

SPARKS, MARY LEWIS.

INTERVIEW

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Nettie Cain,  
Interviewer.  
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An Interview With Mary Lewis Sparks,

Mrs. Mary Lewis Sparks of Atwood, Choctaw and Chickasaw, was born eighteen miles from Hartshorne in 1879.

Her grandmother came from Mississippi and her mother was born in the Indian Territory.

Her father, who was a Chickasaw, came from Georgia.

When her grandmother left Mississippi she left almost everything as the Government would let them bring very little.

Mrs. Sparks attended school at New Hope near old Skulleyville where there was an Indian school and she attended college at Dallas, Texas, for two years and Baird College at Clinton, Missouri, for one term.

She began teaching at the age of eighteen and her first school was in the mountains in the McGee Valley and the post office was Daisy. This was a mixed school but the school had to have at least ten Indian children enrolled before the Government would let them have a school. Her salary was \$35.00. The white children were to pay a tuition fee of \$1.50 per month but very few paid the tuition fee.

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Mrs. Sparks taught one term near McAlester. This was a mixed school and had about fifteen white children. She only collected \$1.50 tuition for all of them. She then taught one year at Hartshorne and one year at Ti.

Then she came to Newburg, was married to Mr. Sparks who was the superintendent of Sardis Indian School, where eighteen Indian children were boarders.

The Government paid Mr. and Mrs. Sparks \$100.00. This paid the board and Mrs. Sparks salary for teaching.

Then, there was plenty of game such as wild turkey, deer, rabbits and squirrels. The large boys would sometimes go with Mr. Sparks hunting.

Before this term of school was out a son was born to Mr. and Mrs. Sparks. That winter after the weather got bad Mr. and Mrs. Sparks had school at home and in that way the trip to the school house was saved. This ended Mrs. Sparks teaching career.