

SPARKS, WILLIE JANE. INTERVIEW #4731-

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

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Field Worker's name Ethel V. ElderThis report made on (date) June 22 19371. Name Mrs. Willie Jane Sparks2. Post Office Address Waurika, Oklahoma.3. Residence address (or location) 103 East F. Ave.4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month October Day 19 Year 18715. Place of birth Shongaloo, Webster Parish, Louisiana6. Name of Father Calvin Marshall Place of birth Hines County, Mississippi.

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Mary Cornelia Simms Place of birth Shongaloo, Webster Parish, Louisiana.

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 5.

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Ethel V. Elder
Investigator
June 22, 1937

Interview with Willie Jane Sparks
103 East F. Ave., Waurika, Oklahoma

I was born October 19, 1871, in Webster Parish,
Louisiana.

My father's name was Calvin Marshall; he was born
February, 1845, in Hines County, Mississippi, and died
June 29, 1928, and is buried at Quannah, Texas.

My mother's name before her marriage to my father
was Mary Cornelia Simms, born May 3, 1850, in Webster
Parish, Louisiana. Died February 11, 1937, buried at
Quannah, Texas.

My parents left Louisiana in 1838 and went to
Henderson County, Texas, and settled at Athens. We made
the trip on the train. There were five of us children and
we enjoyed riding on the train; that was one of the great-
est treats we had had in a long time.

We lived there for a long time and moved to Ennis,
Texas, and lived there about two years. My father bought
a farm at each place and was not satisfied with either of
them, so he decided to move to New Mexico, but after look-
ing around a great deal to find something that suited him,

he did not like New Mexico as well as he thought he was going to, so decided to sell out and move back to Texas and this time we went to Tyler County, Texas, where e stayed for about two years and then Father decided He did not want to farm any longer so decided to make another change and this time we settled in Williamson County and stayed there for a number of years.

My father opened up a feed store and sold all kinds of grain; he liked this work very well but decided to sell out this store as he was offered a good price for it and we left and went to the town of Mexia, Texas.

I had been teaching school a few years at the different places we lived; I began teaching when I was sixteen years old. I taught at Mexia for twelve years then I met and was married to William Robert Sparks on June 13, 1900, and we made our first trip to Oklahoma on the train on our honeymoon; we visited my husband's people at Chickasha for a while then went back to Texas to the town of Ennis and opened up a feed and grain store there.

When the time came for people to register who wanted to draw land in the Indian Territory we came here and my husband registered at El Reno for the drawing.

We drew a claim two miles west of the town of Addington, and built a small box house, just a shack and we lived there until we could prove upon our claim.

We cleared the land of all brush and trees that we did not want to keep and put in a nice farm and had a well dug to supply us with water and had a good start of stock. so we built a good house then and had the place looking very prosperous.

My husband thought it best for me to go back to Texas to spend a while with my parents, as it was getting very tough around here then as the cattlemen were all having to move their cattle off the range as the claims were being settled, and they would move them at night and we were kept awake by the noise that the hundreds of cattle would make roaming over the prairie.

The land that we drew our claim on was the Kiowa-Comanche strip; Oklahoma was not a state at that time and the cattlemen all had cut the land into ranches any size they wanted as they paid the Indians a certain amount of lease money for the use of it. All the land east of the Meridian line was settled by squatters and half-breeds for lots of the white men would

married Indian girls just to get hold of land.

The first saloon was built on the Oklahoma line, just about a quarter of a mile from our house; they gave us a lot of trouble as many "drunks" would roam around and it was not safe for a white woman to stay alone.

The only white neighbor we had was about a half mile from where we lived, they were fine folks named Cook, just the two of them but we women were always scared to get out of our houses to visit each other alone.

When I came back from my visit to Texas, my husband met me at the station at Adlington with a buggy, driving two of the smallest mules I believe I ever saw; they looked so comical that I never shall forget how they looked.

We did not stay there very much longer but sold out to a wealthy German and moved to the town of Aurika, bought a home here and have lived in the same house for over thirty-three years.

I have one white counterpane with fringe about six or eight inches long, also two coverlets that are over one

hundred years old. My grandmother had her slaves help
her card, spin and weave them and they are in good condition
today.