

Joel Spring, Pioneer Hugo Citizen, Played Important Part In History

The Hugo Daily News August 28-29, 1941

When Joel Spring died at Hugo, February 21, 1908, it was said that no other contemporary had done so much to enrich his community in those elements which make for civic wholesomeness and material prosperity. Such a citizen was an honor to Oklahoma history and to Choctaw county, and such an account of his character and activities as can be given is but a meager memorial to one whose life left much that was practical in its accomplishment and inspiring in its character.

Had Goodland Store

Nearly twenty-five years before his death, Joel Spring, having recently married, engaged in merchandising at Roebuck Lake in what is now Southeastern Oklahoma. From Roebuck Lake he removed to Clear Springs Court Ground, about two miles west of the present Hugo and the seat of Kiamichi county. After the building of the Frisco Railway through that section of the country he removed his business and his household to Goodland, where for years he conducted one of the largest mercantile establishments in the Indian Territory.

Hugo in 1902

Then in 1902 the new town of Hugo was established. Mr. Spring, quickly seeing the great promise for the new town, located here as one of the first merchants, and from the first took the position of the most prominent business man and citizen. He at once acquired an interest on the town site on the east side, erected a large, attractive and beautifully furnished residence on an eminence in that part of the city, built a number of the most substantial business houses of the place, and in every practical way showed his unbounded faith in Hugo and its people. And this feeling was heartily reciprocated, for citizens and countrymen trusted in his judgment and generosity with complete faith, placing in his keeping their property and their future with no security other than that of his long tried character. He became the friend, adviser, banker, and father of the entire community, but with all his later affluence and unique standing he cast an affectionate eye over his struggling days of his early life.

On the walls of his residence in Hugo was a reproduction from a small photograph of the tiny log cabin in which he commenced married life on the banks of Roebuck Lake, showing the proud nineteen year-old husband standing in the yard and his fifteen year old bride in the doorway.

Was Paid High Tribute

Of his part as a town builder, the editorial expression of the entire community of Hugo found in an old copy of the Hugo Daily News, should be quoted: "As a town builder and developing force, he was without a peer in Southern Oklahoma. He was a person of wealth and resource and owned much property in this city. During the past five years he erected seven large brick buildings - all of the very best and constructed with a view to permanency, majestically beautiful and an ornament to a city of many thousand people. As are all great men, he was at time subjected to undue criticism, but....."