

Turnbull Benton, Mary

by Irene Benton Coe

Mary Turnbull Benton's mother's and father's family walked the "Trail of Tears". They were among the thousands of Choctaw Indians that were removed from Mississippi and Georgia. They were also of the few to survive the long hard move. They were settled in what was called Cherokee and Choctaw Nation, which was later known as Oklahoma (meaning Red Man).

Jerico Perkins. To them were born four sons and three daughters. The sons were LeRoy, Daniel, Simeon and Turner. The girls were Mary, Julia and Angie. Mary Turnbull was, born in 1854 and married Charles Benton In Indian Territory, both were full blood Choctaw. To them were born six sons and two daughters. Their names were Mathis, Theodore, Sissie, James, Clem, Charles, Edgar and Myrtly, the youngest, died in infancy. Mathis and Sissie died young. Clem and Charles were twins and were killed at age 15 by cattle rustlers. Life was hard and few Indian men lived to be old. Grandfather Benton died when his children were young, leaving the burden of raising a large family for grandmother. There were three postal offices in the Territory, and mail to different parts of the Territory as it arrived. Grandmother was one of the carriers, delivering the mail by horseback. She supported the family for a while, but the job became too dangerous for a woman and she was forced to abandon on account of robbers, murderers, and cattle rustlers. Mary Benton and her' six children moved home with her parents.

May 11, 1881, tragedy struck the family again. A son was killed on horseback rounding up cattle in the spring. This family also moved home with Doctor Turner and Jerico Turnbull, who also had a large family of their own. So you see what a good Presbyterian Christian grandmother Jerico was, and what a burden that fell on Turner· Turnbull's shoulders. Grandmother Jerico read the Choctaw Bible daily, had family prayer every night, and ruled the large family with strict discipline. The Indian man never asked nor received help, nor neglected his duty to care for his own.

Doctor Turnbull died and this load fell on the shoulders of his son, Turner, who had his mother move nearer him so he could help care for all those orphan children.

So many owe so much to this man. He fed, clothed and saw that all had the opportunity for an education. The boys were sent to boarding school at Jones Academy-Hartshorn and other schools. The girls were sent to New Hope, Oak Cliff College at Dallas and Durant.

Theodore Benton and Onie Fitzer were married August 9, 1906. They lived with his mother, Mary, the first year helping her and saving to start their own

home. Their first child was born July 11, 1907. In the fall, they moved to their own home, a 1-inch x 12-inch plank board, three room house on the same plot of land allotted him by the U.S. Government.

Things had grown a little better for them by the time their fifth child was born and the family had outgrown the old house, so a five room house ready cut for assembling was ordered from Scars and Roebuck.

To Toad and Onie, as they were known by friends and relatives, were born eight children; Irene, Cecil, Charles, Bernice, Ray Turner, Woodrow, Opal and Mary. They reared the family on the land located near Matov in Bryan County 1926, pastures looked greener over the fence, so Toad and Onie moved the family in a Model-T truck, to West Texas around and near Plainview.

Onie Benton passed away October 5, 1961. Theodore passed away March 6, 1967 They are buried in Plainview where several of their children still live. One son Charles passed away December 30, 1982 and was buried Amarillo, Texas where he lived. still survive

So you see, the Benton Family had heritage in the land long before there was an Oklahoma.