

FRASCOLA, ANTONIO.

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BIOGRAPHY FORM  
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION  
Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

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Field Worker's name Nora Lorrin.This report made on (date) December 16, 1937. 1931. Name Antonio Frascaola.2. Post Office Address El Reno, Oklahoma.3. Residence address (or location) 115 $\frac{1}{2}$  South Rock Island.4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month November Day 15 Year 1866.5. Place of birth Forenza, Italy.6. Name of Father Jaun Frascaola. Place of birth Italy.7. Name of Mother Mary (Luca) Frascaola. Place of birth Italy.

Other information about mother \_\_\_\_\_

Notes or 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 \_\_\_\_\_.

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Nora Lorrin,  
Investigator,  
Dec. 16, 1937.

An Interview With Antonio Frascaola,  
115 $\frac{1}{2}$  South Rock Island Street,  
El Reno, Oklahoma.

I was born in Forenza, state of Basilicata, Italy, November 15, 1866. I came to America when I was fifteen years of age, and arrived on Easter Sunday, March 24, 1881. It took us a month to cross the Atlantic. We stopped in a seaport town, Valencia, Spain, for seven days. We landed in New York and I stayed there for three years, following the shoemaker's trade. I then went to Indianapolis, Indiana, and worked on the railroad for about two months, and then went to Baltimore, Maryland, and enlisted in the United States Cavalry.

They sent me to Jefferson Barracks, near St. Louis, Missouri. I was sent by stage coach to Fort Reno, Indian Territory. There were four of us recruits, one Irishman, named Stevens, two Americans, and myself. When we got to Hennessey, we met a town with plenty of dogs. On the way, the Irishman spied a polecat and he asked one of the

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Americans what it was. The American told him to get off and kick it and see what it is. So he got off. He smelled it, and before he got close enough to kick it, it disappeared down a prairie dog hole. They all laughed at the Irishman, and he got mad.

We got to Fort Reno, November 15, 1886. I was assigned to K Troop of the 5th Cavalry commanded by Captain Woodson. Second Lieutenant was John R. Goldman, and the First Sargeant was Dick Lands. A French Canadian by the name of Mattilla was harness maker.

We had a man in our ranks that was something of a prizefighter, named Collins. The French Canadian got him to challenge me, who had never had on a pair of boxing gloves, to a sparring match. The other soldiers had made Collins think that I was a fighter. When I found out what they had done, I didn't want to back out, so I put on the gloves, deciding to do the best I could. I struck one blow, landing square on the other fellow's nose, and Collins did not wait for any more but ran away. Later at another time, Collins caught me by the arm and held me and banged my nose.

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When I first went to Fort Reno, I did not know either how to get on a horse or to saddle one, but they showed me how and I soon caught on.

We were sent out on field service, down around Purcell, scouting around for "Boomers". After six months we returned to Fort Reno. We were kept at the Fort for two months, when we were sent to the Osage Agency, now called Gray Horse. It was because they were paying off the Indians. Once a month sixty to seventy-five thousand dollars were sent to the Agency to pay to the Indians, and the soldiers were sent there to guard the money. We were at the Osage Agency a year.

When we were first sent to the Osage Agency, there were about sixty-five of the soldiers that started from Fort Reno and twenty-eight of them deserted on the way, leaving ~~only thirty-seven to land at the Agency.~~ The ordinary soldier was allowed, at that time, just \$12.75 per month, and the first year they were furnished their equipment and clothes, but had to pay for it out of their monthly allowance at the rate of \$10.00 a month. They had to donate 25¢

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a month to the old soldiers hospital or benefit fund, and it left them almost nothing for anything else, and so they deserted wholesale. We returned to Fort Reno, and after another six months there, we were ordered out on field service again, this time, to Caldwell, Kansas, scouting for "Boomers". We found a few and ordered them over the line, and if they didn't go, arrested them. We hardly ever had to make an arrest, as usually they would go when told to do so..

Back to Fort Reno for a couple of months, and then we had orders to go to the Osage Agency. On our way there, we stopped on Ponca Creek, near where Ponca City is now and made camp. We met up with an Indian who thought he was a foot racer. We had a bugler who could run one hundred yards in nine and a half seconds. They made a match, ~~the winner to get \$50.00. Kelly, the bugler, beat the~~ Indian foot racer five yards. We went on to the ~~Osage~~ Agency, and there we had a great welcome, bands playing, flags flying, and meeting people we had met when we were there before.

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We hadn't much more than arrived, when they got up a horse race. An Indian was there with a nice little racing mare. The soldiers had two horses that could run, one of them was named "Morgan", and they decided to run Morgan against the Indian's little mare. The Indian's pony was the favorite, and nearly all the betting was on the Indian's pony. I told a lot of my friends not to bet on the Indian pony, because our horse could really run, but they did not pay much attention to me. Morgan beat the Indian's horse, and there was a lot of money lost on the Indian's pony. The same horse was shipped to Wichita, Kansas, to run at a fair held at that place. The soldier, who was to ride him, was a bit overweight and they would not let him ride. The people who were managing the fair provided a citizen rider, and the horse broke and left the track, when it came to the opening of the ring. The soldier thought it was a put up job.

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Back to Fort Reno for two months, which was spent drilling, jumping ditches, hurdles, etc. One day there were sixty of us jumping ditches and hurdles in columns

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of four. I was in the second column. I had been given a horse that was strange to me and it had a weak knee. It fell in jumping, luckily a little to one side, throwing me out of the line of the oncoming horses. I was not hurt. Next we were ordered out in a detachment of ten, eight privates, one First Lieutenant, and a First Sargeant, with \$60,000.00 to be taken to the Sac and Fox Agency. The first night out, we camped twenty-five miles east of Fort Reno, on the North Canadian River. I was acting as cook for the party. Three guards were placed around the camp, changing them every two hours. We went to sleep and about the middle of the night, we heard a shot in camp and everybody got up all excited. First Lieutenant Colman had gone to sleep, with his shotgun across his belly, and he had accidentally hit the trigger and made the gun go off. Next morning Lieutenant Colman blamed me for it. He had it in for me for some reason. I was sound asleep and I didn't have anything to do with it. The Sargeant took it in hand to report the matter to the commanding officer, and he told him that Lieutenant Colman had fired the shot himself.



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accidentally in his sleep. There were three guards watching so they knew that I could not have done it without their knowledge. It took us two days to get to the Sac and Fox Agency, and we were there about a month. We were then returned to Fort Reno.

In 1893, we were ordered out on field duty, and we started for the Cherokee Strip. There were sixty-eight of us, including three officers. I was one of the guards the first night we camped. The soldiers arrived on the south border of the Cherokee Strip about a week before the Opening, and the morning of the opening they formed in line to watch the prospective homesteaders and see that everything went off all right. In the line west of where I was stationed there were a lot of cowboys who kept trying to stampede the crowd and get them to run on ahead of time. They kept whooping and trying to get them to rush in. They were just mischievous. We paid no attention to them, and when twelve o'clock came, we turned them loose. And there, we saw the prettiest sight that anyone ever saw. Houses on wheels, wheelbarrows, horses, carts,

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wagons, and one lady, getting over the line, threw herself down and hollered, "This is mine".

My company was ordered back to Fort Reno after the Run was over, the same day. We got to Kingfisher, found all the business established, tents up, houses up, etc., but we passed on by and came back to Fort Reno and started drilling. We next went to a field near Kingfisher, camped at Kingfisher Creek. There were about sixty of us, a storm came up and blew all the tents down and stampeded the horses, and the horses headed for Fort Reno. The guard followed them but could not catch them until they reached the Fort. He brought them back the next day, and we went to Hennessey.

While I was doing shoe repair work in the army, an incident occurred that was typical of the Indian's mental attitude toward the Government. An Indian squaw brought me a bag of fifteen pairs of shoes, to be half-soled and mended in various ways. She thought because I was a soldier, she could get the work done for nothing, and she did not know differently until I got them finished. She

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thought because I was part of the Government that the service to the Indians was free. Well, I<sup>was</sup> very generous about it and only charged her \$2.00.

Sometime later, a detachment was ordered out to scout southwest of Fort Reno about forty miles, three or four miles from the Washita River. I was with the detachment. That country was not opened at that time. When we got close to this valley, we saw a nice little mountain, with a grove, lots of trees all around and we spied a little smoke coming out of the trees. When we got there, there were four or five families in the center of the grove. They had corn growing and potatoes and cabbages. About a hundred yards was cleared out of the center of the grove on the mountain side, and it was very nice. When they saw us, they didn't know what to say. The Corporal advanced and told them to leave at once, and gave them a few hours to get out. We stayed there all night and came back to Fort Reno the next day. It was a pretty place, everything nice and handy, plenty of wood and not far from water, they had five teams, some cows and were fixed up nice, but they were Boomers and had to get out.

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The soldiers were sent out on field service again to Caldwell, Kansas, and from there were sent to Arkansas City for a Sham Battle, and from there back to Fort Reno again. Later they again went to Caldwell, Kansas.

I was discharged and went to New York and visited with my people. I was there fifteen days and then re-enlisted in the United States Army and was sent to Jefferson Barracks about three miles north of St. Louis, Missouri. I was there two months and was then sent to Fort Reno, in Oklahoma again. Arriving there I was assigned to Troop K 5th Cavalry, again, the old troop I was in before. I was there about six months and was transferred to Fort Sill and with some others was sent down there in a big United States wagon. I was assigned to Troop H 7th Cavalry. We were in Fort Sill six months and we were sent out on field duty. Three months after I got back, we were ordered to old Fort Riley, Kansas.

I came back to El Reno in 1908, and worked for a while in another fellow's shoe shop. Then I put up one of my own on Wade Street, about where the Chevrolet Company

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have their place of business now. Later, I went to Seattle, Washington, and on returning to El Reno bought out a man by the name of Lewis who had a shoe shop in the 100 block on West Russell Street, about where the Schaffer Oil Company have their filling station now. Then a short time later, I moved to my present location at 107 East Russell and have run the Old Fort Reno Shoe Repair Shop ever since.