

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

MEACHER, HENRY.

INTERVIEW.

4632

Field Worker's name Anna R. Barry

This report made on (date) June 18 1937

1. Name Henry Meagher

2. Post Office Address El Reno, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) 202 South Roberts Street

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month November Day 21 Year 1876

5. Place of birth Canadian County, Oklahoma

6. Name of Father John Meagher Place of birth Ireland

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Virginia Jackson (Meagher) Place of birth Kansas City

Missouri.

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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Anna R. Barry
Interviewer
June 18, 1937.

Interview with Henry Meagher
202 South Roberts Street,
El Reno, Oklahoma

My father, John Meagher, was born in Queens County, Ireland, in 1843, and at the age of five came with his parents to America. The Meaghers first settled in Allegheny County, New York, and there my father received his schooling and became a citizen of the United States. In the spring of 1867 he arrived at Salina, Kansas, which boasted only a few sod houses, and an Indian agency and a general store. He first hired out as a teamster and drove loads of lumber across the country to the settlements that were rapidly springing up on the plains of Kansas.

During the early building of Darlington in 1869, my father and mother came to Darlington and my father being a carpenter helped to build many of the early buildings which made up the school and agency group. My mother who was a niece of Bob Poisol, was a teacher in the Indian school at Darlington.

In 1876 at the Poisol ranch house she gave birth to a child, a son; I was that child. As far as is

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known, I am the first living white person born in the present bounds of Canadian County.

In a small clump of trees a half mile west and three fourths of a mile south of Banner is the burial place of Bob Poisol, who was the first to establish a ranch in Canadian County, in the vicinity of the little village which is now known as Banner between the North and South Canadian Rivers.

Bob Poisol, who was half Arapaho, kept on friendly terms with his Indian brothers and located his ranch house about half a mile north of the place where Banner now stands. The log house was in two sections with a driveway through the center.

The ranchers were required to register their brands at the Cheyenne and Arapaho Agency, which was established at Darlington in 1869. These brands were published regularly in the issues of the Cheyenne Transporter, which was published at Darlington from 1878 to 1884. "J-P" was the Poisol brand. Across the North Canadian River about a mile away, Ben Keith, who married Poisol's sister, established his ranch house

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having for his range a large area north of the river.

To the east three or four miles the famed Chisholm Trail passed, and the ranchers could tell the progress of the vast herds of Texas cattle and horses which moved over the trail by the clouds of dust which were stirred up.

In September, 1884, Mother and I accompanied Bob Poisol, (Mother's uncle) to "Sacred Heart Mission" in the Creek Nation, the trip being made to enroll my sister in school. We were riding in a spring wagon. On the return trip, we stopped at an Indian house to buy some chickens and eggs, paying cash for them. My uncle then noticed a fine team of horses and discussed the possible purchase of them. During the course of these transactions a young Creek Indian stood near-by watching and listening to the conversation. He doubtless noted the fact that my uncle seemed well supplied with money and therefore planned to follow and waylay him for the purpose of robbery. As we were traveling along we came to a small creek, a shot rang out, it sounded so loud that my mother thought our gun

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which was hanging in the top of the spring wagon had gone off. We noticed my uncle grew very pale; he then told my mother he had been shot. (I was then eight years old). Just as I heard that shot I looked in the direction from which it came and saw this same young Indian who had been at the Indian's home where we had bought the chickens. I noticed some cattle nearby and conjectured rightly that a ranch must be close. My mother grasped the lines and drove the team at a run up a trail to the McClure ranch, fourteen miles distant. Her uncle's wound proved to have been fatal, as he was dead when she brought the team to a stop. A number of cowboys at the ranch formed a posse and arrested the Indian. He was identified by Mother and me and temporarily lodged in the guard house at Fort Reno for safe-keeping. Several weeks later, when he was started under guard toward Wichita for trial, he overpowered his guard, killed him and the driver and made his escape. A party of ranchmen and cowhands was organized, took up his trail, overtook and recaptured him and promptly hung him to a tree.

Before they hung this Indian he said if he ever made good his escape, he would kill my mother and had

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intended to kill Mother and me both when he shot my uncle but the main spring of his gun broke.

Mother and I accompanied by the rancher who had befriended us, returned to the Poisol ranch with my uncle's body. He was buried in the little plot near a small clump of trees on the Karl Bornemann homestead in which his mother, a full-blood Arapaho, also lies.

When the opening in 1889 came I watched the stirring drama from the third story of a building at Darlington. I was then a lad thirteen years old. My mother and Hattie Lemoyne, another Darlington teacher made the run on horseback just to be with the crowd (as the twenty-second of April 1889 was a holiday for Government employees). Both women were expert horse women. Neither attempted to stake a claim.

My grandmother (Snake woman) was married to Thomas Fitzpatrick, noted Rocky Mountain fur trader. Fitzpatrick became the first Government agent of the Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes with headquarters at Bents, Fort in Colorado. Agent Fitzpatrick died in Washington D. C. in 1834, while he was there on official business. His widow made her home

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among the Arapaho people after his death and was an interpreter for the Arapaho tribe at the Medicine Lodge Peace Council in the autumn in 1867.

My mother, Jennie Meagher, after my father's death was married to Dr. A. H. Jackson and became one of the most respected citizens of El Reno upon its establishment in 1889; she was known as Mrs. Jennie Jackson. I lived on my uncle's ranch until his death broke up the happy arrangement ,

As I was practically reared up and down the Chisholm Trail, I will give a little of its history. In the late spring or early summer of 1867, there came up across the eastern part of Canadian County the first herds of cattle being driven from Texas to Caldwell, Kansas, for shipment. This was the beginning of the Texas cattle trail which continued in use until the settlement of Oklahoma and the extension of the railroads. The Chisholm Trail entered the county at the crossing over the Canadian River near Mustang, passed northward to a crossing over the North Canadian, northwest of the site of the town of Yukon, and followed a

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northwestward course to a junction with the Chisholm Trail, north of the Cimarron, crossing on the site of the town of Dover. This was the first cattle trail and has a very real place in the history of three states.

In 1869, Darlington was established and the first agent of the Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes was Brinton Darlington, who died at his post two years later and was buried in the Little Agency Cemetery, surrounded by the graves of other Indians whom he loved and who had learned to love him.

In the establishment of Fort Reno and Darlington, the chief business of the two places was the confinement of the Indians within their assigned reservation and the beginning of their training and education in the ways of civilized life. This meant not only soldiers and teachers but agent farmers, matrons, seamstresses, cooks, freighters, herdsmen and traders. My mother was a teacher in the Darlington school for several years. The "Cheyenne Transporter", which was issued twice each month, has greatly aided the preservation of these two historical spots.

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The eastern half of Canadian County was opened to homestead settlement, April 22, 1889, and that part of the western half north of the Canadian River was also opened three years later, lacking three days. The Rock Island Railroad line was extended from Caldwell, Kansas, southward to El Reno in 1889-1890. At the same time the projection of the Choctaw Railway, eastward from Fort Reno, through El Reno to Oklahoma City, was actively under way. The building of the Rock Island caused the final abandonment of Reno City, which was passed by on its site north of the North Canadian River. In a like manner, the Choctaw line failed to build through the town of Frisco and it was abandoned in favor of Yukon.

Canadian County received its name from the Canadian Rivers, the Canadian proper forming the greater part of its southern boundary and the North Canadian traversing its area from west to east.

The county was first organized in 1890. Its area at that time included only that part of the ninety-eighth meridian, making it only about four hundred and seventy square miles in extent. As the result of the

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opening of the surplus lands of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Indian Reservation, April 19, 1892, the area of the county was expanded by the addition of all that portion west of the ninety-eighth meridian and north of the Canadian River, making an increase of approximately three hundred and twenty-five square miles. On August 6, 1901, as the result of the opening of the surplus lands of the Wichita-Caddo Indian Reservation, the area of the county was further increased by the addition of that portion lying south of the Canadian River and having an approximate area of one hundred square miles. El Reno was designated as the county seat by the Organic Act, May 2, 1890.