

METHVIN, J. J. (MRS.) . FOURTH INTERVIEW. 9732**461**

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

METHVIN, J. J. (MRS.) DR. FRANK HALL WRIGHT

9732

Field Worker's name Lillian Gessaway

This report made on (date) January 21 1938

1. Name Mrs. J. J. Methvin

2. Post Office Address Anadarko, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) 709 West Alabama

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month May Day 9 Year 1869

5. Place of birth Paris, Illinois

6. Name of Father William R. Swanson Place of birth Kentucky

Other information about father \_\_\_\_\_

7. Name of Mother Susan Nyer Place of birth Kentucky

Other information about mother \_\_\_\_\_

Notes or complete narrative by the field worker dealing with the life story of the person interviewed. Refer to Manual for suggested subjects and questions. Continue on blank sheets if necessary and attach firmly this form. Number of sheets attached \_\_\_\_\_.

METHVIN, J. J. (MRS.) DR. FRANK HALL WRIGHT.

9732

Lillian Gassaway  
Investigator  
January 21, 1938

Interview with Mrs. J. J. Methvin  
709 West Alabama  
Anadarko, Oklahoma.

DR. FRANK HALL WRIGHT

Dr. Frank Hall Wright was born at old Boggy Depot, January 1, 1860. His father was Reverend Allen Wright, a full-blood Indian who had been educated in the East; graduating from the classical course at Union College, Schenectady, New York, and from Union Theological Seminary, New York City.

After his return to his own people-the Choctaws, Allen Wright was ordained to the ministry of the Presbyterian Church and a year or two later married Miss Harriette Newell Mitchell of Dayton, Ohio, who had come to the Choctaw country as a teacher in one of the mission schools.

Frank Wright's earlier childhood was spent amid the turbulent scenes of the Civil War in which the people of his tribe were involved. At the close of that struggle his father was chosen as one of the representatives of the Choctaw Nation to negotiate a new treaty with the Govern-

METHVIN, J. J. (MRS.) DR. FRANK HALL WRIGHT.

9732

2

ment at Washington and while absent on that mission his people chose him as their Principal Chief, which position he filled from 1866 to 1870.

Frank Wright's education, carefully supervised by his parents, was begun under private tutelage and was continued at old Spencer Academy near Doaksville, in Union College, whence he graduated in 1882, and again by entering Union Theological Seminary, whence he graduated in 1885. Shortly afterward he was married to Miss Addie Lillenthal, of Saratoga, New York, who survives him. Two children were born to this union-Gladys, now Mrs. Charles B. Harrison of St. Louis, and Frank Hall Wright, Jr., who died in April, 1918, while in the aviation service of the army.

Immediately after his graduation and marriage, Frank Hall Wright was licensed to preach by the Indian Presbytery of the Southern Presbyterian Church and assumed the labors of a missionary pastor at old Boggy Depot, where he remained until 1892. He then began evangelical work in New York City and vicinity, but had to discontinue it at the end of a year and a half on

METHVIN, J. J. (MRS.)

DR. FRANK HALL WRIGHT.

9732

3

account of pulmonary tuberculosis, which he had contracted after leaving the West. Although critically ill for a long time, he partially recovered, largely because of the devoted care of his wife, and in 1895 he accepted a commission as a missionary to the Indians of the southern plains under the general assembly of the Dutch Reformed Church. Still physically weak, he secured a team, wagon and camp outfit and prepared to live in the open, not only that he might be thereby better enabled to reach the people among whom he was to labor, but also in the hope that his health would be benefitted.

Wright first went to the Comanches. Arriving near one of their villages he pitched his camp preparatory to getting acquainted with them. Viewing the stranger with suspicion the Comanches dismantled their lodges and moved to a new camping ground. Nothing daunted, Wright pulled up stakes and followed them. It was not an easy task to win their friendship but the sincerity and devotion of Reverend Frank Hall Wright were irresistible. Even then they did not care to listen to the preaching of Christianity, but in the end they were always glad to give him a hearing,

METHVIN, J. J. (MRS.)

DR. FRANK HALL WRIGHT

9732

4

for he was a very plain preacher of a very simple gospel which they could all understand.

Gradually his work was extended to other villages of Comanches and to the people of the Plains, Kiowa, Apache, Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes. He not only preached to them and prayed with them, but he sang to them and Frank Wright was a singer of such marvelous charm and power that no one, red or white, who ever heard him sing could forget him or the songs he sang. He mastered the Indian sign language, but in his preaching he always resorted to the help of interpreters. His meetings were largely attended, there sometimes being hundreds gathered in the open air, beneath some shady grove to listen to his words and join him in singing the songs of peace and hope. Some of the most relentless foes of the white man were led to seek "the Jesus road", among these being Geronimo, whom General Miles had characterized as the "human tiger". Eventually Wright's labors were extended to people of more distant tribes, including the Sioux and the Winnebagoes in the north, and to some of the Indian people of New Mexico.

METHVIN, J. J. (MRS.)

DR. FRANK HALL WRIGHT

9732

5

In more recent years, his evangelistic field has been largely among white people in the states of New York, Pennsylvania, the Virginias, the Carolinas, Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia, Alabama, Texas, Iowa and Oklahoma. But always in the autumn of every year he would hold a round of meetings with his Indian friends in Oklahoma, Dakota and New Mexico.

Thousands of people, in many states, were saddened by the tidings of his sudden death, while on a vacation far from home, but by none will he be more sincerely mourned than by the people of the tepees and lodges who not only listened to his words, but also learned to love him as a brother.

Note: Reverend Frank Wright came to the missions at Anadarko and preached in the schools. He died about eight or ten years ago, I can't get the exact date. This information was found in an old scrapbook of Mrs. J. J. Methvin. Field Worker.