

**United States Department of the Interior
 National Park Service**

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Benson Cabin

Other names/site number: _____

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: 486 CR 520

City or town: Shannon State: MS County: Lee

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

 national X statewide local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

 A B C D

<p>_____ Signature of certifying official/Title:</p>	<p>_____ Date</p>
<p>_____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>	

Benson Homestead
Name of Property

Lee, Mississippi
County and State

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official: _____ **Date** _____

Title: _____ **State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government** _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:
___ entered in the National Register
___ determined eligible for the National Register
___ determined not eligible for the National Register
___ removed from the National Register
___ other(explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box.)

- Building(s)
- District
-

Benson Homestead
 Name of Property _____

Lee, Mississippi
 County and State _____

Site

Structure

Object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>4</u>	<u> </u>	buildings
<u>1</u>	<u> </u>	sites
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	objects
<u>6</u>	<u>1</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register _____

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/Single Dwelling/Homestead Site
AGRICULTURE: outbuilding
AGRICULTURE: outbuilding
AGRICULTURE: animal facility

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Domestic/Single Dwelling/Homestead
AGRICULTURE: storage
AGRICULTURE: storage
AGRICULTURE: animal facility

Benson Homestead
Name of Property

Lee, Mississippi
County and State

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Other: Dogtrot House

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: ____

Hewn Logs

Metal Roofing

Dimensional Lumber

Bricks

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Benson House property is an early nineteenth-century domestic farm site consisting of several buildings and landscape features reflective of early settlement patterns in Itawamba County, Mississippi. The site is in the Black Prairie Physiographic zone and was considered optimal land for growing agricultural crops. The current structure is a rambling farmhouse with long porches almost encompassing the entire structure. The house is a combination of architectural styles that are reflective of additions that took place over the span of two centuries. The materials used for the house also shift over two centuries, reflecting the trends in vernacular farmhouses in Mississippi during the 19th and 20th centuries. When viewed from the outside, the house is obviously old, but when viewed from the interior, the oldest sections of the house reveal themselves as two rough-hewn log cells. Within the Benson house are two early nineteenth-century log structures. One is a two-story hand-hewn log structure with a fireplace on both levels. The property is significant for its connection to Anglo-American settlement patterns in North Mississippi, though portions of the hewn log house itself may have been constructed by the Chickasaw. Dendrochronology tests point to a possible early nineteenth-century construction date, which predates the Pontotoc Creek Treaty of 1832. In this treaty, the Chickasaw ceded six million acres to the United States government which included the Benson house land. Land patent records indicate a Chickasaw woman named ABBI-BIT-TAH-NO-YEA owned and lived

Benson Homestead
Name of Property

Lee, Mississippi
County and State

on the Benson land at the time of the Pontotoc Creek Treaty. Oral histories handed down in the Benson family convey that the Chickasaw constructed the original log sections of the house.

Narrative Description.

Prominently placed on the site sits the Benson dogtrot house which faces south along Brewer Road. Today, (2022), the house has the appearance of an early twentieth-century farmhouse. This perception comes from the aesthetic upgrades made over almost two centuries. These upgrades include tar paper siding, modern windows, and tin roofing. The upgrades, however, hide a much older structure.

On August 7, 1837, the land where the Benson house is now located, Section 4, was deeded by a Chickasaw woman named "Ahbittanoyea" to Henry Cook for \$1,000, (Deed Book 2, p.282) and consisted of 640.56 acres. In 2022 the Benson property has been reduced to thirty-seven acres. The house and outbuildings sit on a slightly elevated and level piece of ground, and despite being unoccupied for several years, its original use is still recognizable as a working farm. The house and outbuildings sit on approximately three acres while the remaining thirty-four acres have grown up in trees. The Benson site is in the Tombigbee watershed along the edge of Town Creek bottom close to the confluence with Coonewah Creek. This location is an important aspect of significance for its connection to Native American and European American cultures who relied on agriculture for survival. This bottom land and its rich soil was an excellent location for the Benson homestead, and even earlier, a Chickasaw home. To the east of the house is a very large fig bush and on the west end is a very large shade tree. The house is surrounded by a mowed lawn despite being uninhabited.

Within the Benson house are two early nineteenth-century log structures. One is a two-story hand-hewn log structure with a fireplace on both levels. The lower level is used as a living room

Benson Homestead

Name of Property

Lee, Mississippi

County and State

today. The other hand-hewn log structure is located approximately 10 feet to the North and was originally constructed as a detached kitchen. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the property owners added frame construction elements, including an additional framed cell that matched the two-story log construction in size (used as a bedroom today). The older log structure and the added frame room were then connected by a dogtrot. According to the current owner Wynell Benson, during the late nineteenth century, the open space between the two log structures was also enclosed and used as living space. Behind the two-story rooms on the east side of the dogtrot hall, a single story extends to the North approximately 40', which gives the Benson home an ell shape. The west side of this single-story section includes a screened-in porch that extends the full length.

There are also other significant structures on the property. A brick well pump house is located fifteen feet to the east of the screened-in porch. Approximately thirty yards to the northeast of the house is a wooden framed, two bay shed used for equipment storage. A wooden corn crib sitting on brick piers is located approximately twenty yards to the north of the house. This building may have been used for other purposes as well and is in dilapidated condition. Directly north of this tool shed is a large pole barn that is also in ruinous condition. While the areas surrounding the house are mowed grass, the corn crib, barn, and fenced animal pens are grown up with small trees and thick underbrush. While the condition of the structures is poor, the placement of the structures and the relationship they have to the main home clearly identifies the property as a nineteenth century frontier era farm.

The Benson home and homestead displays a bare minimum of upgrades over multiple generations, as still seen in the homes exterior finish materials. Because of this, much of the original structure's integrity is hidden yet still intact. The oldest sections of the Benson House are the two log cells. One two story living space and a separate one-story kitchen. We do not know if it was constructed by the Chickasaw or European Americans, but we know that hewn log construction was popular among both cultures during the first half of the 19th century in North Mississippi. The massive logs provided protection from the elements of weather as well as protection from wild animals and other people. Logs were also readily available in the virgin forests of Mississippi. Transportation of building materials was not an option in the 1830's. Roofing on the Benson house were wood shingles and would have been produced onsite. The bricks used for the two chimneys would have also been made onsite. The builders did own tools such as broad axe, saws, and chisels for example, but all materials were harvested or produced on site. The method of construction used to build the Benson House is far superior to modern construction and this is apparent in that almost two centuries later, the Benson House (log sections) is still structurally sound. When considering the historic integrity of the Benson house it is apparent that the aspects of design and workmanship make it a significant structure. Today, much of the Benson house design and craftsmanship have been lost and replaced by quicker and easier methods. The materials of the two oldest log sections of the Benson house are another aspect that make it a significant structure. Whether it was constructed by Chickasaw or European settlers, their access to Mississippi old growth hardwood would be a vital component in the construction of the Benson cabins and the longevity it has experienced. The Benson house at around two hundred years of age is an excellent testament to the superiority of early nineteenth century materials and workmanship.

Benson Homestead
Name of Property

Lee, Mississippi
County and State

Inventory:

Benson House

When viewing the south façade (Photograph 001) of the Benson House from Brewer Road today we see a two-story dog trot house with a framed covered porch extending the entire length of the home. The porch roof is supported by seven square wooden columns. The roof of the house and porch are covered in tin sheeting. The exterior walls of the first story are wood clapboards and the second story is covered in an earlier twentieth century tar paper siding which resembles gray shingles. The gable ends of this section of the house are also covered in gray tar paper siding. Each room flanking the dog trot hallway has a double window centered on the wall and is trimmed with one by four-dimensional lumber that is painted white. On the second story, one transom style window consisting of three panes, faces south. At the east end of the house a brick chimney is visible (Photograph 002) and rises a few feet above the ridge line of the house. Behind the east side of the two-story section with the chimney, a single-story section approximately 16' wide extends north for roughly 40'. The west side of the single-story section has a screened in porch that runs the entire length and joins the screened in dogtrot hall.

Entering the Benson house from the west side of the single-story section (Photograph 003) across from the well house, we first enter the screened in porch. A single door at the north end of the screened in porch leads into a kitchen which is approximately 12' X 16'. Much of the south wall in the kitchen consists of the backside of a fireplace chimney, which indicates this kitchen is a later addition. The other three walls of the kitchen are framed with dimensional lumber. The kitchen walls are covered in sheets of wood paneling and next to the fireplace chimney a small section has been exposed revealing the chimney is part of a log structure (Photograph 004).

Moving through a single door on the south wall, we move from the kitchen addition into one of the hewn log cells. The fireplace and mantle are located on the north wall and the room is approximately 12' X 16'. The room has wood paneled walls and ceiling tiles leaving the logs unexposed (Photograph 005).

A single door at the south end of the log room leads into another room that is approximately 12' X 12' and the walls and ceiling are wood paneling and foam tile as well (Photograph 006).

At the south end of this room is another single door that leads into the front room on the east side of the dogtrot hall and this two-story section of the houses floor is elevated by about 3 inches in comparison to the single-story section to the north and this indicates these two sections were not originally joined. The front room is approximately 12' X 12' and is similarly covered in wall paneling and foam ceiling tiles. The floor is covered with carpet except directly in front of the stair well where 4" wide wood flooring is visible. On the east wall a covered firebox and mantle are located. On each side of the mantle is a twelve-pane window. On the south wall is another set of double windows that are floor to ceiling in height (Photographs 007 & 008). The

Benson Homestead

Name of Property

Lee, Mississippi

County and State

east wall contains a centered single door that opens onto the dogtrot hallway. To the right of this door and enclosed in the corner, there is a small door that leads into a narrow stair well that allows access to the second story (Photograph 009). When entering the stair well and ascending to the second story, it is immediately apparent that the modern updates are absent. Instead, what is seen are hand-hewn logs horizontally notched and stacked. Also evident is the absence of iron nails, and instead mortis and tenon or pegged construction is present (Photograph 10). The floor upstairs is made of 12" wide boards (Photograph 011). The east wall on the second story also contains a small fireplace (Photograph 012). The log construction ends at three feet above floor level and the top logs act as a top plate and the gable end is framed construction (Photographs 013 & 014). The rafters are made of pine debarked saplings and are exposed (Photographs 015 & 016). Another important observation made from this second story room when looking over the three-foot west wall, it is apparent that the dogtrot hallway and the connecting west room are framed additions that were added after the log construction. Returning to the first-floor room, the door on the west wall opens onto an approximately 12' X 16' screened in dogtrot hall (Photograph 017). On the west side of the hall is a single door leading into a bedroom and bathroom. This side of the dogtrot mirrors the original log constructed side but is obviously a later addition added to create a symmetrical dogtrot style house. When considering all the different time periods in which the Benson house was constructed, it is important to note the aspect of feeling that it invokes. It really allows visitors to experience a sense of understanding about what life was like during the different phases of construction. From the early nineteenth century beginning of the house one can feel the immense labor, by a European pioneer family or a Chickasaw family, that went into constructing the home. We also get a sense of what it was like to have to harvest or manufacture materials with resources on site. The later eras of construction also convey information about hardships such as war and depression and is reflected in the materials available and afforded at those times. We also get the feeling of better times when modern kitchens and bathrooms were added and the hardship of harvesting your own materials was not necessary. These feelings associated with the significance of the Benson home extend from the house out onto the surrounding property as well. Although gardens, fields and outbuilding are considerably grown over, there is enough evidence remaining that you can understand the buildings uses and locations in relation to the house and the important roll each played in its era on an almost bicentennial Mississippi farm.

Well and Pump House: (Photographs 018 & 019)

Directly west of the original log kitchen sits a well pump house. Current owner Wynell Benson states that the well pump house is a mid-twentieth century addition but that the well itself is the original early nineteenth century hand dug artesian well. The well pump house is approximately 6' X 6' and is constructed of factory-made bricks from the mid twentieth century, which indicates that this structure is a later addition. The roof is covered with v-groove tin sheeting and a small wooden door on the south side allows access. The well would have been one of the most important features of an early nineteenth century home and it is likely as old, if not older, than the home itself.

Benson Homestead

Name of Property

Lee, Mississippi

County and State

Tractor shed and car house: (Photograph 020)

Northwest from the house beyond the garden spot sits an extant wooden framed tractor and car shed that looks to be early twentieth century construction. The center section is approximately 20' X 20' and is framed with dimensional lumber. The gabled roof that runs north and south and is covered in sheets of tin. The west and east sides of this structure have approximately 12' lean to additions that likely were used for storage or tools. Wynell Benson describes this structure as "the car house" and says that the farm tractor parked on the east side and the family automobile on the west side.

Corn Crib: (Photograph 021)

Approximately 25 yards to the north of the house sits an extant approximately 12' X 8' wooden framed corn crib resting on brick and concrete piers. The bricks appear to be early to mid-twentieth century factory produced. The exterior walls are covered with rough sawn 1" X 4" horizontal boards. The north side of the corn crib has a closed lean to approximately 12' X 12' with vertical board siding. The floor of the lean to is earthen and ground level with an open doorway on the east side. There is also a collapsed shed roof extending from the south side. This shed may have had other uses as indicated by its additions. Corn cribs were important structures on early nineteenth century farmsteads as they protected drying ears of corn from wild animals. Corn provided food for the family as well as all the livestock on early nineteenth century farms in Mississippi.

Barn: (Photograph 022 **Pending**)

Approximately 10 yards northwest of the corn crib are the remains of a large pole barn approximately 40' X 40'. The barn appears to be in an abandoned gathering lot for livestock. Originally, barns like this were used to stall and protect livestock at night. Wynelle Benson recalls using this barn to house a pair of work mules as well as dairy cows in the 1950's. Wynell does not know how old the barn is but the presence of dimensional lumber in the framing suggests the first half of the twentieth century construction.

Benson Homestead
Name of Property

Lee, Mississippi
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Benson Homestead
Name of Property

Lee, Mississippi
County and State

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Agriculture

Exploration/Settlement

Architecture

Period of Significance

1836 to 2009

Significant Dates

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

European American

Native American (Chickasaw)

African American

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Benson Homestead
Name of Property

Lee, Mississippi
County and State

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Benson house and homestead site is an intact homestead from the earliest years of settlement in Itawamba County. The Benson house and homestead is locally significant under the classification of Criterion A in the areas of Agriculture, Exploration/Settlement, and Architecture. The Benson site includes the distinctive characteristics of location, agricultural uses, and building methods associated with early north Mississippi European settlement. There is also the possibility that further research could reveal that the house was constructed by the Chickasaw as Benson oral history describes. Under Criterion C the Benson home is significant for its vernacular styles that span different time periods over its almost two centuries of existence. The current house consists of building methods and materials that changed with time to include stacking squared logs, mortice and tenon, pegged construction, framing with hand forged iron nails and construction using factory produced materials. The Benson house and property is also significant under Criterion D. The Benson site has potential to allow us to understand more about Native American settlement patterns in this region.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Criteria A: Early Settlement/Agriculture

In 1832, the Chickasaw Indians ceded over six million acres of land in north Mississippi to the U.S. government. ¹ This is known as the Pontotoc Creek Treaty and part of this agreement was that all Chickasaw people would relocate to reservation land in Oklahoma. (Figure 01a) This

¹ Connolly, Emilie. "Panic, State Power, and Chickasaw Dispossession." *Journal of the Early Republic* 40, no. 4 (2020): 683-689. [doi:10.1353/jer.2020.0096](https://doi.org/10.1353/jer.2020.0096).

Benson Homestead

Lee, Mississippi

Name of Property

County and State

was part of a larger policy known as the Indian Removal Act and directly affected the southeastern tribes, including Cherokee, Creek, Chickasaw, Choctaw, and Seminole. The Benson property is located in the Tombigbee watershed along the edge of Town Creek bottom in Section 4 Township 11, Range 6 East, along the old City Point Road. The Town Creek Bottom consists of rich soils and is included in the Black Belt geographical description for Mississippi. (Figures 01b & 01c) In the first two decades of the nineteenth century the Black Belt was recognized as a strip of prairie with rich dark dirt ideal for growing cotton. In the 1830s, under President Andrew Jackson, Native Americans, including the Chickasaw, began being forcefully removed by the United States government from this region in order to open these lands to white farmers and planters from Georgia and the Carolinas. The land in this area was fit for large scale plantations as well as small family farms. The Benson site may have also been an ideal homestead site for a Chickasaw family before the arrival of white settlers. Oral tradition in the Benson family states that the house was owned and constructed by a Chickasaw Indian. Deed books show that in 1837 the property was deeded from a Chickasaw woman named “Ahbittanoyea” to Henry Cook for one thousand dollars. On the same day, the land was sold to James Christian who would marry Elizabeth Benson in 1856. Her son from a previous marriage, James Curry Benson, would eventually own the property and the property remains in the Benson family’s possession today (2022). The current house consists of building methods and materials that changed with time to include stacking, mortice and tenon, pegged construction, framing with hand forged iron nails and construction using factory produced materials. The Benson site has potential to allow us to understand more about Native American settlement patterns in this region. The Benson property represents the early part of the western migration by Anglo Americans from the East in their search for fertile land suitable for the cultivation of crops. The outbuildings and dependencies also describe the functions and needs of a pioneer farm in the early nineteenth century in north Mississippi.

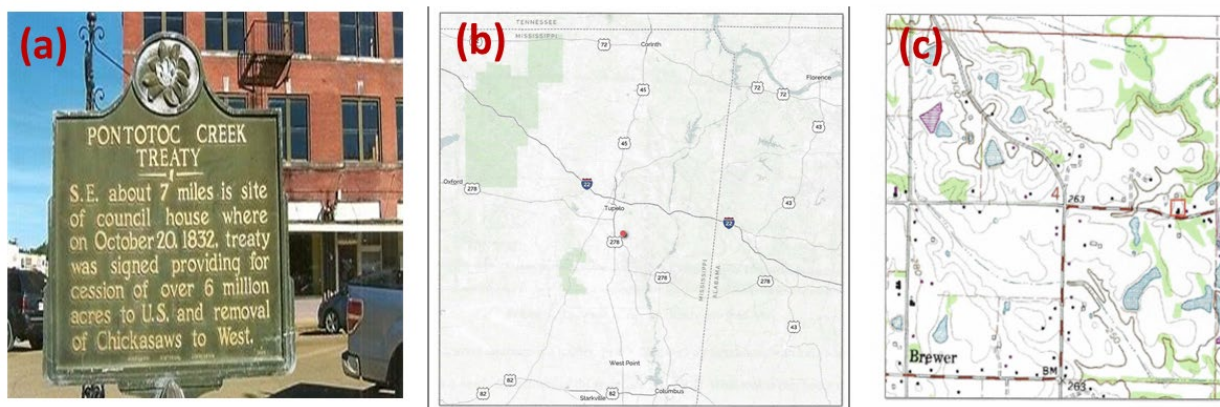


Figure 01.

The first evidence of the Benson home place was recorded in the Itawamba County (now Lee County) 1836 book of deeds. The first person named on the 1836 deed was Allibittuneya (spelled several different ways in records). According to Dr. Brad Lieb, who is Director of Chickasaw Archaeology of Culture and Humanities Preservation Division with the Chickasaw Nation in Ada, Oklahoma, Abbibittahnoya was a Chickasaw Indian woman with twelve children and she

Benson Homestead

Name of Property

Lee, Mississippi

County and State

was awarded three sections of land, eight, nine and four, in the Pontotoc Creeek Treaty of 1832.² These sections of land were 640 acres each and Abbibittahnjya received three sections based on her number of children. Unlike most other southeastern Native Americans faced with removal, many Chickasaws like Abbibittahnoyeya were awarded a deed of ownership for the land they possessed. Dr. Lieb contributes this to the shrewd negotiation abilities of Chickasaw leaders at the time Chickasaw leaders at the Pontotoc Creek Treaty in 1832 demanded that individual Chickasaw landowners receive payment for their land in order to help them reestablish in Oklahoma. This agreement resulted in issuing land patent deeds to individuals which allowed, and required, them to sell their personal land to incoming European settlers from the east. Section four includes the land where the Benson Home is located and was considered a more valuable section of land when compared to land prices in the 1834 land cession deed book (Deed Book 2, pg. 82), which could be an indication of a structure on the property. "On August 7, 1837, the land where the Benson house is now located, section 4, was deeded by "Ahbittanoyea" to Henry Cook for \$1000, which is \$200 more than the minimum allowable price of \$800, or \$1.25 per acre, as stipulated in the 1834 land cession from the Chickasaw to the U.S. government. The price suggests that there was an improvement on the land that made it more valuable." (Doherty) Oral tradition in the Benson family states that the Benson house was owned and constructed by a Chickasaw Indian. In 1837 Henry Cook owned a large plantation at Fawn Grove and never lived at the Benson property. In 1852, the Benson property was transferred through a deed of conveyance to James Christian. (Deed Book 9, p. 163).³ The deed of conveyance indicates that Christian took possession of the Benson property in the mid 1840's, probably began living and farming there, which supports family oral tradition. James Christian was married to Elizabeth Benson. Benson had a son from a previous marriage named James Curry Benson (Photograph 023) who took possession of the Benson property in 1876, according to Wynelle Benson. In all, six generations of Bensons have lived in the home, including William Bobby Benson, Wynell Benson's (current property owner) husband, who passed away in 2017. (Photograph 024) The house is uninhabited today and property is maintained by the Benson family.

Homestead Farming

The extant buildings and use of spaces on the Benson property reflect the many different activities that took place on the farm. In contrast to the many wealthy plantation farms found in the nineteenth century Mississippi Black Belt, the Benson farm is an example of a largely self-sufficient homestead. President Thomas Jefferson had promoted this "yeoman" lifestyle as a reaction to an increase in industrialization. He also saw the adoption of this lifestyle as a way that Native Americans could be assimilated into Anglo-American culture. Historical maps and other primary sources tell us that the Chickasaw in the area around the Benson property were practicing these concepts leading up to Indian removal. Like the Anglo-American settlers arriving in the Old Southwest, the Chickasaw built log homes and established permanent farms. Some even became the owners of enslaved people. These accounts add some support to the oral traditions that the Benson home was possibly constructed by the Chickasaw.

² Dr. Brad Lieb. Director of Chickasaw Archaeology of Culture and Humanities Preservation Division with the Chickasaw Nation in Ada, Oklahoma. Personal Communication.

³ Deed Book 9, p. 163. Itawamba County, Mississippi Land Records.

Benson Homestead

Name of Property

Lee, Mississippi

County and State

The Bensons raised crops as well as livestock. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, cotton was the main cash crop in the Mississippi Black Belt., but farmers also had to produce necessities like grains and meat to feed the families and the livestock. Drinking water was also a necessity and the current well that supplies water to the house today, is the original hand dug artesian well that is at least as old as the house, if not older. The current brick well house covering the well is a mid-twentieth century addition.

There is no known documentary evidence that the Benson farm was home to slaves. James Christian occupied or owned the Benson property from 1838 until his death sometime in the 1860's. Christian is described in family records as a "wealthy planter" and records also indicate that he owned extensive tracts of land in Pontotoc County as well. Federal census in Mississippi during 1860 differentiates between Planter and Farmer for occupation of individuals. Most extensive landowners who are described as Planters in the census, were growing cotton with the use of slave labor. Ongoing research may yield more information about the Benson homestead during the Antebellum period.

Gullet Gin

In February of 1867, the Benson home place was sold by James Christian to the J.F. Gullet family of Aberdeen, Mississippi. It is unknown why the home was sold since it was occupied by James Christian, Elizabeth Benson, and her son James Curry Benson. One theory is that James Christian had died, (he was thirty years older than his wife Elizabeth), and the home needed to be sold. The Gulleys manufactured cotton gins and according to several Benson descendants, the first Gullet gin was invented in the upstairs of the Benson house. Mary Benson Leech, a descendant of James Curry Benson, wrote in her Benson genealogical records "A cotton gin was contrived and built in the loft of the old Benson house. The plans were there for many years." Other Benson descendants have stated that as late as the 1940's, there was a copy of the blueprint of the first Gullett gin in the upstairs where it was invented (Figure 02). The Gulleys owned and operated a gin in Aberdeen, Mississippi and moved the gin business to Amite, Louisiana sometime in the late 19th century. In 1876, prior to the Gulleys move to Louisiana, James Curry Benson, now an adult, was able to purchase the Benson home from the Gulleys.⁴ (Photograph 028)

⁴ Wynelle Benson Family Papers.

Benson Homestead
Name of Property

Lee, Mississippi
County and State

2 Sheets—Sheet 1

B. D. GULLETT.
COTTON GIN.

No. 10,406.

Patented Jan. 10, 1854.

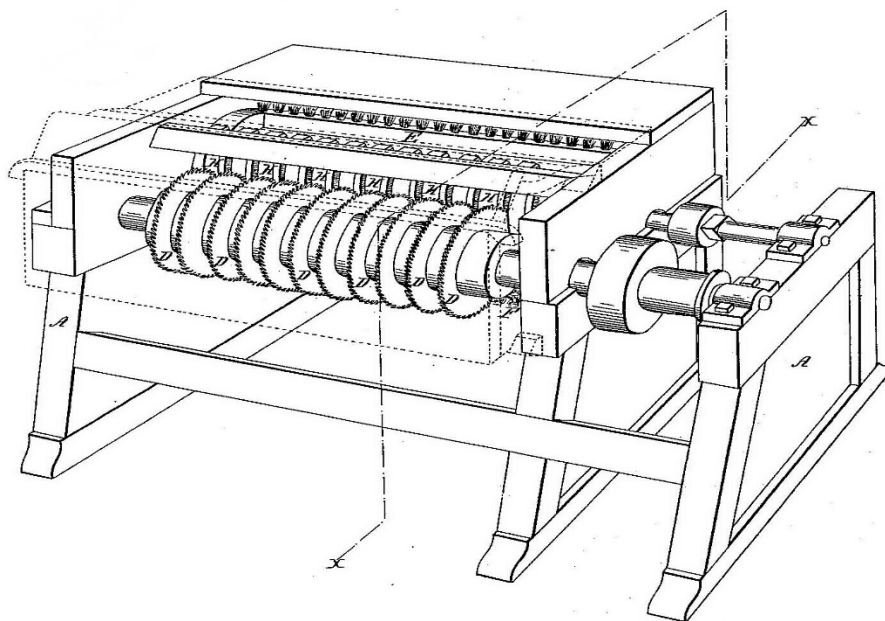


Figure 02.

Benson Gin

Sometime shortly after the Civil War, James Curry Benson established a cotton gin across the road from the Benson house. This cotton gin was used by the Bensons to process the cotton from their fields as well as cotton grown by farmers in the surrounding communities. Wynnell Benson possesses many of the handwritten business records from the twentieth century. The Benson gin also operated as a grist mill and a sorghum mill for the Bensons and surrounding communities. The gin passed from James Curry Benson to his son Thomas Jabus Benson after his death in 1906. One impactful event for the Benson gin and residents on the farm happened in the 1920's when natural gas was run from highway 6 to the Benson property. This predated the arrival of electricity a decade later but was equally impactful as it allowed an inexpensive source of energy that could be used to power the gin and provide heat and lighting to houses. Farmers from surrounding communities brought cotton, corn, and sugar for processing well into the 1930's when the gin was leased to Charlie Bucy. The Benson gin was a thriving business and continued operating until the late 1950's. Unfortunately, like most small gins, it has long disappeared.

Benson Homestead
Name of Property

Lee, Mississippi
County and State



Figure 03. Benson gin about 1930

Sharecropping

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century and most of the twentieth century, many large landowners, including the Bensons, implemented sharecropping on their farms. When the system of enslavement ended at the conclusion of the Civil War, landowners had to find another way to ensure their land remained profitable. Landowners often built simple houses for tenants and their families who agreed to farm on shares for landowners. When Both white and black sharecroppers lived and worked at the Benson farm. Wynell Benson remembers four separate tenant houses on the Benson property. Two houses on the same side of the road and a short distance from the Benson house and two more tenant houses across the road close to the Benson gin. None of the tenant houses are extant today. However, one important feature connected to

Benson Homestead
Name of Property

Lee, Mississippi
County and State

this period of the Benson Farm's history does remain one hundred yards west of the Benson house: a store. Though not part of the Benson property today, the Bensons built the store during the first quarter of the twentieth century when the gin was a thriving business. Small stores on plantations and farms played an important part in making rural life sustainable for residents and surrounding communities. Wynell Benson remembers the 1980's as the last decade that tenants lived on the Benson farm.

CRITERION C: DESIGN/CONSTRUCTION
(Photograph 029)

In 2018, under the supervision of Dr. Brad Lieb, archaeologist for the Chickasaw Nation, Raymond Doherty and other local volunteers conducted a phase 1 survey in search of evidence of a Chickasaw house site at the Benson property (Figure 04). The following description of the materials and building methods of the Benson house are found in that report.



Figure 04.

Benson Homestead

Name of Property

Lee, Mississippi

County and State

Architecturally, the Benson House is unusually complex, with twentieth century elements and encompassing porches added onto and surrounding two older hand-hewn log structures. The picture below shows the house before a west wing addition was added in front. (Figure 05) The two log sections were once separate and were attached by bridging the gap between them with enclosing walls and roof. This was a common practice in nineteenth century southern houses, where the kitchen was often unconnected to the living quarters in order to reduce the risk of a fire destroying the entire home. The sections of the house constructed with hand hewn logs are highlighted in light blue in the diagram below. (Floorplan diagram). The front log section is a two story “single pen,” with fireplaces on both the first and second floor. This second story also has two rectangular windows, opposite each other facing the front and rear, that are a distinctive feature of the house. The window in the rear has been removed, not needed as it was enclosed by the addition connecting the two original log structures. The rear section is a single-story double pen construction.

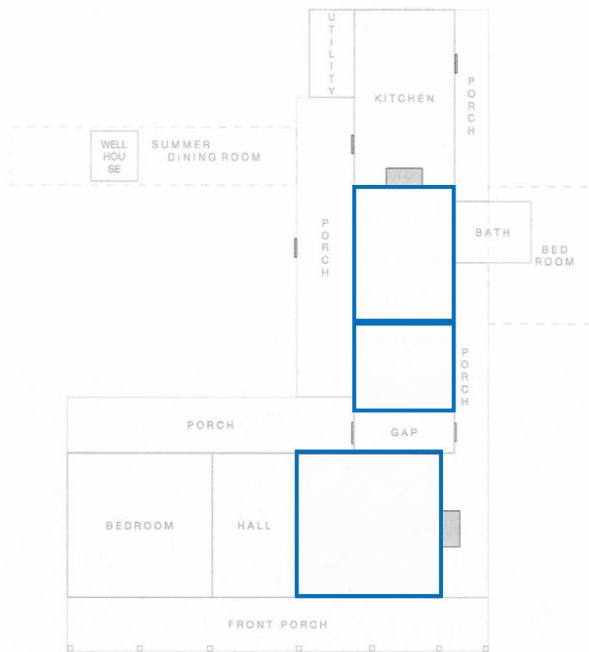


Figure 05. Floorplan showing original log sections (left) and photo of Benson house late 1800's (right).

The Benson house, like many early eighteenth-century pioneer houses in the south, was constructed with hand hewn and stacked logs. The logs are rectangular and hewn with an axe known as “planked log” construction. They vary in size from six to thirteen inches in height and three to four inches thick (Figure 06). Mortis and tenon construction are evident with pegs protruding from some of the logs, though their purpose is not evident and so may be vestigial (Figure 06). The rafters appear to be pine saplings, 2.5-3 inches thick (Photograph 019). The gable studs are made of split pieces of pine nailed to the girt.

Benson Homestead

Name of Property

Lee, Mississippi

County and State



Figure 06. Plank log construction (left) Peg protruding from log (right)

Log construction methods, like those used in the Benson house, provided a solid structure but inconsistencies in finished dimensions of the logs required finish methods in order to close gaps and cracks left between logs. Some of the logs are over twenty feet long, the longest of which are the front and rear wall plates that can be seen jutting out under the side eaves. Some mortar was observed between logs where there were narrow gaps, but the chinking and daubing in wider gaps appears to be missing, with boards instead placed over the gaps. These were evidently added before the siding was added, as they appear to be hand made as opposed to circular saw milled cut lumber of the siding. The photo below shows the structure when the additional bedroom was being added about 1925. (Figure 07). The siding is removed on the west side exposing the log structure and the gable studs. It also appears there are vertical corner posts with a “log infill” type construction, with the hewn timbers set between corner posts. However, these posts are not visible from the interior.

Benson Homestead
Name of Property

Lee, Mississippi
County and State

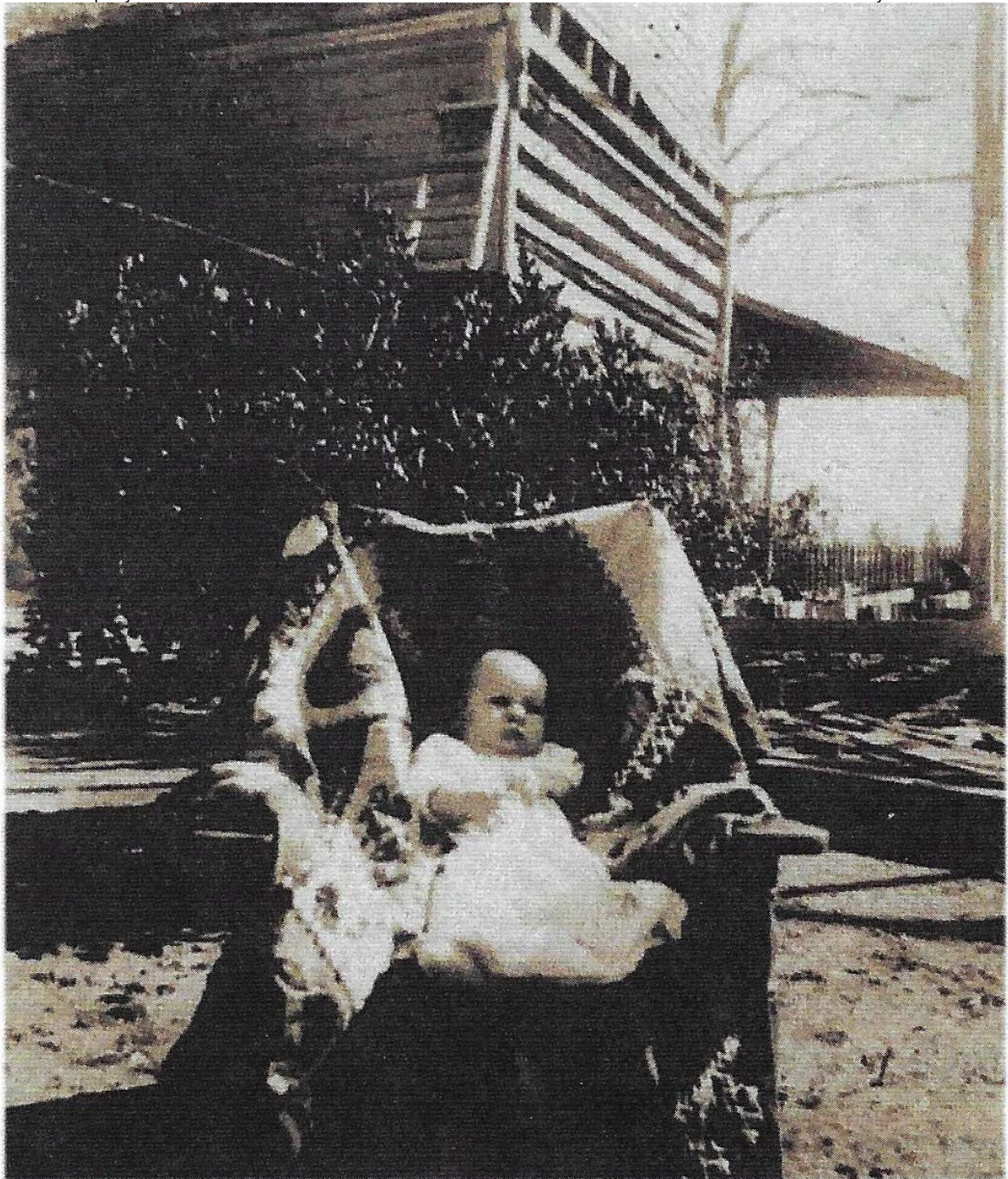


Figure 07. Benson house during bedroom addition showing exposed logs about 1925

Large handmade bricks are a good sign of the early age of a structure. The bricks of the chimney at the Benson House are $8\frac{1}{2}$ X $3\frac{7}{8}$ inches, and 3 inches thick (Figure 08).

Benson Homestead

Name of Property

Lee, Mississippi

County and State



Figure 08. Chimney and close up of brick courses at Benson house.

According to A Guide to Artifacts of Colonial America, “by and large, eighteenth century colonial American bricks were about 8 3/4” long, 4” wide, and about 2 5/8” in thickness, give or take a little in every direction” (Hume 1969:81). Relatively modern bricks, such as those used in other house chimneys, built in the 20th century, are smaller at 8”X 3 5/8”. What is unusual about the Benson bricks is their thickness, at 3”. In comparison, the bricks recovered from the foundation of the Colbert structure, (a structure owned by Chief George Colbert about 15 miles from the Benson property), are similar in length to the Benson bricks wider (4 1/4-3/8”) and thinner (2 1/8-3/8”). This comparison suggests that the Benson bricks date to a very early nineteenth century date of production more consistent with the Colbert structure.

Hundreds of nails were recovered at the Benson House site, though most of them were too heavily encrusted in rust for dating purposes. Only thirteen nails were in a condition to identify, all of which appear to be face pinched with square rather than rounded points

CRITERION D: INFORMATION POTENTIAL

The phase 1 survey in 2018 also included an archaeological survey of the grounds immediately surrounding the Benson house. The survey was conducted over several weeks and consisted of 112 shovel tests. Contents of these tests were screened and exposed European

Benson Homestead
Name of Property

Lee, Mississippi
County and State

American ceramics, native pottery and lithics, Glass, iron nails, and even a ring possibly made from brass. Most of these artifacts dated from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries but the lithic sherds found were much older and dated around 1000 years old to the Woodland period. The final report of the archaeological survey at the Benson property could not conclusively prove that the house was constructed by the Chickasaw, but it could not rule the possibility out either. There is also the possibility that the Benson log house and kitchen was moved from nearby when Henry Cook purchased the property in 1837. Dendrochronology tests were conducted on some of the logs of the house as well and the report yielded a wide range of dates making the results inconclusive as well. Despite the inconclusive results that the house was Chickasaw, the results did open opportunities for further research and learning about Native American settlement patterns back to the Woodland period. Further research could help improve our understanding of both Native American and historic occupations of this region. The Benson site also presents the opportunity to study the many eras of Mississippi history and the effect they had on the multi cultured residents who called this area home.

Benson Homestead
Name of Property

Lee, Mississippi
County and State

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Connolly, Emilie. "Panic, State Power, and Chickasaw Dispossession." *Journal of the Early Republic* 40, no. 4 (2020): 683-689. doi:10.1353/jer.2020.0096.

Doherty, Raymond. "A Cultural Resources Survey of the Benson House Site Brewer, Mississippi." Division of Heritage Preservation, Department of Culture and Humanities. The Chickasaw Nation. Ada, OK (2018).

Deed Book 9, p. 163. Itawamba County, Mississippi Land Records.

Dr. Brad Lieb (Director of Chickasaw Archaeology of Culture and Humanities Preservation Division with the Chickasaw Nation in Ada, Oklahoma) Interview with Scott Jenkins on November 3, 2022

Wynell Benson (Current owner of Benson home and property) Interviewed by Scott Jenkins June 2022 through November 2022

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Benson Homestead
Name of Property

Lee, Mississippi
County and State

Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property 40 + acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 34.15515 | Longitude: 88.66887 |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

- | | | |
|----------|----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |

Benson Homestead
Name of Property

Lee, Mississippi
County and State

4. Zone: Easting : Northing:

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Scott Jenkins
organization: _____
street & number: _____
city or town: _____ state: _____ zip code: _____
e-mail _____
telephone: _____
date: _____

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

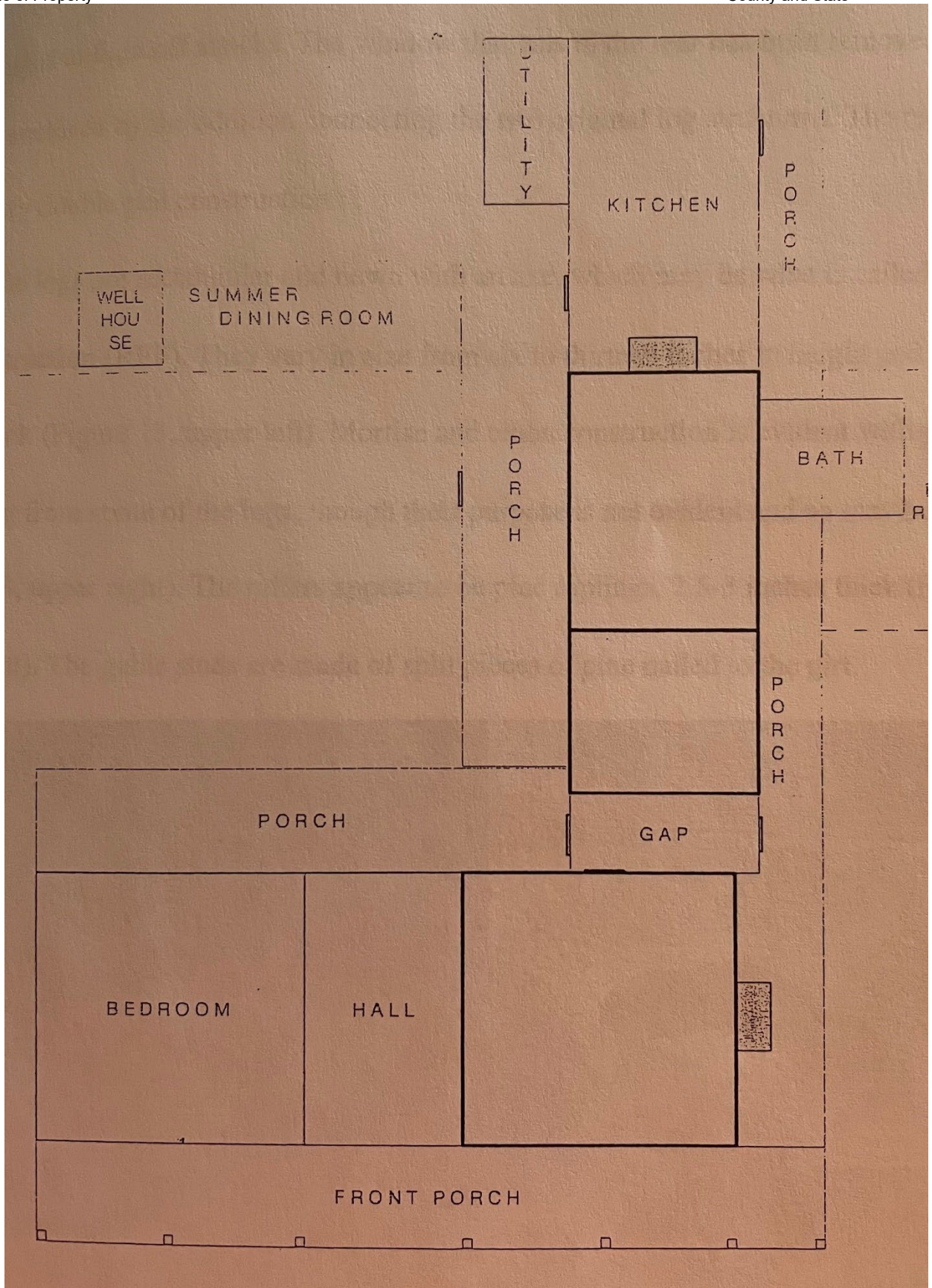
- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Benson Homestead
Name of Property

Lee, Mississippi
County and State

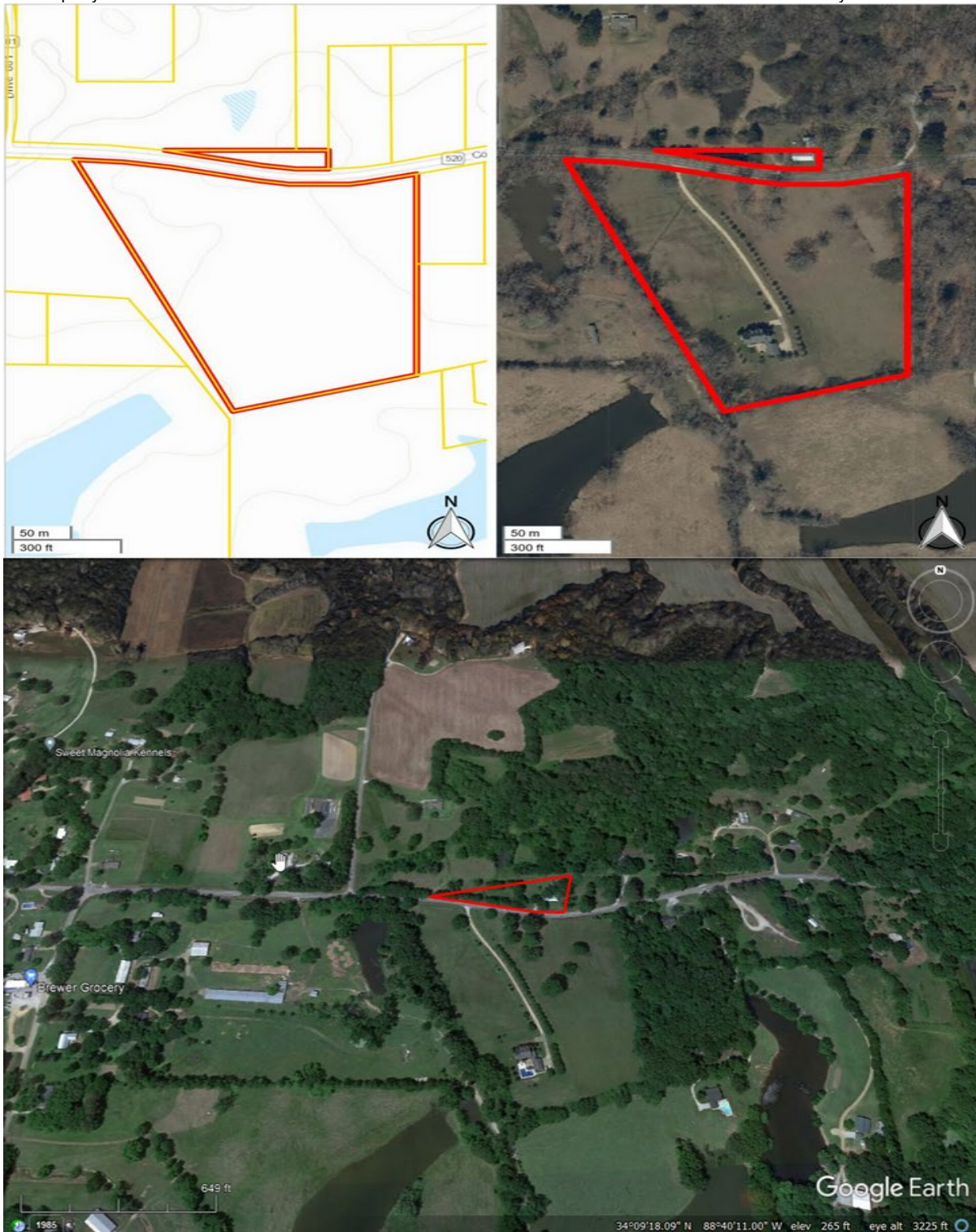
Benson Homestead
Name of Property

Lee, Mississippi
County and State



Benson Homestead
Name of Property

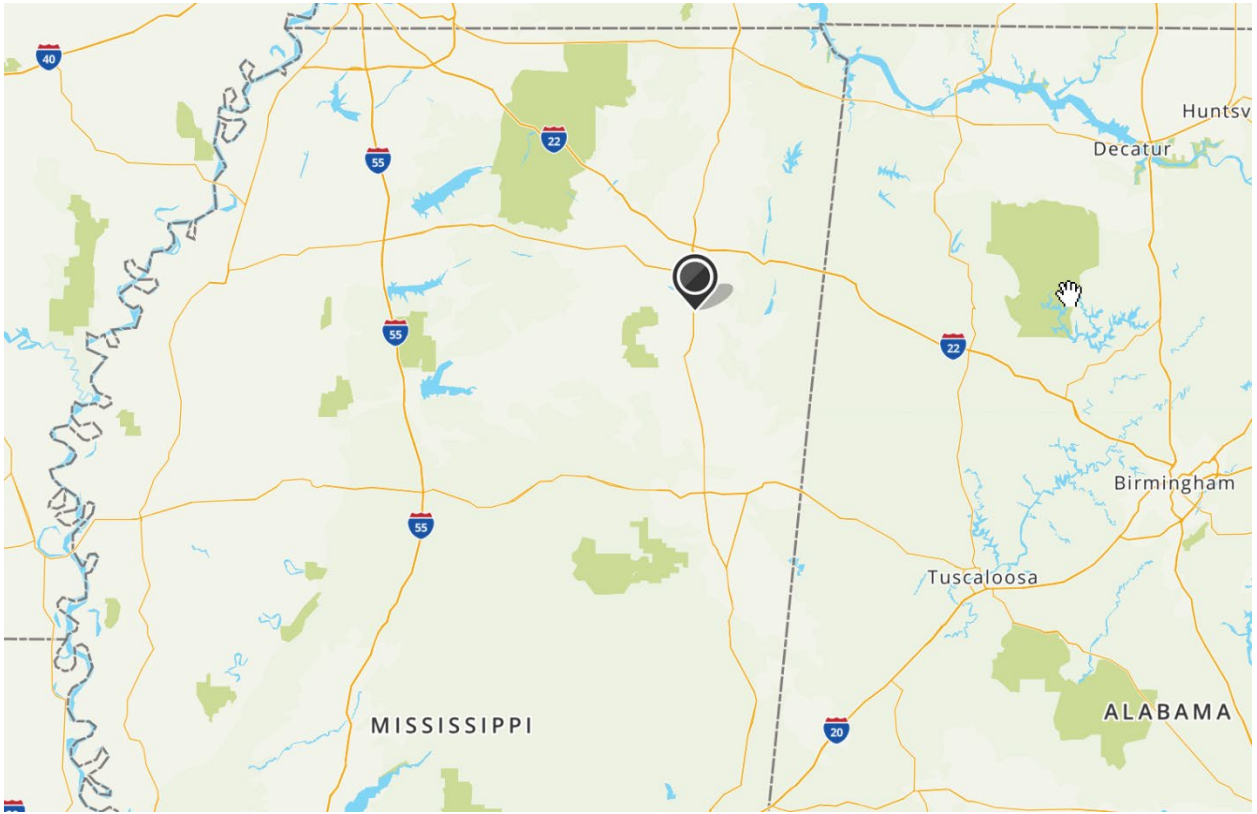
Lee, Mississippi
County and State



Current Benson Homestead Property & National Registry Boundaries.

Benson Homestead
Name of Property

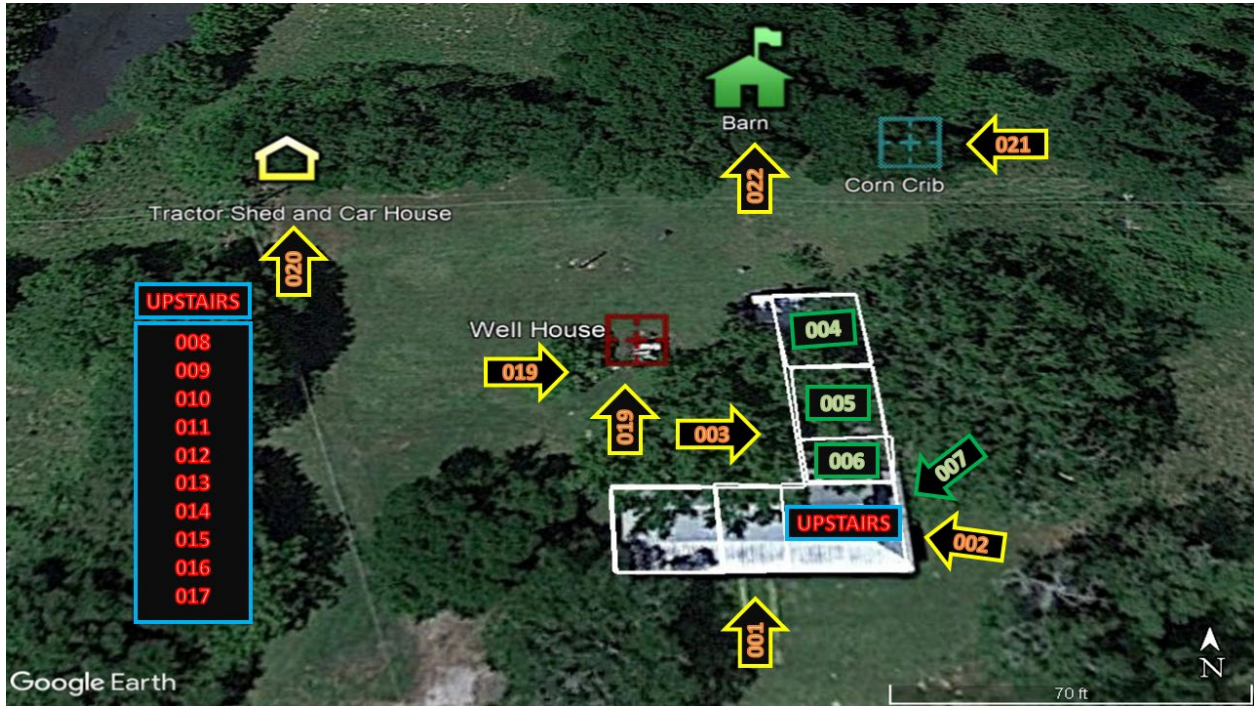
Lee, Mississippi
County and State



Benson Homestead General Location.

Benson Homestead
Name of Property

Lee, Mississippi
County and State



Photograph log of Benson Homestead.

Benson Homestead

Name of Property

Lee, Mississippi

County and State

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Benson Cabin

City or Vicinity: Shannon, Mississippi

County: Lee

State: Mississippi

Photographer: Scott Jenkins

Date Photographed: 2021, 2022

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 22. South façade of bedroom, hall, and original log cabin, view to north
- 2 of 22. East gable end of original log cabin with brick chimney, view to west
- 3 of 22. West façade of original log Kitchen, view to east
- 4 of 22. Interior of modern kitchen facing south
- 5 of 22. Interior original log kitchen facing north
- 6 of 22. Interior of enclosed room connecting log kitchen and main log cabin facing south
- 7 of 22. Interior bottom floor of log cabin facing east
- 8 of 22. Interior bottom floor of log cabin facing north showing stairwell doorway also
- 9 of 22. Interior Stairwell entrance to second story of log cabin
- 10 of 22. Interior Upstairs stacked logs and mortice and tenon construction
- 11 of 22. Interior Upstairs flooring
- 12 of 22. Interior Upstairs east wall with brick fireplace
- 13 of 22. East Interior upstairs gable end
- 14 of 22. Interior upstairs stacked logs and log top plate
- 15 of 22. Interior upstairs view of roof showing pine sapling rafters
- 16 of 22. Interior upstairs view of roof showing pine sapling rafters
- 17 of 22. Interior dogtrot hall facing south with screen enclosed ends
- 18 of 22. View of well house facing east
- 19 of 22. View of well house facing north
- 20 of 22. Exterior view of Tractor shed and car house facing north
- 21 of 22. Exterior view of Corn Crib facing west
- 22 of 22. Exterior view of Barn facing north

Benson Homestead
Name of Property

Lee, Mississippi
County and State

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

- Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
- Tier 2 – 120 hours
- Tier 3 – 230 hours
- Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.

Benson Homestead
Name of Property

Lee, Mississippi
County and State

MS Lee County Benson Homestead 001



Benson Homestead
Name of Property

Lee, Mississippi
County and State

MS Lee County Benson Homestead 002



Benson Homestead
Name of Property

Lee, Mississippi
County and State

MS Lee County Benson Homestead 003



Benson Homestead
Name of Property

Lee, Mississippi
County and State

MS Lee County Benson Homestead 004



Benson Homestead
Name of Property

Lee, Mississippi
County and State

MS Lee County Benson Homestead 005



Benson Homestead
Name of Property

Lee, Mississippi
County and State

MS Lee County Benson Homestead 006



Benson Homestead
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Lee, Mississippi
County and State

MS Lee County Benson Homestead 007



Benson Homestead
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Lee, Mississippi
County and State

MS Lee County Benson Homestead 008



Benson Homestead
Name of Property

Lee, Mississippi
County and State

MS Lee County Benson Homestead 009



Benson Homestead
Name of Property

Lee, Mississippi
County and State

MS Lee County Benson Homestead 010



Benson Homestead
Name of Property

Lee, Mississippi
County and State

MS Lee County Benson Homestead 011



Benson Homestead
Name of Property

Lee, Mississippi
County and State

MS Lee County Benson Homestead 012



Benson Homestead
Name of Property

Lee, Mississippi
County and State

MS Lee County Benson Homestead 013



Benson Homestead
Name of Property

Lee, Mississippi
County and State

MS Lee County Benson Homestead 014



Benson Homestead
Name of Property

Lee, Mississippi
County and State

MS Lee County Benson Homestead 015



Benson Homestead
Name of Property

Lee, Mississippi
County and State

MS Lee County Benson Homestead 016



Benson Homestead
Name of Property

Lee, Mississippi
County and State

MS Lee County Benson Homestead 017



Benson Homestead
Name of Property

Lee, Mississippi
County and State

MS Lee County Benson Homestead 018



Benson Homestead
Name of Property

Lee, Mississippi
County and State

MS Lee County Benson Homestead 019



Benson Homestead
Name of Property

Lee, Mississippi
County and State

MS Lee County Benson Homestead 020



Benson Homestead
Name of Property

Lee, Mississippi
County and State

MS Lee County Benson Homestead 021



Benson Homestead
Name of Property

Lee, Mississippi
County and State

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