpath with each other. The Cherokees lived on the Arkansas and White Rivers, and this Joseph Revard was a great help to the Osages in carrying on the war by furnishing them with guns and ammunition. The Cherokees held a war council and in this council it was decided that Revard must be gotten rid

PURLEE, VERNON (MRS)

INTERVIEW.

13845.

-14-

of. Seven warriors were detailed to hunt and kill Revard, which they promptly did. The war soon closed after Revard's death. I might write a long history of the hunt for Revard and of his death, but cannot give it here.

"After peace was made between the Cherokees and the Osages the latter sold the portion of their country to the United States Government. The Cherokees then bought the land and after the Osages moved north took possession of their new homes. Captain John Rogers then settled at the Grand Saline. Colonel A. P. Chouteau, who was an agent for the Osages, had built his residence and agency at the place now occupied by the asylum, or rather six hundred yards down towards Grand River. The marks of his home and the Osage Agency are plainly visible today. Revard was there before Chouteau built, but his cabin remained.

"The next man who occupied Revard's cabin was Joseph Gladden, a hunter and trapper. All around him were rough customers, and his wife was of the same wool and warp. Gladden and his wife left for Texas, where he said he

FURLEE, VERNON (MRS)

INTERVIEW.

13845.

-15-

could have more elbow room and lots of fun with Mexican 'greasers'.

"Burrus H. Smith was the next man. Mr. Smith did not live in the house, but taught school in the cabin. He was in the employ of Captain John Rogers, for his own and his employees' children. Captain Rogers carried on extensive salt works and it took a great many hands to run them day and night. There were a great many families living at the Saline, and at that time it formed quite a village. Smith taught school in Revard's cabin for a few seasons and then went to Texas in company with the great Sam Houston.

"Rising Fawn, a young Cherokee, who had been a brave under Captain John Rogers during the Osage war, came up from his home on Lee Creek for a visit to his old war Captain. There were a great many Osages camped on Grand River around their agent, Colonel Chouteau. Rising Fawn decided to kill one more Osage. For that purpose he went one morning before day into the vacant Revard cabin, and, with gun and tomahawk, waited for an Osage to pass. About sunrise an Osage youth passed and Rising Fawn fired into

PURLIEE, VERNON (MRS)

INTERVIEW.

13845.

-16-

him. The Osage's gun dropped, but he started off at a two-forty gait, with the Cherokee after him, tomahawk in hand. The Osage youth escaped and gave the alarm. Soon quite a little army of Osages surrounded the premises of Captain Rogers, hunting for Rising Fawn, but he had 'vampoo'ed the ranch'. Rising Fawn had broken the Osage's arm at the elbow and he was always afterwards crippled in that arm. During the War of the Rebellion, so-called, he was well known in the Southern Army as 'Major Broken Arm'.

"After Chouteau's day came Lewis Ross, and then came the Civil War with all its fury, rain, and destruction. Then came the cure and balm for all troubles and white-winged peace threw her mantle of love around all and everything. Then came a sad change, in the death of Lewis Ross, after which the place was vacated. The noble old mansion was deserted--not a human soul to be seen, not a human voice to break the graveyard silence that had settled down upon the place. Your humble writer has been at the place and in the grand old mansion, when all who had once lived there were gone, most of them to the land from whence there is no returning.

PURLEE, VERNON (MRS)

INTERVIEW.

13845.

-17-

"Then came the purchase of the place by the Cherokee Nation for the purpose of making a home for the Cherokee orphans. Then comes the great school and the merry ring of the laugh and whoop and hells of the Indian youth. The school was first opened at the Male Seminary, with Reverend Walter A. Duncan as superintendent. When the Ross mansion was fitted up and repaired ready for the reception of the school, Duncan, like Moses, led the children from Egypt to the banks of the Grand Water, Neosho. This Neosho is the name given to this grand old river by the Osage-people (water) osho (grand). Reverend Duncan had many difficulties to surmount, but he overcame them and with a firm and steady step marched with his Indian orphans onward and upward.

"After Reverend Duncan came Reverend Joseph Thompson, who has followed straight in the footsteps of our great Moses, Duncan. Today the great school and home for our Cherokee orphans is ~~an honor and an ornament, an~~ institution of which any nation might be proud. The great glory of the thing is that the Cherokees run this school and meet all the expenses of government with their own

PURLEE, VERNON (MRS)

INTERVIEW.

13845.

-18-

money. May the great Sovereign Ruler of the universe
hold our nation up with both hands, never to fall."