

SPRINGSTON, J. L.

INTERVIEW

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Effie S. Jackson,
Journalist,
12-3-37.

An Interview with J. L. Springston,
2747 East Fifth St.
Tulsa, Oklahoma

Of all the material in his files on the life and times of his father, W. B. Springston, Mr. J. L. Springston treasures most his father's account of the early day history of Spavinaw. Following is the story of that time from the pen of John L. Springston and signed by him:

Spavinaw, as a place of locality, was originally known as Lynch's Mill, later taking the name of Spavinaw or Spavinaw. A sawmill was the first improvement on the place and a grist mill was added soon afterward. Later a colony of Mormons from the North came and took over the sawmill and gristmill. They then put in a large mill building, two or three stories high and also they put in a flour mill. That was the status of the place up to the Civil war; it was known as Lynch's mill.

West and north of the mill Thomas L. Rogers builded himself a house, and it yet stands. It was a two-roomed log house one story high. I see in the paper that it was said to have been the home of one west, which is a mistake. It

was the home of Rogers during the improvement and building of the mill properties.

Salt works were opened south of the mill, at the foot of the mill that borders the town of Spavinaw on the south. Both of these properties were operated under the same management, until the war began in 1861.

Joseph M. Lynch, the original owner of the mill and salt works, resided five or six miles north of the settlement on what was then and now known as Lynch's Prairie, near Grand River. He was one of the leading citizens of the Cherokee Nation and one of the best lawyers. He had three boys, but I recall the names of only two, Joe Jr. and Lon. Joe later lived in the Canadian district of the Cherokee Nation and died there. Lon, after the war, lived in Flint district and died there.

Joseph M. Lynch was a slaveholder, and one of his ~~slaves was Eason, the tanner. Lynch had a tannery business~~ until after the war. Mr. Lynch was a tanner, too. Mr. Lynch operated a large farm and was generally well-to-do.

Between the Lynch place and the mill lived a full-blood Cherokee Indian named Doo-Stoo, or Spring Frog, a Baptist

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preacher who also owned a large farm and was plentifully supplied with this world's goods.

From Lynch's home due south two miles lived Mrs. Elizabeth Elliott, grandmother of the writer. Lynch lived on the north side of the prairie and Mrs. Elliott on the south. Just west of the Elliott house lived one Elliott Powers.

West, the man alluded to in a recent article, lived below the mill. Now he lives about two miles down the creek. He owned and operated a large fine farm. His wife was named Mahala and his four children, as I remember them in order were Walter, Will, Laura and John.

About two miles west of the west home lived Anderson Bangs and his wife, Susan and two children, James and Osceola. The latter now lives at or near Adair, on the M. K. T. Railroad. West's wife was a McLaughlin.

Directly north of the mill lived Hiram Landrum, head of one of the prominent families of the nation. Hiram Jr. after the Civil War represented the Cherokees at Washington as national delegate. West of Hiram there lived another Landrum, David. This home was east and north of the present dam.

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THE WICKLIFFES.

East of the dam up the Spavinaw Creek a mile or so, lived John Wickliffe, father of the boys who were some years ago hunted as outlaws and who are now good citizens of the county in which they live.

Just up stream from the Wickliffes there lived an Indian who had a sort of zoo. He owned two black bears and kept them in a log house. They were the first in captivity in the Western Cherokee Nation. He also had a parrot which could not learn Cherokee. Therefore the parrot had to live without talking.

Still on above the parrot and bear house there lived one George Seven, full Blood. Then further up the creek was the largest farm on the creek, owned by Alexander Springston, father of the writer. One Sixkiller lived yet above that place. There is only one of this family now

living, Moses Ridge, a Baptist minister near Salina.

DELAWARE TOWN.

The Anderson Springston farm was about two miles above the dam. Two miles east of this place was the place called Delaware Town, where the Osages were originally

located. The Delaware tribe ran them out of the locality and located there themselves. Hence the name of Delaware Town.

Before the Cherokees as a nation moved west, the Osages occupied the territory from Delaware River to where Vinita is now located. They owned from Vinita down the present line of the Katy Railroad to opposite Wagoner, from there to Grand River across to Illinois River, across the Illinois River to Lee's Creek, now in Sequoyah County, opposite Fort Smith. The drive against the Osages by the Cherokees began not long prior to 1838 and when the main body of the Cherokees emigrated west, the Osages were obliged to leave the Cherokee land and go farther west for a location. They encamped for a while at Claremore but eventually left the country.

THE NATIONAL CHURCH

~~Delaware Town was the seat of the Baptist Church,~~
the largest in the nation at that time. It was sixty by sixty feet. The entire nation attended church there each year. In September the church was surrounded with small kitchens and sleeping booths were prepared especially for the women of the advanced class in education and wealth.

They were well taken care of during the progress of services.

Evans Jones and his son, John B. Jones, were the founders and pastors. They were missionaries and they did more for the uplifting and civilization of the Cherokees than all other denominational workers of the period. But the Civil War broke them down and effected the work they had given to the cause up to the time of the war. Neither of the missionaries lived to renew the work after the war, except for the establishment of the Lacone school, first at Tahlequah, later at Muskogee.

CHIEF DOWNING A PREACHER.

At Delaware town church, especially in the month of September, every year, the people from all over the nation congregated. Lewis Downing, later principal chief of the nation, was one of the favorite ministers for these occasions.

Captain Spring Frog was also a leader. Representatives of district churches throughout the nation attended officially. Captain Thomas Pegg, one of the leading Cherokee ministers, was a national representative of his people.

It is understood that Thomas Rogers of Lynch's mill was the brother of Charles Rogers of COO-weg-scoo-wee

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district, Cherokee Nation. It is said that Hon. C. V. Rogers, father of the noted Will Rogers, was also a brother. This is purely surmise with the writer.

On the mountain region south and west of the dam, as well as on the ridges south and east, were deer, turkey and fox ranges prior to the war. They were then plenty. During the fall and winter wild pigeons clouded the skies by millions.

SULPHUR SPRINGS.

Just northeast from the home of the writer's father, nine miles or so above the present dam, are two great springs. One of them is sulphur and quite strong. Prior to the Civil war it was the stamping ground of cattle and horses from sections for miles around. This was particularly true during the summer season. Up the creek from the sulphur spring about a mile and a half there is a spring that bears the record of pure and cool water in the summer and heated water in the winter. This spring is located on the road that leads from the writer's old home to the school house he attended for eleven or twelve years.

Central Delaware district was the home of Charles Thompson, chief of the Cherokees from 1875 to 1879. This was in the Charles Landrum settlement, eleven miles east from the Delaware

Town Baptist church. This was Spavinaw Creek and the District Court house was located there at one time.

Three miles south from the home of the writer was the home of He-cow-ee Thompson, brother of Chief Charles Thompson. He was one of the strongest friends the Indians ever had anywhere at any time. His loyalty and activity developed during the Civil War and this will be detailed later.

Some distance south of the dam lived Lewis Ross, brother of the great chief of the Cherokees. He had a fine home and extra large farm holdings. He was a slave-owner and he had great herds of cattle and horses. His home was near Salina and debris is yet to be seen. The place became the Cherokee orphan's home and was burned down several years ago.

Above is the story of what was once Lynch's mill, later Spavinaw now Spavinaw, and the location of a great dam. This story also bears on the territory that was Goingsnake, Delaware and Saline district of the Cherokee nation, later Indian Territory, now Oklahoma, once home of the original North American Indians.

Written November 1, 1925 by John L. Springston.