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

#8228

MESCHBERGER, JACOB.**INTERVIEW.**Field Worker's name Anna R. BarryThis report made on (date) August 13, 1937. 19371. Name Jacob Meschberger.2. Post Office Address Calumet, Oklahoma. Route #1.3. Residence address (or location) Nine miles northwest of El Reno.4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month November Day 18 Year 18575. Place of birth Adams County, Indiana.6. Name of Father Jacob Meschberger. Place of birth Switzerland.

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Rosina Meschberger. Place of birth Germany.

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.
Aug. 13, 1937.

An Interview With Jacob Meschberger,
Route #1, Calumet, Oklahoma.

I was born in Adams County, Indiana, November 18, 1857. I was twenty-three years old when I left Indiana and came to Caldwell, Kansas, then came on the stage to Darlington where I arrived April 10, 1880. When I first came here, I could not speak much English but spoke only German, all I could say in English was "Yes ma'am"; "No ma'am" and I would have a hard time to make people understand me.

The year before I came, the school at Darlington had burned. I burned brick for the new school at Darlington, worked under John Seger, hauled sand from the North Canadian River, carried brick on my shoulders to where men were building the school, two masons working on the building. One man got sick, I helped lay brick. They paid me \$23.00 per month, room and board.

When I first came to Darlington the Cheyenne and Arapaho Indians were bad; they had on their war paint; they were against the white people who were crowding onto

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their reservation. General Sheridan ordered them (the Indians) to report to Darlington Agency (I think in 1885) to be counted. In making their camp they crowded in close to the agency buildings, put their tepees here and there so that it was impossible to count them, General Sheridan told them to move by the next day. They said "No move; me go to war". Sheridan told them to move out on the prairie with their tepees, get a certain distance apart, if they did not, he would order out troops and force them to, so they obeyed the orders of Sheridan.

A census of the Indians was taken. How many? Don't know, prairie covered. Little Man was Cheyenne Chief, took some of his Indians to edge of Cherokee Strip and Captain Lee sent some soldiers to order Little Man back. Little Man said, "Tell the agent I'll be back in thirty days". Lee got hot, and sent the police again and said, "You come back or I'll send the military after you". Little Man came back with police as far as Cantonment.

Mr. S. S. Maury was a Mennonite missionary then at Cantonment. The Indians then could get rations at Canton-

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ment. Little Man and his Indians wanted some rations. Mr. Haury wrote a letter to Captain Lee, about Little Man. Little Man said, "I go by this letter of Haury's, tell Little Man to come to Darlington where he belongs, if he wants something to eat". Little Man came back to Darlington.

Little Wolf was war chief (don't know Cheyenne or Arapaho). A white man's horse had been stolen near Darlington, Indians refused to tell who got it. The agent told Little Wolf to bring in ten braves and place them in jail as hostages until the thief was found (around 1883). Little Wolf refused and said, "Thief might never be found". Little Man told agent the Indians were ready to go on the war path, but he did not want to make the ground red around the agency. Next morning there was not an Indian at Darlington. All had disappeared in the night and had taken revolvers and rifles. The agent called out the army force. Little Wolf and his band fled, formed line thirty miles wide, stopping at houses and getting horses and rifles, by the time they reached the Kansas line they were well equipped. They had killed a few of the settlers

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when they refused to give the Indians arms and horses. Cavalry overtook them before they reached the Kansas line and they were captured and brought back to Darlington.

Four years I worked for the Mennonite Mission, as farmer. About 1884 the Government sent some wheat to Mr. H. R. Voth, or missionary; ask agent what is that. Agent Miles said, the Government sent that to see if we could raise wheat in Oklahoma. Then missionary turned to me and said, "Can you raise any here"?

I said, "I'll try". I don't know how much, I guess about a half bushel. We did not have the reapers then, I cut it with a scythe about one-half to three-fourths acre. I was the first Indian-farmer at Darlington. At one time we had sixteen stoves in the buildings and wash house. I was responsible for firewood for school. It took from seventy to eighty loads a school term. I had to haul it four or five miles from river east of Darlington. We would haul wood in the day time. Indian boys chopped wood after school and in mornings. There were between forty and fifty pupils. We raised corn, potatoes and vegetables.

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One time, (about 1888 I think) I had a call to bring Indian children to Caldwell to go to school in Kansas. We had great time in reaching Caldwell. We were hindered by floods at Pond Creek, the Cimarron and at Salt Fork. When we reached the Cimarron it was up almost out of bank. The two Government wagons had to stop on account of high water. We stayed all night; there were no restaurants in those days and we had to camp out. Next morning the water was down some, I put four mules to one wagon to ford the river as the nearest bridge was about a hundred miles away. I got down in the river; there was quicksand. Then I got out; I struck a long hole; the mules had to swim. I couldn't see anything but the noses of the mules. I had mostly Indian girls in this wagon. The water took the wagon box off the wagon and those girls jumped into that water like a school of fish. They all could swim. One little boy and I stayed in the wagon box. A bunch of cowboys were on the side of the river which we were trying to reach; they helped to get the girls over and also the mules, they then swam to me on horseback, threw me a lariat, the horses safely pulled

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the wagon box across. All the time this little Indian boy was tightly holding to my leg. I was afraid to take the mules across again after the other wagon, because of the quicksand so I called to the boys told them to take the wagon box off and see if they could bring it across. Ten of the boys (twelve to eighteen years old) came across with this wagon; first the wagon box; then the runner. It took us almost all day to get across the Cimarron River.

Agent Miles issued rations to the Indians from a wagon before a commissary was built. When he got mad his ears would wobble. The Indians called him the "High Spirit". I have gone through the commissary at Darlington when money was piled high for Indians. The Cheyenne and Arapaho Indians came after rations, clothing, money and to the beef issues; they brought blankets, tin buckets and flour sacks to hold money. Indians were rich then, they wouldn't work but would go into camps, have big pow-wows. Caddo Springs was a big camp ground on account of the excellent water there.

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One time when I was working as Indian farmer at Darlington, I was cutting grass with a mower and fine team of mules (Jennie and Dick). In this field there was a large elm tree and about three o'clock in the afternoon it was very hot. I drove the mules up under this tree to rest and cool. After they had rested something like thirty minutes, I started them again to cutting grass. We had not gone one hundred yards when all of a sudden, Jennie fell into an old well, ten feet deep. When she fell in, there was such a sudden jerk that I fell off the mowing machine. As I started to get Jennie I saw Dick the other mule go in the well. I ran around and unsnapped the neck yoke. I looked into the well and saw that one mule had fallen on the other. I pulled on lines. I was a strong man then and I thought I could pull the mules but found I couldn't. I knew where two Indians were working, cutting wood about a mile from here. I ran as hard as I could go, over brush, hills and rocks and when I got there I was so out of breath that I could hardly talk. My speech was so broken I couldn't make the Indians understand for a long time. I got mad, told them

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they could understand and they thought my mules had run away. I took one Indian by the hand and told him to come on and pointed for the other to go to a white man's house, get help and a long hand shovel. When the Indian and I got back to the well, we thought the first mule would be drowned. We looked in and all we could see was his head out of water. Help came from Darlington Agency and we started digging about six or eight feet back from this well, slanting toward the well. Everything was all right. Everyone worked hard and fast with good mules. As we slanted this ground, we could see the mules better. Then we took a good rope put around Dick and he came pawing out. After we got the first mule out, we had to dig some more to slant ground. I was certainly glad when we got both mules out about dark that evening. After that I always felt afraid to cut tall grass in a field, unless I knew the field.

On the claim of Mrs. J. S. Palmer north of El Reno years and years ago an old Indian, Black Coyote, pointed to a large hill, saying "Indian Chief buried there, deep, buried long time." Several years later sand and rock

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were sold from this hill. One day some children were playing here and they by accident dug up this Indian. One of the children was our Dr. Malcolm Phelps of El Reno. When they uncovered him, they said, "He was wrapped in the most beautiful blanket, but just as soon as the air hit it fell apart." On one arm were bracelets from the wrist to the elbow. In this grave were dishes, the dishes were buried with the warriors and chiefs for use at their first meals in the "happy hunting grounds". When I first came to this country the Indians put their dead in trees and a large pole would be placed between two limbs of trees. They would wrap the bodies in blankets and tie them to this pole; they usually camped not far from this place so as to keep a watch on the bodies.

Many people came to Darlington to see the great religious dance of the Cheyennes and Arapahoes and to one not familiar with the religious customs of the Indians, it is a sight never to be forgotten. When once witnessed and understood its memories will forever remain. During these dances, nothing but breech-clouts are worn by those who take part. The whole person is painted a deep red

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and finished up with feathers of birds. During the dance the most terrible groans and yells come from the throats of the excited Indians who would dance until they dropped from exhaustion.

On September 2, 1888, I married Dina Loganbill, who at that time was a matron at Darlington Indian school. In later years we quit the Indian Service, bought a farm, and have lived in Canadian County all these years.