

COLBERT, SUSAN.

INTERVIEW.

12604.

WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

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Field Worker's name Gomer GowerThis report made on (date) January 6th 19381. Name Susan Colbert2. Post Office Address Poteau, Oklahoma, General Delivery3. Residence address (or location) Same4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month December Day 6th Year 18665. Place of birth Near Hugo, Choctaw County, Oklahoma.6. Name of Father Bob Parrot Place of birth TexasOther information about father Cherokee Indian7.- Name of Mother Mary Ann McCoy Place of birth MississippiOther information about mother Ex-slave owned by Bill McCoy.

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 4.

Gomer Gower
Investigator
1-6-38

An Interview with Susan Colbert,
(colored) Poteau, Oklahoma.

Susan Colbert was born in what is now Choctaw County. Her mother, Mary Ann McCoy, was a ex-slave and her father, Bob Parrot, was a Cherokee Indian and was, presumably, a part of that band of Cherokees who settled in Northeast Texas under the terms of a treaty made with the Republic of Texas during its brief existence. This band later returned to the Indian Territory.

Prior to the removal period, Susan Colbert's mother and grandmother were owned by the Greenwood family in Mississippi and, with several other slaves, were traded to Bob Shields, one of the emigrating Choctaws, for lands which he owned in Mississippi. These slaves were brought by Bob Shields to the new Indian Territory. Upon the marriage of one of his daughters to Billy McCoy, Mary Ann, later the mother of Susan Colbert, was given to the newly married McCoy's and was owned by them until the emancipation. Hence, the name - McCoy- by which she was known until her death near the McCoy plantation.

Her father, Bob Parrot, the Cherokee Indian to whom reference has been made, had he lived until the time

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of enrollment as a citizen would have conferred upon her all the rights and privileges of a Cherokee citizen. However, his death which occurred in 1870, many years before the enrollment was made, rendered it impossible for her to prove her Cherokee parentage, with the result that she was granted the privileges of a Freedman only.

Her mother resided on and near the McCoy plantation for several years after the freedom of the negroes was proclaimed and was at all times given the necessary assistance by the McCoy's in rearing her family after the death of her husband which occurred in 1870; as stated. The relationship between the former slaves and their former owners remained much the same as it was before the slaves were given their freedom.

In 1885, Susan Colbert was united in marriage to Tom Smith, who was a mixture of Choctaw and negro, a gay adventurer who left her to shift for herself within a short time after their marriage.

Some years later, she was married to I. C. Colbert, a Choctaw Indian, with whom she lived until his death, which occurred on September 21st, 1935.

She now resides with a daughter at Poteau.

Upon being asked if she had been granted the rights of a citizen through her Indian relationship- father and two husbands- she replied that she had not; that the enrollment regulations prohibited the recognition of Indian and negro marriages so far as establishing rights of citizenship was concerned, and that she was granted the rights of a freedman and not the rights of a Choctaw or Cherokee citizen.

This brief story of the life and reminiscences of the daughter of an ex-slave is of interest in that, among other things, it accounts for the manner in which some of the slaves came into possession of the emigrating Choctaws when they were about to leave their former Mississippi homes to carve out new abodes in a new land which they had been led to believe would be theirs for all time to come, and at their death would be handed down to their children from generation to generation.

It also accounts for and brings out in a most forceful manner, the many perplexing situations which thrust themselves upon the attention of the various enrolling committees for solution. The wisdom of

Solomon could not have devised a more effective provision for the protection of the Choctaw citizens than that which withheld recognition of marriages between the Indian and negro races. Had such marriages been sanctioned and accepted as a proof of the rights of citizenship, innumerable bogus claims for enrollment would have been made and real justice would have been thwarted.