

STANKA, AUGUST.

INTERVIEW . 9256

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

#9256

STANKA, AUGUST.

INTERVIEW.

Field Worker's name Ethel Mae Yates,

This report made on (date) November 22, 193 7

1. Name August Stanka

2. Post Office Address Elk City, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) 519 West 1st Street.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month July, Day 23 Year 1853

5. Place of birth Czechoslovakia.

6. Name of Father Mathais Stanka. Place of birth Czechoslovakia.

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Tracy Stanka. Place of birth Czechoslovakia.

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 0

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An Interview with August Stanka, Elk City.
By - Ethel Mae Yates, Investigator.
November 22, 1937.

I came with my family from Montague County, Texas to the Indian Country in 1894 in one covered wagon and one spring wagon. The weather was nice so we slept out on the ground. We forded Red River near Ringgold and came one and one-half miles into Cleveland County.

The people told us when we first came that it hadn't rained enough to wet a man in his shirt sleeves in eighteen months. I rented a place and moved in a little frame house and paid a man \$50.00 cash for fifteen acres of land and rented the rest third and fourth. It had rained a little that Fall so I went to Oklahoma City to get credit for tools to make a crop but credit was hard to get. However, I managed for enough to get by and there was sufficient rainfall so I made a good crop and was able to pay off my debt and credit was easier to secure the second year. I had to do all of my farming with a walking plow; my crop was on Little River and I got my wood for fuel down on this river. I would cut it in halves. I made one crop here and then moved three miles

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north, close to the Perry Schoolhouse where our children could go to school. We would have subscription schools that would last about three months of the year; we lived here three years.

I never did go on many fishing trips; I don't like fish much anyway and when I did go I would get chills.

I moved from here five miles east of Moorewood and made one crop; there was a fine orchard on our place so we had the finest grapes, peaches and other fruit. In 1900 I sold out and came West in a covered wagon and spring wagon with our teams and what household goods we had. I bought out a relinquishment, five cows and calves, three hogs and what feed the man had and we moved in a dugout dug down in the ground and walled up with native lumber. This was in Custer County close to the Colly Schoolhouse. There was a post office and a little store established there but later they were done away with. The Colly Schoolhouse was a little rock house with puncheon floor and a puncheon top covered with dirt and a home-made table for the preacher's desk. I was the first preacher there. People were hungry

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for the Word and as there was no preacher my oldest son told that I had preached one sermon and several funerals so I began preaching; preached there and over on Spring Creek close to where Harmon is now and I would also go over five miles north of where Canute is and preach. Roads were poor but I went to my appointments in my little spring wagon; sometimes I would be gone from Saturday until Monday. I farmed for my living and preached to the people and very seldom got any pay for preaching. This country was very poorly settled up, houses were few and far between; people pioneering a new country had very little of this worlds goods, so I gave the best that was in me to the people.

In 1901 I sold one of my horses and financed a camp meeting there on the corner of my place; people came from everywhere and camped there for the meeting and it was some job to feed the people. We were living in a dugout and a one-room house but we took care of the singers and preachers and some said that we wouldn't have any chickens left for the meeting lasted ten days but my wife said she believed she had more chickens than

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she started with. I stayed on that place for five years and founded a Church of God there with twenty-five members.

I had to go to Weatherford for all of our supplies and hauled our coal from there, also lumber to build our house. Weatherford was forty miles and the nearest railroad town.

There were seven acres broke out on my place. I broke my land and made the finest crop and raised cabbage and tomatoes and corn. People would come from all around and want to buy a bushel of corn. Some wanted it for meal and some wanted it to plant. Some could pay and some couldn't, but I never refused any one.

While here a Missionary came from Canada to preach to the Indians. I had the privilege to go one Sunday. The man was preaching and all at once he cut his sermon short; I went to him and asked him why he did it and he said the Indians had begun to move from side to side and if he hadn't stopped preaching they would all have left. After services he made a large wash kettle of coffee and set down a large wooden box of crackers and the Indians

feasted. One Sunday he failed to bring anything so the following Sunday there was scarcely any people out to hear him. He had to give them something to eat to get them to come and hear him preach. These were the Cheyenne and Arapaho Indians.

Elk City was established the next year after we came West. The first time I was here it was just a tent town. My wife made some cottage cheese out of some sour milk and churned some butter and we came to Elk City with our cheese, butter and eggs and it wasn't any time until we had sold everything that we had brought for the people were hungry. After that we would bring over milk, butter, eggs and any kind of vegetables that we raised and ^{they} found a ready sale.

There were many rattlesnakes; I had just come home one day and was putting my team up when I heard my baby girl screaming. I went to see and a rattlesnake had bitten her and the dog had killed the snake. It was too far away to get to a doctor so my wife knelt down and prayed for her and God healed the bite.

We had some grand times while here going over on the

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Washita River and gathering plums and grapes. Our nearest neighbor lived three-fourths of a mile from us up a creek in a little dugout. We carried water from a spring down in a creek until it went dry, then we dug a well and got good soft water, although most all the water around us was gyppt.

In 1902 a cyclone came through the country and blew our little house, the top of our dugout and almost everything away and put us out of a place to live so I was forced to sell some of our cows to build another home; I sold four hundred dollars worth and built another little house where I lived five years, then sold out and moved to Frederick and lived there awhile, preached and farmed. I came back West from there and have lived in and around Elk City ever since but kept up my preaching until I got too old. I am now living at 519 West 1st Street, Elk City, Oklahoma.