

JOHN THOMAS SPICKARD

1854-1938

The life of John Thomas Spickard spanned eighty-two years, four frontier states and a shift from one century to another. He survived a sea voyage before he was born, a violent hail storm when he was twenty-seven, the death of his wife, the birth of seven children and the death of four of them. His life-time included the Civil War and World War I, the depressions of the 1890's and the 1930's. He was born into the agrarian West, and died in the modern world.

Ruth Spickard Spaulding has written about her grandfather and shared her thoughts with me when we talked in March of 2006. I have included her comments, written and spoken, in italics throughout the biography.

The story of John Thomas Spickard must begin *before* he was born. Mary Ann was pregnant when she got on the ship in San Francisco with her husband, George A. Spickard, her daughter Delilah Ervin, his son, Charles Smith Spickard, and their son, Eldorado California Spickard. They endured the long journey through Nicaragua and probably up the Mississippi River home to Missouri. Eldorado died days after their return. John was born just three months later.

John Thomas and Mary C. Shinn Spickard

John T. Spickard, born Oct. 14, 1854 on the family farm just west of Spickard, Mo., in Grundy County. He lived and worked on this farm. . .

George bought a three-hundred acre farm and their family soon began to grow, their farm to thrive. George and Mary Ann were clearly leaders in their community. By the beginning of the Civil War, John had two more brothers and a sister. The 1860 Census for Washington Township, Grundy County, Missouri also shows "James", five years old, who has not been identified, and two farm laborers, Luther Bell, sixteen and Franklin Martin, twenty.

John was only seven when the Civil War broke out. He must have heard many heated arguments among the settlers of this border state. His father was a Union man and soon was elected a captain in the local Missouri militia, charged with protecting the peace in the communities of Northern Missouri.

John continued to work the family farm through out his teens. He probably went to school for a few years. His father and uncle were on the

first school board for the area. In 1871 the town of Spickardsville, Missouri was incorporated. It was, of course, named for his father because he owned the land. In the 1860's Joab and Elizabeth Hodge Shinn had moved to Liberty Township in Grundy County. One of their daughters, Mary Candace Shinn, caught John's eye. They were married in Grundy County on August 12, 1873.

He lived and worked on this farm until 1874 [sic] when he married Mary C. Shinn. He bought a farm where they lived and where their 6 children were born. In 1892 he moved to Oklahoma, returning to Spickard in 1899.

Mary C. Shinn Spickard, born April 10, 1855. She had a brother Uncle George Shinn who was married to Aunt Sarah. They were the parents of Cappy who was married to Bert Ewing. Bert and Cappy came to see us around 1935 when we lived in Spickard. I suppose they lived around Berry as they are buried in Berry Cemetery. George Ewing was their son and he lived in Des Moines and moved to California in the 1950's. In 1960 Mildred went to Calif. on the train and took Cappy out to stay with George.

Mary also had a sister Ellen Shinn whose married name was Alumbaugh. She was the mother of Goldie Alumbaugh who was a missionary nurse in Africa for 38 years. Ellen died in 1893 and is buried in Berry Cemetery, where so many of our family is buried.

Mary's Mother's maiden name was Hodge. I have Uncle Jim Hodge's "fiddle" so my mother said.

It is possible that John and Mary Spickard had a child who was born and died before they were married. The Groff Cemetery records show the following:

"C. M. Spickard Died 1872 1 yr 4 mos dau of J.T. and M.C."

Another child, Maggie, was born December 11, 1877 and died March 12, 1879. She is also buried in Groff Cemetery. Their surviving children were:

Wilroy Oscar (always called Roy)	Born August 17, 1874
Sylvia T.	Born March 16, 1876
Charles George (Charley)	Born August 14, 1884
Ella Francis	Born December 21, 1886
George Harrison (Harry)	Born June 17, 1888

John worked his farm in Myers Township until about 1892 when he made the decision to take part in the great Oklahoma Land Rush of 1893.

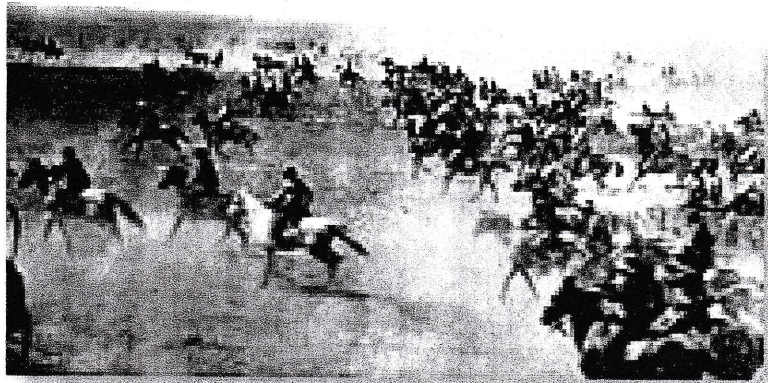
The Oklahoma Land Rush of 1893

At precisely twelve noon on September 16, 1893 a cannon's boom unleashed the largest land rush America ever saw. Carried by all kinds of transportation - horses, wagons, trains, bicycles or on foot - an estimated 100,000 raced to claim plots of land in an area of land in northern Oklahoma Territory known as the Cherokee Strip. There had been a number of previous land rushes in the Territory - but this was the big one.

In 1828 Congress designated the land that would become Oklahoma as Indian Territory. White settlers were required to leave, and a number of tribes from the East and South were forcibly moved into the area from their ancestral lands. Chief among these were the Five Civilized Tribes - the Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek and Seminole - who allied themselves with the South during the Civil War. Following the war, the US government looked upon these tribes as defeated enemies. This animosity combined with increasing pressure to open up the Indian Territory to white settlement prompted the first land rush in 1885, a second followed in 1889.

By the time of the Oklahoma land rush of 1893, America was in the grip of the worst economic depression it had ever experienced. This was one of the factors that swelled the number of expectant land-seekers that day. Many would be disappointed. There were only 42,000 parcels of land available - far too few to satisfy the hopes of all those who raced for land that day. Additionally, many of the "Boomers" - those who had waited for the cannon's boom before rushing into the land claim - found that a number of the choice plots had already been claimed by "Sooners" who had snuck into the land claim area before the race began. The impact of the land rush was immediate, transforming the land almost overnight.

Oklahoma
Land Rush
Of 1893

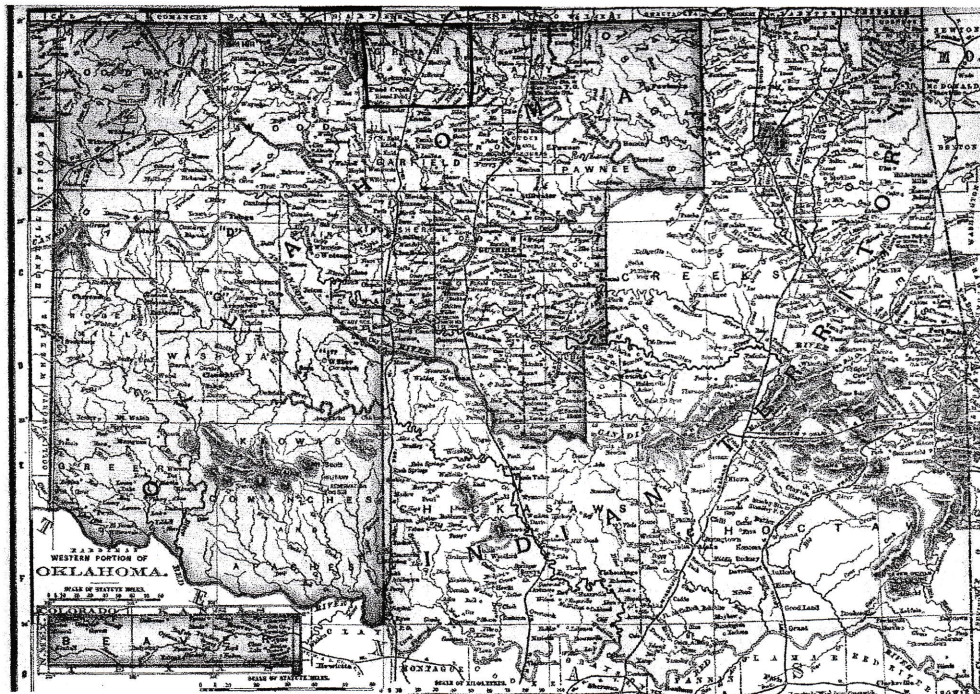


The Grant County, Oklahoma Census of 1900 shows John T. Spickard living on a rented farm with his family. All the families around his owned their farms. Perhaps he wasn't one of the lucky one to stake a claim. Perhaps he just wasn't meant to be a farmer.

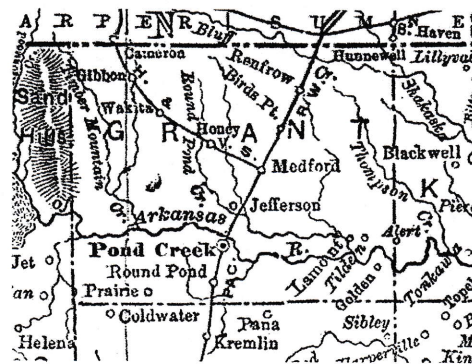
1900 United States Census: Oklahoma, Grant County, Hickory Township.

Spickard, John T.	45	Farmer	rental
Mary C.	40?		
Charles G.	19	Farm Laborer	
Ella F.	13	Servant	
George H.	10	Farm Laborer	

Roy (Wilroy Oscar), their oldest son, was living in Trenton, Missouri in 1900 with his wife, Maude and their two children, Goldie and John.



Oklahoma 1895



Grant County, Oklahoma

John's father, George Alexander Spickard died on May 30, 1899 while John was still in Oklahoma. Sometime soon after the 1900 census he moved his family back to Missouri, and then made the decision to go to Colorado to find work. It is not certain whether he went alone, or took his family. We know that his sister, Sylvia Spickard Larcom and her family were in St. Joseph Missouri in 1900 and in Dillon, Summit County, Colorado by 1910. His brother Charles moved to Colorado at some point. We know he died in Denver in 1963. Harry also may have lived there. (Colorado census takers had poor handwriting and spelling, so it is hard to pin down some of the dates.) His father's will provided \$1200 for each of his children, unless he had already given them an equivalent amount. Considering John's lack of success with farming and his wandering ways, I suspect he had already received his inheritance before his father's death.

In 1901 he moved to Denver, Colo., and worked for the Railroad. In 1907 he moved back to Spickard and took over the Farmers Telephone Company as local manager with headquarters in Spickard. The company had 16 long lines and upwards of 30 phones.

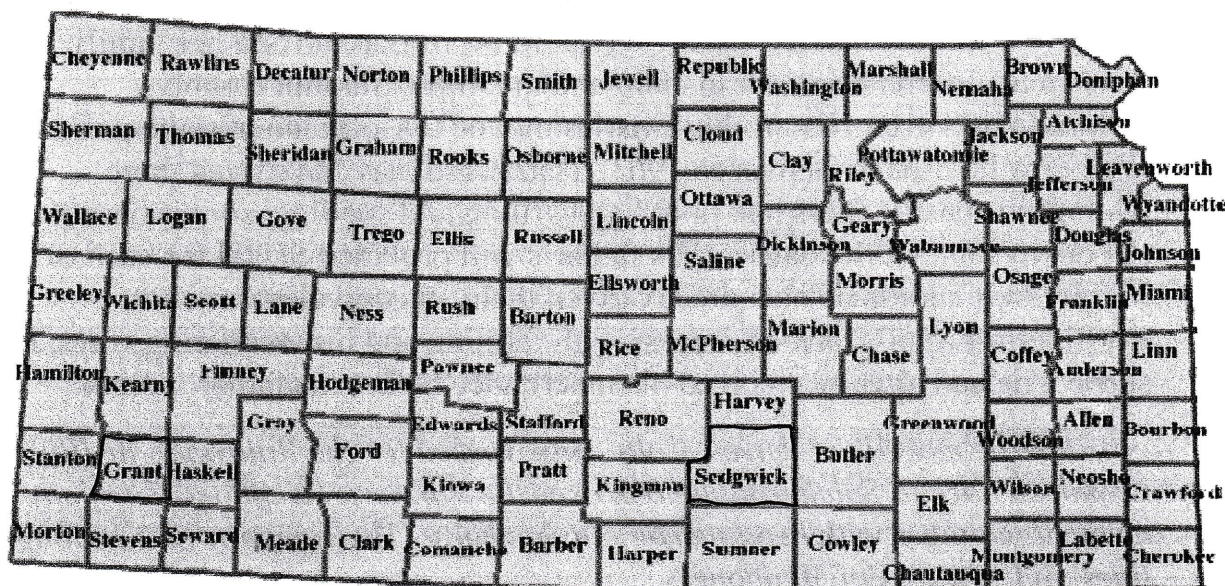
Mary died in 1907 and is buried at Berry.

My grandpa married Luella Cooper in 1908. When grandpa first came to stay with us when we lived in Kansas I remember hearing the grown-ups saying that grandpa's wife, Luella was living with her children and grandpa would live with his children. I don't know when or where she died, and I don't know if Cooper was her maiden or married name.

Mary Candace Shinn died on March 4, 1907 at the age of fifty-two. She is buried in Berry Cemetery in the southeast corner of Grundy County, Missouri. There is no headstone. My father recalls that the Shinn family believed headstones were idolatrous. Was Mary with John in Colorado? Did he bring her home to Missouri because she was ill? I believe it more likely she stayed in Missouri while John was working in Colorado and that he came back to bury her.

John stayed in Spickard for a time. He married a Mrs. Cooper. The family story is that her name is Luella; however I found her listed in one census reports as Priscilla and several times as Drucilla. Drucilla Coon, daughter of David and Lucinda Shaw Coon, married Thomas Blueford Cooper from 1873 to his death in 1998. They had eleven children. Lottie, age 12 and Albert, age 10 were living with John and Drucilla in 1910, according to the Grundy County Census for that year. They lived in Spickard where John was a lineman for the telephone company and Drucilla worked the central exchange.

By 1920 John and Drucilla were living in Wichita, Sedgwick County, Kansas. John's son Roy and Roy's son John Cleo Spickard also moved to Kansas, living on farms in Grant County in the southwest corner of the state.



Kansas Counties

1910 Census Wichita, Sedgwick County, Kansas

John T. Spickard	Head	65	Laborer	Packing Company
Drucilla Spickard	Wife	63		
Henry H. Cooper	stepson	32	Laborer	Packing Company
Albert L. Cooper	stepson	27	Laborer	Packing Company
Lottie E. Cooper	stepdau	22	Laborer	Packing Company

During the '20's John Thomas spent a period of time living with Roy's family, as did his brothers Harry and Charley. Ruth Spaulding was a little girl at the time and has these memories.

How I remember Grandpa - - A very neat well dressed man. He took care of his own room. One of his chores was to clean the barn which he did - - always dressed in a dark 3 piece suit, white-shirt and tie. He never seemed to get dirty, which I never could understand. He had one book in his room which he read from cover to cover many times. He had dark hair with a little gray and a mustache neatly trimmed. He had very little to say. I can't remember ever talking to him. (Part of this is copied from Ford's History of Grundy County 1908. Grandpas one book was the Bible.) [My father also remembers him as a tall, silent man, always in a suit.]

John then moved to Colorado to live with his daughter Sylvia F. Larcom and her husband John W. Larcom in Englewood, Arapahoe County, Colorado, according to the 1930 Colorado census. He was seventy-five years old and not employed. My father believes one reason he may have moved there was the modest "old age pension" that Colorado provided to its senior citizens. Colorado also had good medical care, especially for tuberculosis. Also, his son Roy was badly injured in an automobile accident in 1929 and he and his son John Cleo lost their farms and moved back to Missouri in 1930.

Drucilla Coon Cooper Spickard died in Wichita, Kansas on March 29, 1934. I don't know where she is buried or under what name.

1930 Census Englewood, Arapahoe County, Colorado

John T. Spickard	father	75		
J. W. Larcom	head	59	Truck Driver	Laundry
Sylvia F. Larcom	wife	54	Waitress	Restaurant

The only photograph I have found of John Thomas Spickard was taken in the late 1800's before Benjamin Franklin died in 1893. John's half brother, Charles, died in 1880. It shows the six sons of George A. Spickard and Mary Ann Thompson. I don't know which is which.



Spickard Brothers

John Thomas

Died 1938 Denver, CO

George Isaac Davis

Died 1936 Trenton, MO

William Warren

Died 1955 Seattle, WA

Alexander Union

Died 1948 Kansas City, MO

Benjamin Franklin

Died 1893 Spickard, MO

Edward Augusta

Died 1940 Springfield, MO

Grandpa was living in Colorado when he died, either with Sylvia or Charley.

John Thomas Spickard died on March 16, 1938 in Denver, Colorado. He was preceded in death by his wives, Mary Candace Shinn and Drucilla Coon Cooper and four of his seven children; C. M., Maggie, Ella Francis and Harry. He is buried at Crown Hill Cemetery in Denver.