

SPENCE, JOSEPHINE.

INTERVIEW

6932

104

LEGEND & STORY FORM
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

SPENCE, JOSEPHINE (MRS.) INTERVIEW: #6932.

Field worker's name Nannie Lee Burns

This report made on (date) July 29 1937

1. This legend was
secured from (name) Mrs. Josephine Spence

Address 120 J. NE Miami, Oklahoma

This person is (male or female) White, Negro, Indian,

If Indian, give tribe _____

2. Origin and history of legend or story _____

From memory

3. Write out the legend or story as completely as possible. Use blank sheets and attach firmly to this form. Number of sheets attached 10

Interview with Mrs. Josephine Spence
By Nannie Lee Burns, Field Worker
July 29, 1937

My father, William W. Williams, a white man, was born in Crawford County, Indiana, December 26, 1826. My mother, Mary Jane Dawson, was born in Rush County, Indiana, August 7, 1833. They married in Indiana and came to Iowa. I was born in Keokuk County, Iowa, September 7, 1859.

CIVIL WAR DAYS.

Father, four brothers and one brother-in-law enlisted in the Northern Army from Iowa.

Father served in Company I, First Iowa Cavalry. He saw much service on the border of Missouri and Arkansas, and was in the battle on Cabin Creek, near Pryor Creek, Oklahoma.

A small division of them were traveling through and came near night to Cabin Creek. There was a little bend where they stopped, protected on one side by a cliff with the river on the other side. These men decided to spend the night here. All were asleep when they were surprised by an attack from their opponents; so complete was it that their mules and artillery were pushed into the creek and the entire force killed or captured, except my father and two or three men, who escaped. They walked to

Osage, Kansas, taking three days to get there and they did not have anything to eat till they reached Osage.

My husband, William L. Spence, was born east of Joplin, Missouri, at Moss Springs. His parents died when he was quite small, so he went to live with a brother-in-law, Jim Anderson, who had married his sister. He slipped away and joined the army when quite young.

Early Days.

My parents left Iowa when I was six or seven years old and came to Mercer County, Missouri, where they stayed only a short time and then came on to Kansas where they took a claim nine miles west of Columbus, in Cherokee County, Kansas. Life was hard in those days and many of these brave men and women who had tried to start here had grown discouraged and at this time a man by the name of Jay came along and bought many of their claims for a song. Some had tried to improve and had built crude houses and small buildings and had fenced and broke some sod, but others had only ploughed around their claims. This man hung around till finally some of the more determined men, noticing the effects of his talk, took up the matter and called a meeting and feeling ran so high that they burned a figure of him in effigy.

Here my girlhood days were spent, growing up with the new country and each year the school situation improved and I received a fair education as it was considered in those days.

Marriage.

March 17, 1880, I married William L. Spence, and I came with him, my father and mother and sister to the Indian Territory the next day. All of us lived till the following December in a small three room house of native lumber. We had one room 14 x 16, a little bed-room and a very small kitchen. This house was a quarter southwest of the old Peoria school-house on the Dave Peery place.

Before we came, father had gone to the Indian agent at Seneca and secured passes or rather permits for us to come across the line. At that time the soldiers were stationed here and were moving out those who had crossed and settled here and who were trying to make a home for themselves on the Indian land. Every time that we crossed the line into Kansas or Missouri, or returned home, we had to show our passes. The soldiers always met anyone either going or coming. We were permitted to come because my father had rented from an Indian and was not attempting to settle for himself.

The Boomer Movement.

The Quapaws, who had by treaty and purchase acquired the land laying south of the Kansas line, had not been equipped to make a living here and were not permitted to sell even a load of wood from their country. They had found it so hard to exist that most of them had left their homes here and gone to live among the Osages, and there were very few Quapaws living here when we came. The country was covered by the blue stem grass, in some places as high as a man's head, so of course was coveted by the cattlemen. Nailer, Goodner and others had been pasturing the range and waiting for the time to expire when the Quapaw country according to the terms of the treaty would be thrown open for settlement. (After they had vacated their lands for so many years, it was to be opened for settlement.)

The government also knowing this and also knowing that so many of the Quapaws had left, had brought both the Poncas and the Nez Perces here, intending to settle them here, but the Quapaws had objected so much that both tribes had been moved farther into the state. My father and brother both helped to move them.

The Nez Perces were here I think only about six months and the Poncas were here I think two years. They

farmed some and as the Poncas were moved in August, the Quapaws got the corn that they had planted.

The Nez Perces were moved first and in the month of September, and the Poncas the following August. Woolard of Baxter Springs took the contract to move them and it was under him that my father and brother helped. They were moved in wagons.

NEZ PERCES.

There had been an Indian celebration at Arkansas City and most of the Nez Perces were there to attend and there were left at home mostly the old people and the children so there was not so many of them to move.

PONCAS.

The Poncas while here had lived in tents and whatever they could stretch up so had no improvements. They buried their people by placing them on a scaffold and left them exposed to the sun, wind, etc. They had a burying ground on the new Abrams Hill, where Mr. Abrams afterwards built his home. In driving through the country you could see the scaffolds as this hill was quite high being on the prairie with no other high ground around it. After he settled there, he had the bones gathered up and they are now buried on the hill and trees have grown up over the spot. On the way, a Ponca woman died and they had to stop and bury her.

The Attempted Settlement.

After the government had at the insistence of the Quapaws moved these Indians, their next trouble was with the white people who were waiting for an opportunity to settle here.

In the spring of 1879, the editor of the Baxter News, whose name I do not remember, published in his paper that this Quapaw country was to be thrown open to settlement, so those who had been waiting for it began to move in. Some ploughed a furrow around what they thought to be 160 acres; some staked their location, and some even moved their houses in with them and set them on the location picked out by them. They kept going farther and farther from the state line till some of them had crossed the Quapaw Strip and were staking and trying to settle in the Peoria country south of the Quapaws. Those who staked had a board nailed to a stake and on the board was their name.

When this was reported to the Government, they sent soldiers here at once with orders to move these people off and they were all compelled to leave, most of them returning to Kansas. This condition was what compelled my father to have to secure permits for us to come here after Father had rented a farm from Mr. Peery. The

Government Soldiers not only moved or caused the squatters to move but would not allow any to move here without a permit to enter.

One man I remember, Tom Griffith by name, who had come here, when ordered to move, loaded up his folks and everything he had and moved them and set them over the line and he stayed in his wagon on this side but when the soldiers came he would drive over the line. However he soon made arrangements with the Agency and moved to the Tom Peckham farm near us at Peoria where he stayed several years. Later he improved the lot at Jennison place, four miles east of Miami in Ottawa Country. He was a good neighbor and well liked by the Indians. He would loan them anything, even a load of corn if they needed it, but he made them understand that he expected to have it back. His son Clarence is one of the old timers in this county now.

The Modocs.

Yes, I remember when the Modocs were moved here.

They were brought to Baxter Springs by train and then moved in wagons to the Modoc Reservation on the state line just north and west of Seneca, Missouri. They wore citizen's clothes when brought here, differing from the Poncas, who wore a handkerchief over the head, moccasins, shirts and skirts and a blanket over this.

The Modocs were homely and so many of them had one eye, and a face scarred from wounds. In fact most of the men were disfigured in some way, caused no doubt from the war they had been in with the soldiers. One of them was so badly scarred that he was called Scar Face Charlie. Some of them were very young men, almost boys. There were also old women and children. The government built them houses, a school house, and a church. An old fashioned Friend from Massachusetts was their pastor. Mr. Pickering was the Boss Farmer and taught the men how to farm.

Roads.

We had few in fact no roads except the Military Road, "Trail", as it was called. This came south out of Baxter Springs and crossed Rock Creek just southeast of Lincolnville. Here there was a very large spring and many people camped here. The men held their herds of cattle near here while getting ready to load on the train at Baxter and later at the state line when the railroad was built to the state line. From this ford as well as from the Peeler's ferry where it crossed the Neosho southeast of here, there were trails leading from these fords in every direction, which as time went on became plainer and later were used as roads. Chetopa, Kansas, west and north of here, was the next shipping point and

there was a cattle trail from the south there but I do not think it came through this county; it came west of here. Later as travel increased, there was a short cut by which they crossed the Neosho here at Miami and brought their cattle to Baxter west of the old trail. This was an advantage because it was not traveled so much and the grass was better along the way, as these men expected to fatten the cattle on the grass as they drove through. From the Peeler's Crossing and Ferry, the road went south and passed just west of new Fairland.

Mose Peeler who had the ferry was a Union Soldier. He was an Ottawa and when he first came here he built a double log house which afterwards burned down and the rock chimney stood there for many years. He lived for some years in a shanty and then he built his two story frame house that you remember. His horse barn is where the old horse shed for the stage horses stood. He also had a store near the ferry.

Peace Officers.

Mose Peeler, Alfred Wadeater and some of the other old settlers were peace officers.

At one time they received word that a man living near the Abrams Hill had been drinking and shooting around and they went to arrest him. As they rode up, the man came out of the door and one of the men shot him and he fell backwards into a house where he lay that day and night.

and till the next day, guarded by the officers, before he was moved but I do not know why.

Robbery.

Jim Charley, a Peoria Indian, got some money through his mother and he decided to open a store in Baxter Springs and put J. P. McNaughton in charge of it. In those days few people used the banks and money was most often carried on the person. McNaughton was coming south one day and said he was held up and robbed at the Rock Creek Ford. Later his papers, etc., were found scattered around but no money, and on the strength of this loss, Jim Charlie was closed out.

Home Life.

In December after we were married we moved to the Nat Jennison place east of Miami. In 1883 my husband and George Black from Baxter Springs farmed the land, 100 acres, at the Quapaw Mission. George Supernaul, who was the farmer at the Mission, with the boys farmed ten acres which furnished the school the corn and other vegetables they used. Mr. and Mrs. White were in charge of the Mission then.

Our house was at first a corn crib and granary. Later they moved from the old soldier's location one of the buildings that had been used as a bakery at the

commissary. This was moved up beside where I lived.

We moved here in the fall and lived here for a year and a half and here my second child was born, Lew. My first, Ada, had been born at the Jennison Farm. We lived a quarter southwest of the Mission Buildings and used the water from a sulphur spring there. This spring had a big gum in it.

Later years.

Since then, we have lived mostly east of Miami among the Ottawas and here our children were born, fourteen in all. We raised nine of them and six of them are yet living.

Neighbors.

Houses were not very close together in those days and the people were very friendly and ready to help you in any way; in sickness and death always ready to do everything possible. The women, when they visited each other, came and stayed all day, helped you with your quilting, etc.

Dr. Jim Wade, one of the early settlers, was a favorite doctor and a very good man, and had a nice family. They lived on the Johnnie Wadsworth farm near Peoria. He was six feet tall, very slim and a nose like a mushroom. He drove two ponies to a topless four wheeled buggy, which had one seat.

The Indian women would come to our home and we tried to do something for them. One day I remember, we were butchering

when one came carrying one baby on her back on a board and leading one, and my husband asked me to give her some meat, which I did, and then she asked me for parts that I would not consider saving.

My husband died in February in 1901 and most of the time since then I have lived with some of my children and a large part of it has been spent in Miami.