

INDEX CARDS

Leasing--Choctaw Nation;  
Kulychaha  
Poteau  
Permits--Choctaw  
Crime--Choctaw Nation  
Burial customs--Choctaw  
Food--Choctaw  
Dyes

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

Field Worker's Name Marvin G. RowleyThis report made on (date) April 22 19371. Name Mary Elizabeth Goodknight (now Dennis)2. Post Office Address Poteau, Oklahoma3. Residence address (or location) Poteau, Oklahoma4. Date of Birth: Month April Day 15 Year 18535. Place of birth Johnson County, Missouri.6. Name of Father George Washington Goodknight Place of Birth Kentucky

Other information about father \_\_\_\_\_

7. Name of Mother \_\_\_\_\_ Place of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

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. Six

WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION  
Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

Name Mary Elizabeth Goodknight

A Biographic Sketch

From personal interviews with the subject

Petsan, Oklahoma.

Date of birth -----April 15, 1853

Place of birth ----- Johnson County, Missouri

Father ----- George Washington Goodknight

Place of birth ----- Kentucky

Marvin G. Rowley, Field Worker,

Indian-Pioneer History, S-149,

April 22, 1937.

Interview with Mary Elizabeth Goodknight  
By-----Marvin G. Rowley, Field Worker.

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About 575 years ago in the country of France, there lived a man by the name of Pierric Terriel. The King of France knighted this man, and changed his name to Goodknight and the name has been used ever since by his descendants.

My name is Mary Elizabeth Goodknight. I was born in Johnson County, Missouri, April 15, 1853. My father was George Washington Goodknight, and he was born in Kentucky. My grandfather was Mike Goodknight, of Kentucky.

My father had slaves so I did not learn to do very much work. I did not know how even to wash clothes, spin or weave, as this was all done by negro slaves.

I, Mary Goodknight, married John Dennis in Slane County, Missouri, in 1870. We came down through Arkansas and reached Kulychaha, Indian Territory, in 1879. Leased house and lot from Sam Garland, half-breed Choctaw Indian.

Charley Barnhill was U. S. Marshal at Kulychaha, Indian Territory, in 1879.

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When one spoke of a Citizen at this time, they meant a native Indian in the Indian Territory.

We stayed at Kalyohaha about one and a half years; then came to Terriel Creek, now called McMurtrey Creek. We moved there two years before the Frisco Rail Road came through here at Poteau,

John Dennis, my husband, built the first Business building and the first dwelling house in the town of Poteau. He built the Business building for Bud Tate Whiteson. He built the dwelling house for himself. The next business building was built for Bob Welch, but John did not build this one. The first building for business was located near where the signal tower is, where Dewey Avenue crosses the Frisco Rail Road.

We leased land on Terriel Creek from Ben Hotubby, a full-blood Choctaw Indian. Leases were at this time called "Permits".

We lived on Terriel Creek for three years, then moved to Poteau, lived there one year, then moved to Cavanal. We run a General Merchandise Store there. We stayed at Cavanal about five years and moved back to Poteau.

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We lived in Poteau until 1905. Then moved out on Terriel Ridge, North West of Terriel Lake.

John Dennis was born in Slane County, Missouri, in 1848. Died at Poteau, April 1924. He is also buried at Poteau Cemetery. John Dennis was a Confederate soldier. He entered the Southern Army in 1862. Mary Elizabeth Goodknight and John Dennis were both white people.

While we lived at Terriel Creek, I, Mary Goodknight, had made in Kulychaha, a set of false teeth, upper and lower plates by Drs. Harber and Nash, medical and dental doctors, partners. These teeth were made in 1883, I had all my teeth pulled, both plates made for the sum of \$20.00; there was no crowns on the new teeth. I broke them once, about six years after I got them made. We were living at Cavanal, and I dropped the upper plate into a crock jar breaking them in two. I took them back to the doctor whomade them, had them fixed up and have worn them ever since. They are still good.

One mile East of Kulychaha, Indian Territory, Bill Moore shot and killed Mike Otin in 1879.

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Both were white men. They bought some whiskey in Hacket, Arkansas, and on the way to Kulychaha they got pretty drunk. Dr. Charley Cractic, practicing Physician at Kulychaha, Indian Territory, and Emmet Cratic, his brother, who run a General Merchandise Store at Kulychaha, were with Moore and Otim at the time of the killing. Bill Moore shot at Mike Otim's feet, and Mike shot at Bill and missed. Then Bill Moore shot and killed Mike Otim. Otim never lived a minute, he died on the spot. The law officers took Moore to Fort Smith. The trial was held before Judge Parker, and he got a Four Year sentence, which he served at Arkansas.

When the Choctaw Indians buried their dead, they waited several months and had what was known as a "Cry". Men, Women, and children attended. They arrived at the scene of the Cry about noon. Had a big dinner. Then the Women put a shawl over their heads and knelt down at the edge of the grave. All of them cried and bawled at the same time. I do not know how long they stayed.

The men and children stayed back from the grave and did not take part in the cry.

Indians were very dirty about their cooking. They would take a stirring paddle out of "Tom Fuller" kettle and hit a dog with it and then put it back in the kettle again. This paddle was about two or three feet long.

On Franklin Prairie, near Howe, Oklahoma, was a killing in 1883. Jack Crow, a negro, Charley Barnett, part Choctaw, and Bob Benton, full-blood Choctaw Indian, were coming down the road on horses. Charley Barnett was between the other two. Benton rode up shaking hands with Barnett holding on to his hand to keep Barnett from protecting himself. Jack Crow, the Negro, shot Barnett with a pistol killing him. Barnett was shot in the body. The Choctaw Indian Court settled this case with Crow and Benton. I do not know what the Settlement was. Barnett, the man killed, was boarding at my house at the time. I had dinner ready waiting for him, when word came that he was dead. Barnett had a white woman for a wife.

I, Mary Elizabeth Goodknight, wife of John Dennis, had two children, whose names were as follows:

Jim Dennis, Born in 1874, Pocahontas, Arkansas, I now live with him at Poteau, Ida May Welch, born May 1871, Kansas City, Kansas. Died April 1898 at Poteau.

Jim Dennis has a grey mule that is 30 years old and still works all day. He bought him about 25 years ago from J. T. Bowan, Poteau, paid \$100.00 for him.

Mrs. Jim Dennis, has a spinning wheel and makes yarn and thread yet. She showed me, Marvin G. Rowley, some of the wool she had made. She bought this wheel from Mrs. Maudie Munks, Bekosha, Oklahoma, in 1907, for the price of \$2.00. The wheel has been repaired several times. The original did not have any anils in it., just wooden pegs to hold it together.

#### "DYES"

Get moss off of rocks, boil about 4 or 5 gallons, put about a hand full of alum to set dye. Use dye while hot, makes a grey color.

Gather Spanish needle blossoms, boil 4 or 5 gallons of them, add one tablespoon full of Alum to set dye. Dye, while hot, makes a yellow color.

(Note) Mary Elizabeth Goodknight does not have a very good memory like she did two or three years ago.