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BIOGRAPHY OF Ben Butler Dancy -
605 NE. Tenth
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

BORN September 29, 1862
Tecumche, Nebraska.

Mr. Ben Butler Dancy came to Oklahoma in 1875 with his mother and father. Ben was then 13 years old. There were several older children.

Mr. Dancy says they settled on a piece of land, south side of what is now called Harrah, Oklahoma, Harrah township, Oklahoma county.

"Yes, in those days all we knew was wood chopping, as in the winter of that year 1876, was a severe cold season and we had to chop lots of wood to keep warm, we built a good log house. There were several of us brothers who were really strong.

We had to drive several miles to a grindstone. It was owned by a man by the name of Mr. Johnson. Dad once said "Boys its time one of you hit for th grindstone. Man, as this here ax is sure dull". We boys all scrambled into the wagon and headed for Mr. Johnson's on the way there we met some Indians who showed signs of friendship which made us feel good as we had heard so much about Oklahoma wild Indians. We were a peaceable family and desired only to settle on this farm and live a Christian life. There were many Boomers in those days. This land was not assigned then, but belonged to the Indians Territory. That was in 1879, there was a lot of trouble and grief then, these boomers were closely watched by the government soldiers. Long civil trials delayed the assignment of this land.

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Most of the trials were held at Fort Smith Arkansas. At Fort Reno they had a guard house and everytime the boomers got in trouble with the soldiers, they were taken there.

There were many cowmen who had to leave Oklahoma, and they sure hated to leave this good land and green grass that their cattle could graze on. This land was well watered with many creeks, and good protection for the cattle in draws, now wonder these cowmen hated to leave Oklahoma.

We loved to ride over the prairies to attend the round ups, to take the cattle up the trail. These were several tribes we came in contact with. We sometimes went to the Cheyenne and Arapaho Indian agency, we had to ride many mile on horseback to reach these tribes. We like to watch them make medicine. A bill passed congress in 1889 opening it for settlement on April 22 of that year. President Cleveland signed the bill and it was decided to open it for the homestead laws. All people entering Oklahoma with a view of selecting locations before that time would be considered sooners. These sooners had no right to any of this land but later they decided to gather around border of Oklahoma. The first man on the land was the one to homestead it. I still remember when we gathered, lots of us along the border during the month of April and camped, waiting for the opening day. The cowmen had advantage of us as they knew the best land, they all had good horses and knew how to ride them. We even practised on horse back and our wagons waiting for that opening day.

The cattlemen had thousands of head of cattle and they had to leave by the order of President Cleveland in 1885.

We had a garden, chickens and hogs. We shot many wolves and

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coyotes, and sold their hides. We made a lot of money that way as there was several of us brothers and we were good shots. We lost some cattle before we liked the wolves.

Trading was very hard in those days. Everything was so cheap during Cleveland's administration. However, we traded around with the Indians for blankets, pots, we would trade corn and hominy, and many other things to these Indians. Every now and then we would be the loser in the trade, as the Indian out smarted us in the trade, but we too sometimes got the best of the deal.

The summer of 1888 was one of the dryest years, that we saw in this state now called Oklahoma. Grass burned up. Money was scarce and times were terrible. We had wood, corn and other things to sell, but we could not sell hardly a thing. We stayed at trading posts for hours and hours and no sales made, lots of times we had to return late at night, and when we got home, this was in the cold weather, we had to go out in the moonlight and have to cut more wood, as mother and dad were not any too well.

At the time of the run, I was not old enough to take a claim. The time of the opening of the county was signaled, and away we went on our horses and what have you. The cowpunchers never did farm their land or even chopped wood, all they wanted was the easy things. But we farmers wanted to get settled and farm and dig wells and live right. At 12 o'clock the soldiers fired a volley of shots and then we started off, we ran about 3 or 4 miles took a quarter section of land near a creek, then the trouble started, just staking a claim did not be any means hold

it. Hundreds of people were passing, lot of them tried to claim our stakes, but with a few high powered rifles, these men moved on, 160 acres was the amount we could be allowed. We dug dugouts and some dugouts were three and four feet deep, we really liked this 160 acres, as a creek was near by and lots of timber.

We got a big laugh at the Sooners as lot of them would slip back into our location but the U. S. soldiers would take them back out of the section, that was a day before the rush. We would watch men make school land location.

I remember a little of the Chisholm trail, leading to trading post.

We loved to ride the wide open prairie, and at night we would hear the tom-toms and we would watch the Indians dance. In those days we would look around and there would be deers jumping around, lots of times we would see a bunch of antelopes running in a big circle. In those early days the Indians owned their own land, they were the Cherokee tribe, The U. S. government had supervision over the old Oklahoma land there.

There were four tribes that I remember that hunted in Oklahoma, as game was plentiful. The Kickapoos, Arapahoes, Iowas and the Cheyennes. The Cheyennes and Arapahoes was from the west the Iowa and Kickapoos was from the east, and the Chickasaws on the south Oklahoma, was well surrounded by the Indians, there was plenty of prairie chickens, antelope, turkeys, deer, quail and beavers in the streams.

Oklahoma was a wonderful state for game and a large cattle range we were told then of cattle thieves by the U. S. soldiers, stray cattle were picked up by these thieves and driven away to certain ranches.

We loved to cook a big pot of beef and lima beans and we enjoyed having friends visit us and we would go and visit our friends and we would all exchange barbecues, rope steers and have a good time, we even had our good Indians to visit us and show us how to rope steers. These Indians would show us how to make medicine, and show us how they would paint up for a big dance, that is when we paid them a visit. We sure always had something with us to give or them to keep in good spirits with them. We we lots of times to their teepees, at night. We learned the way they lived, and tried to learn to talk to them. I picked up a piece of bread and in the sign language asked them what to call it. They called bread "coconist" and water "hop", dog was "ah case" and "two-wax" meant to get out. I soon got to where I could talk to them and get as loud as some of them could. All they had in their teepees was their bedding, and pots, and a few supplies. They had a fire in the middle of the teepee. They controlled the smoke with long poles that were fastened to a fly at the top of the teepee. I never heard a papoose cry, they called a boy a "cusa-uaugh, a mota vewho was a negro soldier. I learned to like these Indians, of course you sometimes would hear some one say the only good Indian is a dead Indian but we liked them and knew that was a wrong thing to say.

Every two weeks rations were given these Indians. Their big feast was when they had wo-haw, they they had a big stomp dance, and at midnight had a feast on wo-haw, pone bread, and black coffee, they used to eat big hunks of meat and cut this meat with knives between their ~~mouths~~ mouths and the chunk of meat. After the feast the dance started,

we were allowed to kiss the squaws for a few cents. The music was that of tom-toms, and Indian songs, once I was told by an Indian girl that they would throw blanket over us when we danced together, this girls was a pretty Indian girl.

The Indians did not marry by our law. If a man wanted a squaw, he bought her so many ponies and wo-haws. Eight to ten head was a fair price. The Indian girl would only talk Indian, she had gone to school and could talk good English. One Indian told me then I still recall that I had lots of heap mu kite, meaning money. The young squaws always had their hair braided with colored flannel and wore a loose calico dress, buck skin leggings with fringe, beaded moccasins with silver conchos on the side, a bright colored blanket, and little beaded trinkets fastened their belts. The bucks never did much work but hunt. The squaws did much most of the work. The bucks sat around the fire at night and smoked and made medicine. They would hand us the pipe to take a few puffs, then handed to next one and so on. They browned sumac leaves, and put them in the tobacco, which gave it a funny odor, I sure did not like that taste.

When Indians got sick, the Indians had a sweat house, made out of a wagon sheet fastened over bent poles, like wagon bows, with rods inside. They built a fire and when good and hot they put sick Indian in there and made him sweat. Then the Indians would jump out and in the creek they would go for a swim. If an Indian had a headache they would cut the scalp just enough to bleed. Also when a squaw lost her

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buck, she went to his grave and cried and cried like a wounded animal, night after night and day after day. Now we will go back to the southside of Harrah, Oklahoma, a highway road runs in the middle of an Indian burial ground, now called Bost hill because so many brave Indians and white men died with their boots on. If anyone will visit this particular spot on top of this hill, that we visited so many time, on Sundays while out walking or riding you can stop and gaze for a few minutes and you can see for yourself a burial ground. Indians have been known to bury their loved ones in their front yard or back yard, but in this case there were a body of Indians who buried their loved one in one piece of ground, just like we do today. Altho the white people of Harrah, Oklahoma, today use this same place for their cemetery ground, this highway runs thru this plot of ground and I know it is a fact that Indians were buried on this plot of ground. The Indians were known to bury their dead on a high hill.

In 1889 I was a guard for a United States Marshall, I know every inch of territory in this part of Oklahoma. Later I ran for sheriff and served two terms and that was 1921 to 24 inclusive. I did not run again until 1926, I was elected again in 1926, 27, 28, 29. and I served Oklahoma City council, away back on 1905 for 2½ years.

There are many more colorful events I could describe but is not just clear in my mind, I would have to stop and think many times.

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