

Harry Parker

Early Settlers' Personal History Questionnaire, WPA
Interviewed by Pierce Bristow Yell County, Ark. December 11, 1940.

Transcribed by Andrea E. Cantrell, University of Arkansas Libraries, 2003. [See transcriber's notes](#)

1. Early settler's name
Harry Parker. – (Colored)
2. Address
Danville, Ark.
3. [skipped]
4. Previous occupation or occupations.
Farming and blacksmithing.
5. Date of birth.
(Doesn't know) (about 1845) was 16 years old at beginning of Civil War.
6. Place of birth.
Five miles west of the present town of Danville, Ark.
7. Married? To whom? When? Where?
To Sarrah Sullivan
Sarrah Jane _____
Manda Howell
Doesn't rember[sic] dates, or second wife's last name.
8. If an immigrant give particulars. City and country of derivation, name of ship on which arrived, etc.
[Has lived in Arkansas] all his life.
9. How long has the individual resided in Arkansas?
All his life.
10. If not a native tell of the voyage to Arkansas. Boat? Wagon train? etc.
[Has lived in Arkansas] all his life.
11. [skipped]
12. - 13. Get details of construction of early homes. (In the southern and southeastern parts of the state chimneys were frequently built of clay and split wood or trimmed branches due to the scarcity of stone and the lack of brick kilns. Some of the more pretentious houses were built with brick imported up the rivers. In the northwestern part of the state stone houses occurred much more frequently. Pay particular attention to these and similar regional differences.)
Logs, cracks chinked and daubed with mud and grass. Chimneys made of 'mud cats' (made of mud and grass) held in place with sticks.
14. [NOTE: inconsistent numbering from here through 59] What form of lighting was used in the early days? Pine knots? Tallow dips? Candles poured at home? Oil or fat lamps? etc.
Pine knots in fireplace or a pan of grease with twisted rag.
- 15 .- 16. What kind of fuel was used? (This was wood in most parts of the state, of course, because it was plentiful and convenient, but in some of the western counties coal may have appeared early.)
Wood, pine.

17. What kinds of food did the early settlers have? Were fish and game depended upon for the meat supply? Was game plentiful? What kinds?
Meat, goat sheep, hogs (domestic), wild game, deer, bear, turkey, hogs (wild).
Raccoon, opossum, squirrel.
He remembers staying in a tree half a day, away from wild hogs.
Bears carried away corn and small pigs.
He saw a bear that had been shot, get a wad of leaves and dram in the would to stop the bleeding.
18. What kinds of clothes were worn and how manufactured?
Cotton or wool spun and weaved[sic] at home made into clothes. His first suit of clothes was after the war. He cultivated the cotton, gathered it, picked the seed out by hand, spun and wove it into cloth, his mother cut out and made the suit.
19. Were there any interesting customs or incidents connected with early courtships? Was bundling ever practiced? (It is highly improbable but possible.) Were charivaries (usually pronounced 'shivaree' in Arkansas and the lower Mississippi Valley territory) frequent?
Charivories[sic]: picnics, meetings.
20. Compare some early food, clothing, etc. prices with those of today. (Since staples were usually bought in barrels, hogsheads, bushels, and similar large units, present prices will have to be quoted on the same basis.)
Nearly all articles used were produced at home.
Potatoes 50 cents bu.
Shoes 1.50 pr.
Flour \$4 bbl.
Cotton checks, 10 cents yd.
Broad cloth 1.00 yd.
21. What were some of the incidents pertaining to the sharing of food and other supplies in times of common need?
Neighbors divided supplies. No one suffered for needed articles as long as there were any of those articles in the country.
22. What were some early cultivated crops? Domesticated animals? (For instance, when did tomatoes cease to be known as 'Love Apples,' regarded as poisonous? When moved from the flower garden to the vegetable garden?)
Corn, wheat, oats, rye, barley, cotton, vegetables, pumpkins. He remembers when tomatoes were considered poison and were grown as ornamental plants.
23. What were early farm implements? Any homemade? If purchased, where? Prices?
He rembers[sic] the gardens were plowed by women, the plow being pulled by the men. He used the cradle to cut small grain.
24. What were early industries in the community?
Farming and trading.
25. What were some native wild plants used as food or for flower gardens? (For example: mullein, sassafras roots, sweet gum resin, sun-flower seed, paw-paws, sumac berries, poke salad-- or salet, or salud. There are stories told of various food substitutes used during the Civil War and Reconstruction periods. These might supply interesting sidelight.)
Mullen, lambs quarter, poke "sallet."
26. Relate interesting incidents of the early days. Tell of childhood impressions and

memories. Tell of group activities such as house raisings and warmings, quilting bees, corn huskings, brush arbor meetings, dances, games, socials, hunts and game drives, hog killing, sorghum making, play parties, and the like. Compare early farm and town life with that of today. Tell any experiences relating to the Indians, their customs and habits.

Hunted with Indians, rode ponies[sic] with them. He said, "When an Indian liked you he liked you and would do anything to accommodate[sic] you, but if he hated you, he hated you and would do any thing against you even to burn property or kill you.

27. Tell of early methods of combating forest fires, town or building fires.
Used 'bush brooms' (limbs with green leaves, usually pine tops).
28. - 29. Get origin of place and thing names such as hills, valleys, rivers, soughs, bayous, plants, animals, etc.
Tell of early taverns, hotels, boarding houses, stagecoach stations, boat landings, etc.
Capt. Howell ran a boat from Danville to Little Rock. Carried cotton, hides, lumber, to market and returned with food, clothing, and other supplies. The trip down took a day or two days, the return three days. This was a steam boat.
30. Tell of early schools.
Schools. In private homes, private teachers, usually paid a small sum or usable articles and lodging. Or in a small hut, with split log benches. Teachers paid some what the same manner. Usually private teachers were for white children, colored children not given much schooling till recent years. White and colored children in separate schools.
31. - 36. Location of school? Late?
Name of teacher?
How were funds provided? Tuition? How much? Was payment made in kind?
School books used? Title? Author? (Many of the old plantations maintained tutors either for individual families or groups of families. Sometimes 'school' was conducted on the premises for darkies'[sic] youngsters. Check on such information.)
What constituted the reading matter of the early settlers? Books? Magazines? Newspapers? Get titles and authors.
Where was the first telegraph station in the community? When established?
Dardanelle, Ark.
37. Tell of the early "Horse cars." When were trolley cars substituted? When buses?
Horse car Ft. Smith and Little Rock soon after Civil War.
38. When and where was the first automobile seen?
Dardanelle, Ark. Does not remember dates.
39. When and where was the first train seen?
Russelleville, Ark. Does not remember dates.
40. When and where was the first airplane seen?
Dardanelle, Ark. Does not remember dates.
41. - 42. [no answer]
43. Tell of any important local celebration in memory of any individual or event.
Was in Texas when slaves were freed, having been sent there during the war by his master. Was brought back and given freedom.
44. Does the individual recall any early historical character such as Sam Houston, Co. James Bowie, former President Zachery Taylor, the James boys, etc.?
While working at a hotel in Ft. Smith saw Jesse James, also carried wood to the

room for Henry and Belle Star.

45. - 49. [no answer]
50. Tell of any battles, skirmishes, forays, etc., witnessed.
Remembers a battle between Federals and Confederates, near Dardanelle.
Doesn't remember details.
51. - 53. Get all information possible regarding the original Ku Klux Klan or similar organizations.
Remembers[sic] seeing Ku Klux but knows nothing of them.
54. Tell of any participation in the establishment of any religious or fraternal organizations.
Charter member of Masonic Lodge.
55. - 57. What is total number of descendants?
Twenty nine [total descendants]—6 children, 6 grand children, 15 great grand children.
58. [skipped]
59. Tell of any books, diaries, journals, sketches, or newspaper articles the individual has written. Give details.
[no answer]
60. [Other information]
A slave, belonged to John M. Parker (Freed, Aug. 4, 1865).