

COLEMAN, FRANK ANDREW. INTERVIEW 8720

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

COLEMAN, FRANK ANDREW.

INTERVIEW.

8720.

Field Worker's name Anna R. Barry.

This report made on (date) September 24, 1937. 1937

1. Name Frank Andrew Coleman.

2. Post Office Address El Reno, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) 739 South Miles Street.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month July Day 7 Year 1870.

5. Place of birth Clarke County, Iowa.

6. Name of Father Edd Coleman. Place of birth New Jersey.

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Lyvina Seger Coleman. Place of birth Ohio.

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 Barry,
Interviewer.
Sept. 24, 1937.

An Interview With Frank Andrew Coleman,
El Reno, Oklahoma.

Frank Andrew Coleman was born in Clarke County, Iowa, on July 7, 1870, the son of Ed Coleman and Lyvina (Seger) Coleman. His grandfather, Andrew Seger, was born August 3, 1812, in Onondaga County, New York; he grew up there and at the age of twenty went to Geauga County, Ohio. In 1833 Andrew Seger married Louisa Knox who was born June 4, 1817. After their marriage they loaded their possessions on a two-wheeled cart, drawn by one horse and moved out into the wilderness five miles from any other habitation.

There Andrew Seger built a one-room log house in which they lived until the country settled up around them and it was on this farm that Mr. Coleman's mother Lyvina (Seger) Coleman was born. Andrew Seger and wife, after rearing a family of seven children, four boys and three girls, sold their farm in Ohio and went west to Illinois, settling at Dover in Bureau County. It was chiefly in that rich and fertile agricultural section of north central Illinois that

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Mr. Coleman's mother and her brother, John H. Seger, grew up and attended school.

Mr. Coleman's mother told him that at one time during the Civil War several speeches had been made urging young men to enlist, but without getting response from a single person when her father, Andrew Seger, rose and said, "If the young men will not enlist the old men will have to", and went forward and signed the enlistment roll, after which Jones Gearing, a man not quite so old as Mr. Coleman's grandfather, said, "If Andrew Seger can go, I can", and put his name on the roll and after that the young men in the audience got up almost in a body and crowded forward and put their names down until the company of one hundred was made up.

Andrew Seger, Mr. Coleman's grandfather, served until after the battles of Corinth and Fort Donelson, when his health became so poor that he was given an honorable discharge. Andrew Seger was then forty-eight years of age.

In 1864 when Lincoln called for three hundred thousand more soldiers, John Seger, Mrs. Coleman's Mother's brother

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who was attending the Dover Academy, enlisted and joined Sherman's Army on the Atlantic campaign. He marched with Sherman's Army through Georgia, thence through the Carolinas and Virginia, and at the time of his mustering out had participated in thirteen battles and skirmishes and had carried his knapsack and gun over fifteen hundred miles.

In 1871 Mr. Coleman's uncle, John Seger, entered the Indian service as an Agency employe at Darlington. In the spring of 1886 he was sent by Captain Lee to colonize a number of Cheyenne and Arapaho Indian families on farms at a place a distance of sixty miles from the Darlington Agency. This place became known as the Seger Indian Colony which eventually came to be regarded as a subagency to Darlington. Here at Colony, farms were opened up and an Industrial School was built. Colony is located near the head of Cobb Creek in the eastern part of Washita County.

It was in 1889 that Mr. Seger kept writing for Mr. Coleman to come to Colony because he needed Mr. Coleman to help with the Indians, and it was in the spring of 1890

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that Mr. Coleman came on the stage to Darlington. He ate his first meal in Darlington at the Mennonite Mission. The next day Mr. Coleman started for Colony, riding with a man who had come to Darlington after a load of supplies and as this freight wagon reached the Canadian River they camped at a place known as Dead Woman's Canyon. This freighter told Mr. Coleman how this place happened to be called Dead Woman's Canyon. It was when John Seger was bringing his first band of Indians to Colony that they had made camp and as Mr. Seger was seated by the campfire with some Indians, a call was heard from back in the canyon and a messenger soon reported the arrival of Bare Robe, whose wagon had been stuck in the mud but who would soon reach Darlington camp. Bare Robe's wife was very ill when they had left Darlington but it was her wish that they put her in the wagon and that she should come along on this trip and she told them if she died to bury her on the prairie and continue their journey. The next morning as the Indians made ready to continue their journey, an Indian came to old John Seger and told him that Bare Robe's wife was dying and

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when Mr. Seger reached their wagon she was breathing her last. Mr. Seger told Bare Robe they would stay in camp that day and bury his wife and Bare Robe begged them to go on, saying that he and his son would bury her and then they would catch the others. The ground was frozen so hard that morning that Bare Robe had to build a fire on the ground so that he could dig his wife's grave which he got just deep enough to barely cover her. This camping place is known to this day as Dead Woman's Canyon.

After Mr. Coleman's arrival at Colony, Mr. Seger, his uncle, put him in charge of the commissary to issue rations to the Indians. At this time they issued sugar, coffee, bacon, flour and soap to the Indians. Mr. Seger would often talk to Mr. Coleman telling him how wild and uncivilized the Indians had been when he first came with them to Colony. Mr. Seger had had each Indian to pledge, when they first came here, that he would stop gambling and would go to work farming. These Indians raised the first wheat ever grown in Washita County.

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Mr. Coleman in all his travels had never seen any one with as large a nose as an Indian named Big Nose whose nose was as large as a tea cup. One night this Indian, Big Nose, got into a gambling game and gambled off his five wives and then mourned for about a month for his wives, and one day traded all his ponies for an old Indian squaw who just could barely get around.

This Indian Big Nose had two girls by his first wife, but when these children were very small they were sent to Carlisle, Pennsylvania, to attend school. One day Big Nose received a letter from his daughter, Rosa Big Nose, stating that she wanted to come and visit her father. When Mr. Coleman read this letter to this Indian, he cried and said he didn't have a home to bring his daughter to and that she would hate him for not having a home. But Mr. Coleman assured this Indian if he wanted his daughter to come on a visit, that he would fix up a little log house down on Cobb Creek for him and this they did, white-washed the wall, put up a bed and stove; this Indian had a tepee which he set up close to the log cabin. Big Nose

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did not like to live in a house. After his daughter arrived she tried to get him to live in the log cabin with her, but he wanted to live in his tepee. Posa Big Nose remained at Colony two years.

In 1892 authority was granted for the building of a brick schoolhouse to be given the name of the Seger School; it was an Industrial Boarding School. Mr. Coleman helped to build this school. He worked as a farmer at Colony from 1890 to 1897.

Mr. Coleman, last summer, built a cistern for Mr. Meschberger, using the same brick that John Seger and Meschberger had made and used in the first brick building at Darlington. One of these bricks Mr. Coleman is keeping for a keepsake to remember the pioneer days at Darlington.