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Form A-(S-149)

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

Field Worker's name Mrs. Hazel B. Greene.

Report made on (date) June 2, 1937

Name J. Norman Leard.

Post Office Address Hugo, Oklahoma.

Residence address (or location) 1/2 mile east of Hugo, Oklahoma.

DATE OF BIRTH: Month _____ Day _____ Year _____

Place of birth Now Milton, Oklahoma.

He is 62 years of age. He is one-sixteenth Choctaw, Indian.

Name of Father J. T. Leard. Place of birth Alabama.

Other information about father Father still living, now in California.

Name of Mother Core McCarty (Leard) Place of birth Near Ft. Smith, in Indian Ter.

Other information about mother Buried at Mt. Oliver, the Hugo city cemetery.

is or complete narrative by the field worker dealing with the life 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 _____.

BIOGRAPHIC SKETCH OF J. NORMAN LEARD.

Hugo, Oklahoma.

BY

Hazel B. Greene, Field Worker.

Mr. J. Norman Leard, a one-sixteenth Choctaw Indian, aged 62 years, lives east of Hugo, Oklahoma, just outside the city limits in the house which he built for his father and mother in 1907. It has been a beautiful house. Still is, inside; but outside it is pretty well weather-beaten. It was one of the few modern houses of its day, and was a mile out of town then. The city has spread to it.

Norman Leard's father is a white man from Alabama, and is now eighty-odd years old. He married a Miss Cora McCarty, a one-eighth Choctaw Indian girl, who resided with her parents on a big plantation about seven miles south of Fort Smith, at a place now called Eureka, Arkansas. It is just barely over the line in Arkansas and the McCarty plantation is a quarter of a mile in the Choctaw Nation, Oklahoma. Mrs. Leard said they had everything on this plantation that they needed, commissary, horse power gin and grist mill, and plenty of negroes to work everything, and a perfect mansion of a home.

In the time of the Civil War they took the most of their furniture to Fort Smith and hid it, so that they had plenty to keep house with after the war. Among other things they have a beautiful old walnut desk, with Zachary Taylor's name

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on it. The Union Soldiers burned the negro quarters, and carried off stock and everything else they could get their fingers on.

After J. T. Leard and Cora McCarty married they moved down further in the Indian Territory, to a little place called "Pulltash", later called Milton, near Munchaha

Prairie. Milton is in LeFlore Co., Oklahoma, now.

Mrs. J. T. Leard passed away Dec. 23, 1927, and is buried in St. Olivet Cemetery, the city cemetery of Hugo, Oklahoma.

J. Norman Leard first went to school in Ft. Smith, then was sent to Spencer Academy. (The Spencer out near Nelson). He said that the school was practically self-supporting. They raised nearly everything they ate except prunes, rice, sugar, and coffee. They were fed plenty

of prunes, he said, but that he quit eating them when he discovered that they were fed molded ones. "We raised our own garden stuff, hog meat, corn, wheat and beef, and had plenty of milk and butter. The Spencer Academy and Wheelock Academy were Presbyterian institutions, and exchanged stock, chickens, etc., to avoid in-breeding. They kept fine, pure bred cattle. Once they sent me alone to take a fine Strawberry Durham bull to Wheelock, I got to

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Rock Chimney Ferry and the river was up. We got that gentleman on the boat but he got frightened and got off and almost pulled me and my horse in, but we finally swam him across. That was about 1889. In those days lumber was so scarce that we economized on it all we could, so the floor of the boat was made of poles. They had no wire cables then either, so the boat was poled up the river and then allowed to drift down to the desired landing place.

"The Choctaw Government allowed \$100.00 per year for the support of each pupil at the academies, but I'm sure it did not cost that much, because we raised so much to eat and had so little to wear. Hickory shirts, brog n shoes, cloth hats, and cotton pants. I don't know where the \$100.00 per year was applied. There were 112 boys at Spencer when I was there.

"I went to Spencer as long as I could, then they sent me to Clarksville, Tennessee, to 'Southwestern Presbyterian'

University in 1894. In 1895 I went to Drury College, Springfield, Missouri. There I won a scholarship of \$225.00 and went to Henry Wendall College at Muskogee, Indian Territory.

"When I graduated in 1898 I became private secretary to Green McCurtain, Principal Chief of the Choctaw Nation, and in 1899 to Governor Duke. I was secretary to Governor Duke when they had so much trouble over the election of a Princi-

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pal Chief and the principal ones involved were Green McCurtain and T. W. Hunter. That is all printed history tho; except the part I played in it. That was when Tom W. Hunter was 'Governor' for a day.' When the negro soldiers were sent down there to force the 'Duke and Hunter men' to turn over records, the seal, etc., to the 'McCurtains,' Wesley Durant

was the first man to be searched by the negro soldiers at the Council house. He was Sargeant at Arms. That is, the attempted to search him, and when that negro soldier started to search him, he started the fight: That made history; and old J. Blair Schoenfelt took off down through a persimmon thicket like a scared rabbit.

"I had gone over to Muskogema Female Academy and the Lighthorseman met me and attempted to arrest me, and meant to put me in the attic of the Council House, but I told them ~~I wanted to put up my team and buggy, so I drove to the Thompson Hotel, there my friends seized me and put me up in the attic of that hotel, right over the kitchen, and took the ladder away to keep me from falling into the hands of the other side, with the seal and records. It was really hot in that attic all night. They all thought I had that seal with me, but I didn't have. I had concealed it in a bale of hay, and they never did find it. McCurtain had to have a new seal made.~~

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When we were forced to submit to the new authority, new Governor, we tried to get them to receive the records but they would not. I think 'old D. Thompson got that seal and kept it. But they kept me in that attic till the fight was over. That was bad medicine."

A picture of the home of Governor Duke, about 3- $\frac{1}{2}$ miles northeast of Talihina, shows a frame house of several rooms with a long porch across the front, and the Executive office in one corner of the yard, and it looked to be only one room. The "Tomfuller" house is to one side and slightly back of the house. The Tomfuller house was of just as much importance in those days as the smoke house, or the well which showed in the front yard. Off to one side, at some distance from the paling fence, was the corral with the high stake and rider fence.

Another picture shows a group around the first stake driven by United States surveyors when they were sectionizing the Indian Territory lands. This picture dated Feb. 7. 1901, showed also a store building and on the roof in large letters is painted, "D. Thomas. Building." and below that: "United States Commissioner. Coffins and trimmings." D. Thomas was a Circuit Court Judge. That sign looked odd.

"Once, I believe it was in 1893, the Choctaw Indians had gotten a per capit payment of \$103.00 and we boys were feeling

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pretty rich, and running around having a good time. There was always rivalry between boys from different counties, rivalry in a social way, and otherwise. A bunch of us went down in Towson County to a dance at the home of a widow Willis. There was a negro fiddler, and we got to kind of running that dance. It was customary for each boy who danced to pay ten cents to the fiddler for each set danced. They called it paying "ten cents on the corner." We got to feeling pretty good and monopolized the floor, and girls, almost to the exclusion of the Towson County boys. Everybody there had on guns. Nobody went anywhere those days without one. The Towson County boys got tired of our foolishness after a few hours of it, and then trying to get us to be civil. So they invited us to leave. We refused. They got to shooting then, and to add to the confusion, they shot out the lights. They were on their own ground and we were not, so we 'lit a shuck', our bravado all gone. and those boys would just as soon to have killed us as not. We had antagonized them to the point of desperation. That negro fiddler got a move on him too. Those boys were tired of being 'horned off.' One couldn't fool with those boys down there very much, especially the Willis boys. They would just as soon shoot you as to look at you, and would have been justified in our case."

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NOTE:

Up in the attic of the old Leard home is the old typewriter that was used in Governor Duke's administration, also the old press, that was used to transfer copies of documents into a record book.

NOTE:

In the Leard home, east of Hugo, upstairs and in the attic are stacks and stacks of papers and books that no doubt would contribute a lot to the history of the Choctaw Nation if it was properly looked into, and some man could probably do that, but Mr. Leard probably wouldn't want a woman prowling around in his "bachelor quarters."