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INDEX CARDS

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

183
#4430

Field Worker's name John F. Dougherty

This report made on (date) June 12 1937

1. Name Chester Benn

2. Post Office Address Sulphur, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) Route #1.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month Day Year 1882

5. Place of birth Texas

6. Name of Father J. J. Benn Place of birth Texas

Other information about father Farmer and Tanner

7. Name of Mother Mary Collier Place of birth Texas

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 Three.

John F. Dougherty, Field Worker,
Indian Pioneer History, S-149,
June 11, 1937.

LIFE OF A PIONEER MAN

Told in an Interview by Chester Benn,
Sulphur, Oklahoma, Route #1.

My parents were J. J. Benn and Mary Collier Benn. Father was born in 1841 and mother was born in 1839. Both were Texans. Father was a farmer and tanner. There were four children. I was born in Texas in 1882.

Father moved to the Chickasaw Nation in 1867. We came in covered wagons, crossing Red River at Delaware Bend, and located near Thackerville. We later moved to Nebo, south of Sulphur. Here we lived in a log house with one room, dirt floor, no doors, and no windows. We used a cowhide for a covering for the doorway. Father leased two hundred acres for ten years from a full blood Chickasaw woman named Jane Brown. He was to pay no rent, but improve the place instead. He built a good three room house and a good barn on the place and each year he hauled Mrs. Brown two loads of corn. He broke the land with oxen. He paid the Chickasaw Government a five dollar permit and had about sixty head of cattle.

He put up a small cotton gin and grist mill on Pennington Creek. It had an overshot wheel, and he ginned about two or three bales of cotton a day. By working all night he could bale six bales. When cotton was brought there to be ginned, the owner was told to return in a week for his cotton. We sold our cotton in

Ardmore for four cents a pound and the cotton seed brought three cents a bushel if we sold it; nearly everybody threw the seed away. Some fed it to their cattle.

We just had two months of school each year. We paid ten cents a day to attend. There were no grades, and we used what books we had at home.

I picked cotton for forty cents a hundred and when I worked by the day on the farm, I received forty cents a day and my board.

I was married to Annie Brewer in 1904. We had five children.

I have lived in Murray County since 1892.