

STURDIVANT, GALLIE.

INTERVIEW

13825

295

BIOGRAPHICAL WORKS
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 Indian-Pioneer-History Project for Oklahoma

STURDIVANT, SALLIE - INTERVIEW 13625

Field Worker's name Eugene V. Murray,

This report made on (date) April 18 1938

1. Name Mrs. Sallie Sturdivant,

2. Post Office Address Ada, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) 523 E. 13th.,

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month July Day 25. Year 1874

5. Place of birth Red River County, Texas

6. Name of Father John Stewart Place of birth Kentucky

Other information about father Civil War Veteran Confederate

7. Name of Mother Nancy Stewart Place of birth ?

Other information about mother ?

Notes: 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 7.

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Eugene V. Murray,
Investigator,
April 18, 1938.

In interview with Mrs. Sallie Sturdivant,
523 east 13th Street, Ada, Oklahoma.

Mrs. Sallie Sturdivant was born July 25, 1874, in Red River County, Texas, near Clarksville. Mr. John Stewart, her father, was born somewhere in Kentucky, her mother, Mrs. Nancy Stewart, was born near Natchez, Mississippi. Mr. Stewart was a Confederate Veteran of the Civil War, and was also at one time a small slave holder. Two brothers and a sister, all older than Mrs. Sturdivant, were born in Louisiana. Mrs. Nancy Stewart the Mother, was by blood one quarter Choctaw Indian, her mother being one of those of the tribe who did not migrate to the Indian Territory during the great removal period.

Mrs. Sturdivant was three years and six or seven months old when the family left Red River County, Texas in the winter of 1877.

The family property on leaving Red River County consisted of three wagons, containing household goods and clothing, twenty-five or thirty cattle and about ten head of horses.

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Mr. Stewart drove one wagon and the two boys, twelve and fifteen years old, drove one wagon each on the journey. Mrs. Sturdivant's older sister drove the cattle and extra horses, she did this as a matter of choice. The hundred and fifty mile journey to the Indian Territory was completed in late February, 1873, the family crossing the Red River at Brown's ferry thirteen miles south of Thackerville.

Mr. Stewart had a brother-in-law and sister living near Thackerville and because of this the family chose Thackerville as a base of operations in the Territory. Mr. Stewart rented a farm here on which the family lived for one year, making a very good crop. There were no schools at Thackerville, however, and Mr. and Mrs. Stewart, wanting to put the children in some school, decided to move where there was a school. For this purpose the family moved to a farm three miles west of Lebanon which was the location of the Old Lebanon Indian Academy. This farm, or rather tract of virgin land, was leased from a Mrs. Lottie Stewart who, however, was no relation to the Stewart family in question. Here, Mr. Stewart had to

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improve the land, starting from "scratch" as did many of the pioneer settlers of Oklahoma. He built a two room log house with a connecting hall between the two rooms, each room having a 'cat' chimney and fireplace.

He also built a log barn and two log cribs for feed, and enclosed a hundred acres of land with a rail (log) fence.

Mrs. Sturdivant remembers the journey from Thacker-ville to Lebanon well and though the distance between the two places was only about twenty-five miles yet it required more time to make the trip than it did to make the trip from Red River County, Texas, to Thackerville. This was because the intervening country was heavily wooded and since the trip was made in the spring, ^{the creeks,} ~~and~~ there were many of them, were nearly all out of their banks. The trail, since it was used principally by horseback riders was not wide enough in most places for wagon travel. The three wagons were "pushed" along through dense thickets of dog-wood, persimmon, sumach and other growths, in many places bouncing over rough stones and in others being "squeezed"

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between the larger trees. Many trees had to be felled before any progress at all could be made. Sometimes a wagon would become bogged down in crossing a creek at which time all hands including the children were needed to set it on its way again. Sometimes the wagons had to be 'swum' across the creeks, as did the extra stock. At times, Mrs. Sturdivant's mother, Mrs. Stewart suffered much because of her fear that the stock would be drowned.

The house on the Lebanon farm was without a floor for several years and because of this the family experienced an exasperating difficulty, a problem which they were some time in solving. Nearly every time anyone sat in a chair the chair would sink into the ground several inches thus showing the ground to be very soft. Mrs. Stewart tried incessantly to remedy the situation by pouring water on the ground in the house to cause it to settle and pack. But no matter how often this was done the chairs would still sink when sat in by anyone. The situation was explained to certain of the neighbors but these people could offer no solution at all.

One day, an Indian, whose name Mrs. Sturdivant cannot remember, came by and stopped at the Stewart home for dinner.

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This Indian who incidentally was quite old, almost spoiled the family's dinner by calmly informing them they had built their house over the graves of an Indian family who had lived there many years before. Thus the riddle of the sinking chairs was solved at last.

There were two other Indian burying grounds located less than a quarter of a mile from the Stewart home which the family had been wondering about for quite some time. The Stewarts never did move their house from its place over the graves but they did put in a hewn log floor and lived in the house for six years.

Soon after moving to the Lehanon location Mrs. Stewart began proceedings which would enable her to be admitted to the tribal rolls with citizenship rights. She made application in 1831 but was not admitted to citizenship until 1888 during which time she had great difficulty in proving her eligibility. Quite a number of the Indians in the territory remembered her parents and grandparents in Mississippi when they were all children but did not, of course, remember Mrs. Stewart as she had not been born

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at that time. It was necessary to go over the rolls with the authorities and with her attorney, a Mr. McCurtain, and trace her lineage back for over seventy-five years before she was finally admitted to her rights.

Some time after settling on the Lebanon place Mr. Stewart built a tenant house on his place for his help as he had by this time begun to farm on quite a large scale as the farm, which was in the Wilson Creek bottoms, was very productive. The nearest cotton gin was five or six miles from the Stewart farm. All supplies and staple groceries were brought in from Denison and Sherman, Texas.

Mr. Stewart took his allotment in 1899 three miles south of Atoka and moved the family there from the Lebanon place. This move was also made for the sake of better and handier schools. This allotment was improved by Mr. Stewart on a larger scale than the Lebanon farm had been and it remained the family home until the death of Mr. and Mrs. Stewart. Mrs. Stewart died in May, 1895. Mr. and Mrs. Sturdivant were married in 1896. Mrs. Sturdivant was twenty-two years old at the time. The newlyweds then took their allotments six miles northwest of Ada, near the present

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Egypt school and established their home there. This land was improved by Mrs. Sturdivant and made into a very productive farm and, this property, consisting of five hundred and sixty-five acres, still belongs to Mrs. Sturdivant.

Mr. Sturdivant died in 1910 but Mrs. Sturdivant and her only child, Claude O. Sturdivant, now undersheriff of Pontotoc County, lived on this property until the spring of 1912. The widow and her son then moved into Ada so that the boy would have better schools. The present Sturdivant home, located at 523 East 13th Street in Ada, is still the family residence and Mrs. Sturdivant who built the house in 1912, shares it with her son and daughter-in-law and grandchildren. Mrs. Sturdivant is now sixty-five years of age.