

DEAN, LAURA R.

INTERVIEW

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

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INTERVIEW

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Field Worker's name Ida B. LankfordThis report made on (date) June 9 19381. Name Laura Rason Dean2. Post Office Address Cordell, Oklahoma3. Residence address (or location) 815 East Caddo4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month November Day 12 Year 18705. Place of birth State of Oregon, La-Grande, Union County6. Name of Father Daniel Rason Place of birth Virginia
Confederate Soldier7. Name of Mother Rebecca Matthews Place of birth MissouriOther information about mother Married Dan RasonHer mother was a sister to Henry Clay, Born in Madison County Missouri in 1852.

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.

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Ida B. Lankford
Investigator
June 9, 1937.

Interview with Laura R. Dean
815 East Caddo, Cordell, Oklahoma.

Lands for Homesteaders.

One of the most spectacular features of Oklahoma history was the opening of the Cheyenne and Arapaho reservation.

On the 19th of April, 1892, we made the Run for our claims. It was a desolate looking country that day. The grass had been burned off, supposedly to make it easier to locate corner stones. The Indians had previously taken their claims, which were staked by high posts.

Thousands of people were ready on the south and east lines, and at high noon (12 o'clock) they began to pour in, in wagons, on horseback and some on foot.

This county (Washita) was called H. County; the county seat, Tacola (since named Cloud Chief) was located near the Washita River. At the end of the opening, Cloud Chief was at the height of its glory. Tents were on every lot and sprung up like mushrooms; there were saloons, gambling houses, grocery and drygoods stores, also there was fighting and drunkenness galore.

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There were no roads traveled by direction across county. One crossed the river any place possible. People lived in dug-outs and cabins.

The Indians were kind and good neighbors. Five hundred of them camped on the Washita, one-half mile from our cabin, and drove away the loneliness with their Tom Tom music, dances and feasts.

One interesting place we visited the first summer was the Darlington Indian School. The Arapaho and Cheyenne Indians were backward tribes even after they were civilized. They had been brought from their northern reservations to Darlington. John Seger, a man of great benevolence and love for his fellow-men and a man of great personality, had higher ideals for the Indians' future than had the majority of the pioneers who settled in the Indian country. He had become interested in the Indians back in the '80's, so in the year 1886, he brought 500 Arapahoes and Cheyennes and located on Cobb Creek on the eastern side of Washita County. There he established his school.

He first was the Indian Agent and taught them how to buy and sell stock, the way to plant and harvest, etc. The first

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building was a laundry, then a dormitory was built . From that beginning the larger school buildings were soon built. The teachers were brought from the north. The Federal Government soon was backing the work of this wonderful man, Mr. Seger.

The Cheyenne and Arapaho Reservation covered the counties now known as Washita, Custer, Roger Mills, Dewey and Woodward. Mr. Seger was superintendent of the school. The buildings were good and it was an ideal location for the nomadic type of people. By 1892 and 1893 the school was in good form and all branches of learning were taught, An art studio (the Indian is a natural artist), a music conservatory, etc., as well as a sewing room and cook room with the best teachers to be found were part of the school equipment. And last but not least was the play-ground, also a small park with deer and smaller animals enclosed with netted wire.

The school grew until, as I have said, all branches of learning were taught. But alas! under the regime of one of our late congressmen the school was closed and the Indian Agency

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removed. Mr. Seger died February 6, 1928, and six weeks later Mrs. Seger died on April 1, 1928. But the name John Seger is a name to be remembered. This school ought to be reopened and the Indians returned to their beloved and beautiful valley and a shrine built to the memory of the man who believed in brotherly love as an educator.

During pioneer days this county was overran with horse-thieves. The officers rode miles on miles through all kinds of weather to catch the thieves, for if a man lost his horses, he could not make a living for wife and children. (Now we have car thieves).

The roads are good (the progress seems hardly possible) with fine concrete bridges and paved, hard surfaced roads. The made work program has been the saviour of a drouth stricken people.