

HUGO HAS LOST A FAITHFUL FRIEND **Joel Spring Passes Away Friday Morning**

The Hugo Husonian February 27, 1908 - transcribed by Ron Henson

Seldom in history have cities been called upon to bear so great and such a heart-felt loss as that sustained by Hugo last Friday morning at 10:30 o'clock, in the death of Joel Spring. His Family and loved ones have suffered a sorrow untold and unmeasured by words, but Hugo mourns the passing of its most loyal citizen and wisest counselor; and thousands of people throughout this country now feel that that man of all men whose friendship, once won, was unerring and steadfast to the end, regardless of the buffeting of the cruel billows of fate and the rise and fall of human endeavor, is no more.

Joel Springs was a man of few words but a man of affairs. Rarely did he appear in a public meeting, never did he attempt to grow eloquent and sway public sentiment, but his counsel was sought on all measures for the good of the many and his wisdom was unerring and based on a just consideration of all concerned. He was outspoken in all his views but was above the petty prejudices and hatreds of factionalism. Regardless of a conflict of opinion, he recognized the rights of all and was the same genial, charitable friend always. He had in his personality all the manly attributes of the natural born leader of men, a man all could respect and in whom all could trust.

As a town builder and as a 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 and during the past five years build seven large brick buildings here, all of the very best and constructed with a view of permanency, majestically beautiful, and an ornamentation to a city of many thousand people. As are all great men, was at times subjected to unjust criticism but when a task was completed no fault could be found and it was a matter of universal admiration. He was charitable and liberal in his donation to any cause, giving freely to the construction and maintenance of the churches and other moral institutions. At one time several years ago the Methodist church was advertised for sale to liquidate indebtedness and it was Joel Springs who came to the rescue. He made a large donation and placed the then struggling band upon their feet, and that with only an expression of regret that they had not made him fully conversant with conditions before they had been reduced to such extreme measures.

It was he who is responsible for the remark that we have so often heard from the lips of strangers, "Hugo is resplendent with some of the finest buildings I have seen in Indian Territory, including those to be found in Ardmore, Muskogee and McAlester." By spending his money so freely to develop the town, he encouraged others to do so and he was indeed and in truth the "Father of Hugo." However great it may become in the future will

be due to his efforts in its struggling, pioneer days. Some day when Hugo shall have become a large city, we wish to stand on one of our principal streets, with uncovered head, before an imperishable statue, dedicated to the memory of this tireless man who was such a great factor when the town was in its infancy.

As a character, Joel Spring was of the most manly and lofty type. He enjoyed the full confidence and trust of his fellowman, and in the early days of this country handled thousands of dollars which belonged to others; but we have yet to hear of the man who claimed that Joel Spring ever beat him out of a cent, or that in any instance did violate that sacred honor which exists between man and man. He was systematic in his work and was successful in every undertaking and had he entered other fields of labor other than that of business would probably have reached the goal of his ambition with the same measure of success as in business.

He was born three miles from where Hugo now stands on Feb. 2, 1863, and was at the time of his death was forty five years of age. His father, Samuel Spring, being a confederate soldier, dying the same year under arms and never seeing his son. His mother also died leaving him at an early age an orphan. He was taken into the home of his uncle, the late Uncle Billie Springs, who when the lad was about twelve years of age sent him to Old Spencer Academy. Young Joel, being of a restless active disposition soon tiring of the dull daily routine of school life, ran away. For fear that his uncle would again send him back to the school he went to Texas, where he wandered for several weeks, tramp fashion, many times sleeping by the road side and subsisting on parched corn which he would gather from surrounding fields.

His aimless wanderings finally carried him to the vicinity of Whitewright, where he met M.E. Savage, a kindly farmer who took an interest in the boy and in whom Joel soon recognized a friend and for whom he soon formed a warm and loyal attachment, and here showed one of his characteristics which was noticeable in later life - it is said he was slow to form a friendship but when once formed was indesolvable and lasted indestructible. Mr. Savage's influence was so great that he induced him to become a member of his household and to quit his drifting. He remained at this place for more than two years, making an acceptable farm hand and acquired habits of industry that remained with him throughout his life. Starting back to the Territory, the parting with Savage family was of a most affectionate nature and was often spoken of very tenderly in later years.

On coming back to this vicinity, he worked one year for his uncle, James and later as a farm hand for his uncles, Billie and Levi Spring. He resided in the Chickasaw nation for several months and on returning began clerking for V.M. Locke, who ran a business near Antlers. Here he received

his first experience in the mercantile business which probably decided his vocation for life.

His first business adventure was when he bought a small store on Roebuck Lake after leaving the employ of Mr. Locke. After running this enterprise for a few months he formed a partnership with his uncle Billie Spring and the business was moved to the old Rock Wall place a short distance south of the present city limits.

A short time after the above and on Sept 20, 1883, he was married to Miss Winnie Gooding daughter of B.L. Gooding of Old Goodland. At this time the subject of our sketch was only nineteen years of age and his bride only fifteen. The wife brought as a dower a small herd of cattle which were sold and Uncle Bill's interest in the business acquired. Then it was as he often remarked, that he and his wife went into business. The store was then moved to Roebuck Lake where the youthful couple began housekeeping in a one room log cabin. A traveling photographer made a tin type picture of this structure showing Mr. Spring standing in the yard and Mrs. Spring in the doorway. This picture, after they became wealthy, was sent away and enlarged. This reproduction now hangs in the hallway of the Spring residence and is one of the family's most prized possessions. That his early business life was characterized by thorough and carefully systematic methods, is evidenced by the fact that the book showing the invoice made at the time buying Uncle Billy's interest, and of the amount owned by himself, and the sum invested by his wife has been carefully preserved to this day. A perusal of these old records disclose neatness and clearness of detail and is evidence to the observer that Mr. Spring early discovered the secret of business success and that his fortune was built by strict adherence to business principles.

He was afterwards in business at the Clear Springs Court Ground, about two miles west of town, and then the seat of Kiamichi county. After the building of the Frisco railway through this section, he moved to Goodland where he for years conducted one of the largest mercantile establishments in the Indian Territory.

When Hugo started six years ago, he immediately moved his business here, erected a fine residence and his history has since been identified with that of Hugo and is too well known to need comment. Of his life, hundreds of pages could be written that would not only be interesting but would be highly instructive to the youth of this country.

It is seldom that in a country which is undeveloped scarcely settled and where human wants are few, that a man in the mercantile business is enabled to build up a large fortune within a few years; yet, this is true of Mr. Spring. But in his case it was his sturdy, honest character that formed the foundation of his success. In the early days he was the only man in this country who owned a safe. In those days many of the settlers were

prosperous and at all times had a large amount of ready cash at their command. They were afraid of the banks in the states run by men of whom they but little, but they were acquainted with Joel Spring, and knew that every dollar would be conscientiously accounted for; and for years he was not only a merchant but the banker for a large section of country. Men came from Nashoba county, seventy miles distance, sometimes for the sole purpose of entrusting their savings with him for safe keeping. Many times a large herd of cattle would be sold and the owner knowing but little of the business world would accept nothing but a check payable to the subject of this article. He was [unreadable] of his people and business matters. He had at all times many thousand dollars deposited with him and while he kept a safe reserve in cash, robbers were not unknown and a large amount was kept invested in good securities. He was a banker subject to no regulation or inspection, yet no man lost a cent or had cause for uneasiness; thus you see his success was to a large extent built upon confidence which the world entertains for only the highest order of manly character.

Joel Spring, while rising from poverty to affluence, was no accident and was a living evidence to the truthfulness of the old saying that, "Blood will tell." He descended from families who were prominent in the affairs two continents during the early part of the Nineteenth century. His grandfather, Christian Spring was born in Switzerland of German parentage and was educated in Germany and served his time in the German army.

Later he was a commissioned officer in the army of Napoleon and immediately after the fatal battle of Waterloo emigrated to America, landing at New Orleans. He drifted into Mississippi and married Susan Bohannan, a lady of French-Indian extraction.

His mother's maiden name was Eliza Leflore and she was a descendant of the famous Leflore family who were for generations the hereditary chieftains of the Choctaws. Greenwood Leflore the man who wrote and negotiated the celebrated Dancing Rabbit Treaty of 1830, and of whom President Jackson said "There is no greater statesman among any people," was a member of this family.

The French revolutions and the fall of Napoleon is responsible for the great predominance of French names lineage among the Choctaws and that too contributed by the best blood of Continental Europe.

Mrs. Joe Spring is a granddaughter of Gov. Basil Leflore. She and seven children survive the husband and father and have the sympathy of thousands of friends.

The deceased was ill only a few days with pneumonia.