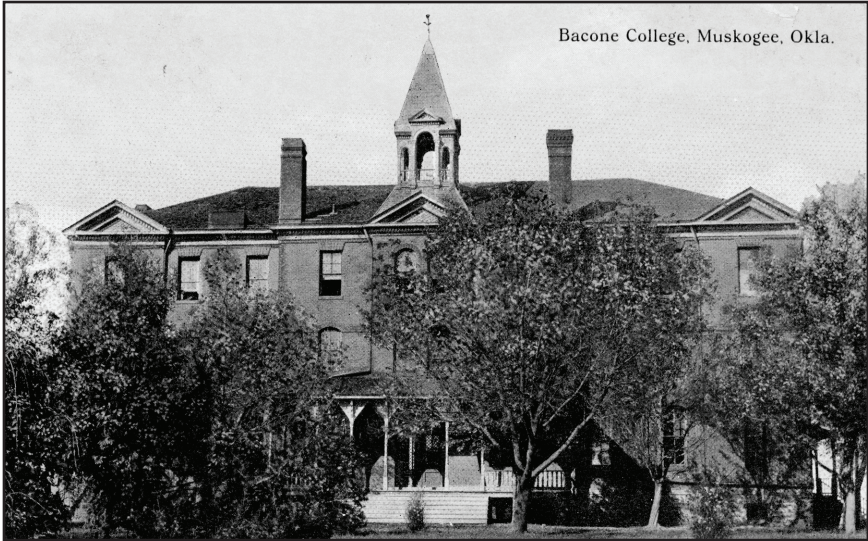


The “Rise and Fall” of Indian Colleges in Indian Territory: Indian University, Henry Kendall College, and Other Colleges, 1880–1907



*By Steven J. Crum**

As the nineteenth century moved forward in the United States, American higher education became more secular, less religious, and more popular. Numerous colleges came into existence throughout the country, including in the region west of the Mississippi River. Regardless of the changes, missionary groups still maintained that American Indians needed to be assimilated into white culture. They thus created several small Indian colleges in Indian Territory. Although intended for Indian students whose ancestors had been subjected to Indian Removal in the 1830s and thereafter, these colleges also enrolled white students living in the territory.

The Indian colleges appeared to have a bright future serving Native Americans in the eastern half of Indian Territory. But the initial brightness dimmed after a few years when the federal government dissolved Indian Territory in 1907, combining it with Oklahoma Territory to create the state of Oklahoma. Most of the small Indian col-

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leges folded with the end of Indian Territory, and only two survived the formative years of Oklahoma statehood. Indian University, which awarded bachelor's degrees to its graduates in the above period, barely survived. To remain in existence it demoted itself, changed its name to Bacone College in 1910, and became a high school for a number of years until finally becoming a junior college in 1927. Henry Kendall College, which started out largely as an Indian college, also survived, but its administrators made the decision to make it into a mainstream college serving white students in the new state of Oklahoma. It became the University of Tulsa in 1920.¹

This country thus witnessed the rise and fall of the Indian colleges of the former Indian Territory. The missionary groups created the rise whereas the federal government indirectly created the fall by dissolving Indian Territory in 1907.²

In February 1880 Baptist missionary Almon C. Bacone established Indian University in a small Baptist building in Tahlequah, Indian Territory, within the boundaries of the Cherokee Nation. The primary objective of the university was "to prepare native teachers and preachers for a more effective Christian work among the Indian Tribes."³ The university was the culmination of an effort that started almost a year earlier, in April 1879, when Bacone and others called a meeting to discuss the creation of a "Baptist Literary Theological and Industrial Institution for the Indians."⁴ At this meeting the participants drafted the following resolution:

There is no institution of learning especially designed for the higher Christian education of the Indians. . . . A majority of the more civilized tribes and Nations are grouped together in the Indian Territory, making this the centre of interest and influence . . . that steps be taken to found in the Indian Territory an Indian University which shall embrace both a literary and theological course of study and furnish facilities for the encouragement of industrial pursuits. . . . That this University be open to the reception of students of both sexes from any of the Indian tribes or nations who comply with the regulations adopted for its government.⁵

The end result of the meeting was Indian University in Tahlequah.

Before founding the university, Bacone had worked as a school teacher in the tribally run Cherokee Male Seminary in Tahlequah. But he became dissatisfied with this position for at least two reasons. He held that the school placed too much emphasis on a lower-level high

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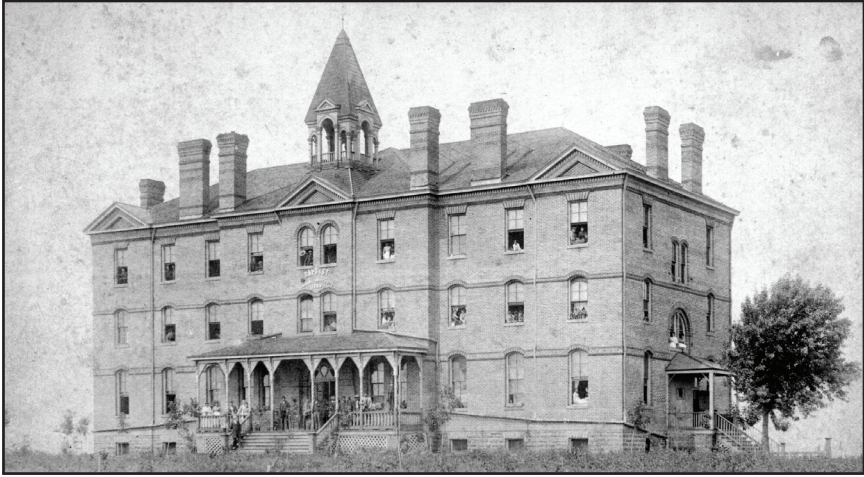
school education, and Bacone wanted emphasis on a more classical higher education. Additionally the male seminary was a secular school run by a tribal government, and Bacone wanted a school emphasizing Christian values and principles since he was a Baptist missionary. He therefore resigned his position in the seminary and shifted focus to his idea of a Christian Indian university that, of course, became Indian University.⁶

Bacone, however, remained dissatisfied with the location of the university in Tahlequah, for he wanted it to be located in a more suitable place to serve Indian students throughout Indian Territory. He selected Muskogee, the capital of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. Muskogee had a railroad line that made it ideal for transportation purposes. Additionally, the Office of Indian Affairs (OIA; today's Bureau of Indian Affairs, BIA) regarded Muskogee as a central place and established Union Agency there to serve the tribes of Indian Territory. Furthermore, Bacone was fully aware of the 1866 treaty the federal government had negotiated with the Creeks. One provision stipulated that missionary organizations could secure 160 acres of land "for missionary or educational purposes," providing they secured the consent of the Creek government.⁷

To take advantage of the treaty provision, Bacone approached the Creek national government in October 1881. Decades earlier, after having been removed to Indian Territory, the Creeks had developed a bicameral legislature with a House of Warriors (lower house) and a House of Kings (upper house). The lower house usually initiated the discussion on important legislation items, and Bacone thus approached the warriors concerning his idea of 160 acres for Indian University. But the warriors tabled the discussion because some of them harbored animosity toward white people. After all, the treaty of 1866 was a surrender treaty in which the federal government acknowledged the Creeks as a defeated people since they had sided with the Confederacy during the Civil War. Even more, the 1866 treaty was a punishment treaty in which the Indian governments of Indian Territory, including the Creeks, had to submit to US demands, including the granting of rights-of-way for whites to develop railroads through Indian Territory. Even allowing missionary groups to secure 160 acres of land was a kind of punishment, because this action invited white people to enter Indian Territory and establish a home base within Indian country.⁸

Perhaps another reason why some Creek leaders did not favor Bacone's proposal was because he was a Baptist missionary. Without doubt, the Creek leaders were fully aware of the negative situation that had developed between the Ottawas and the Baptist officials of

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Indian University, near Muskogee, Indian Territory. Photo by J. F. Standiford (1544, Alice Robertson Collection, OHS Research Division).

Ottawa University some eight years earlier in Kansas. Ottawa University had come into existence in the 1860s within Ottawa tribal territory, and the Ottawas had granted approximately one-fourth of their tribal land for institutional development. But in the end, the Baptists defrauded the Ottawas and made Ottawa University a postsecondary institution for white students. Moreover, the federal government subjected the Ottawa tribe to removal in 1869, and the Ottawas lost a university that was intended for them. Eventually, the various Indian tribes of Indian Territory became aware of the Ottawa University controversy after the Cherokee Nation reported it in the November 1873 issue of the *Cherokee Advocate*.⁹ By the early 1880s the Ottawas were in Indian Territory and lived not far from the Creek Nation.

However, Samuel Checote, the principal chief of the Creek Nation and also a Christian convert and Methodist minister before becoming the chief, intervened on Bacone's behalf. Checote asked the warriors to reconsider Bacone's request because he wanted more Creeks to experience higher education. Checote stated:

It would be a grand opening to those of us who wish our children to attend high schools [Indian University also had a lower preparatory program] and are not able to send them to the states. . . . It is true the nation sends a few male students away (in the states) to be educated, but there are some who wish their daughters edu-

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cated and their financial condition will not admit them sending their Daughters to the States.¹⁰

Checote was referring to a decades-old practice that started in the 1840s, immediately following removal, when the Creek government subsidized the higher education of some male students to pursue a college or university education outside Indian Territory in the East or Midwest. This higher education program allowed George Washington Grayson and a few others to attend Arkansas College in the 1850s. Beginning in 1876 the Creeks created an official tribal scholarship program called "Youth in the States." Its purpose was to educate future tribal leaders. But young Creek women were not granted tribal scholarships initially, most likely because the Creek government had accepted certain American practices, including regarding higher education as a male pursuit. But Checote wanted to break this practice and allow Creek women to pursue a higher education. He felt a university in Creek territory could serve this purpose. Also, Checote was fully aware that it had been an expensive enterprise over the years to send Creek men to pursue higher education outside Indian Territory. Having a university at home in Muskogee could help reduce the expense. For these reasons he favored Bacone's request and asked the warriors to take the matter from the table and approve it.¹¹

Checote's influence convinced some warriors to reconsider Bacone's request. The warriors voted 37–36 to discuss the matter in October 1881. Shortly thereafter, they voted 39–34 to grant 160 acres to Indian University. It is clear that the lower house almost did not grant Bacone's request, for it was almost evenly divided on the issue, an indication of Creek animosity toward the 1866 surrender treaty that acknowledged the Creeks as defeated people and that white religious groups could request Creek land grants for educational and religious purposes. It is significant that the lower house did approve the land grant to Indian University as a result of key members being sympathetic to Bacone. One of these was warrior member William McCombs, who was a Baptist minister. The House of Kings then approved the lower house's decision, making Indian University an Indian land grant university. Unlike other postsecondary institutions of the second half of the nineteenth century, it did not receive its grant from the well-known Morrill Act of 1862, which provided land grants to mainstream universities across the nation; instead, the grant came from an Indian nation. Interestingly, some months before Bacone had approached the Creek Nation, the Creek government had rejected a Methodist proposal for a school of higher education within the Creek Nation.¹²

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The Creek land grant decision of 1881 was profound because it marked the first time in Native American history that a specific tribal group endorsed a college or university initiative. By the 1880s the Creeks had come to value formalized Euroamerican higher education. Yet, the Creeks did not run Indian University. Rather, it was run by white Baptists who wanted Indians to be educated at a higher level.

Indian University remained in Tahlequah until 1885 when Almon Bacone finally secured enough funds to build campus facilities in Muskogee. He secured \$10,000 from John D. Rockefeller for a building on the new campus. Before moving to Muskogee, Bacone already had organized a board of trustees to govern the university that consisted of eight members: four whites and four Indians. The Indian board members included Charles Journeycake (Delaware), chief of the Delaware Nation; James Williams (Cherokee), a former Cherokee chief; A. L. Lacie (Cherokee); and John McIntosh (Creek), who served as superintendent of public instruction for the Creek Nation. Although the Baptist denomination ran Indian University, Bacone wanted as much Indian input as possible, and a board consisting of 50 percent Indian members was an example of this.¹³

Indian University offered its students bachelor's degrees. All freshman students took one year of algebra and Latin, and one semester of ancient history, modern history, physiology, and natural history. Sophomores took one year of geometry, Latin, and Greek. The first semester of the sophomore year included rhetoric and civil government, and the second included trigonometry, logic, and English literature. Juniors took Greek and an additional year of Latin. Their first semester courses consisted of astronomy and history of civilization. The second included chemistry, zoology, and botany. Seniors took one year of French, German, and an additional year of Greek, along with one semester of geology, geography, mental philosophy, moral philosophy, and political economy. Successful graduates earned bachelor of arts (AB) degrees. Bacone wanted his students to pursue graduate study, and the university developed a master's program beginning in 1887. No students earned this degree.¹⁴

Although the Baptist Home Mission Board ran the university, Indian University still needed financial support from other sources to maintain its institutional existence. This was a major reason why Bacone became a fundraiser. One source he tried to tap into was the Office of Indian Affairs. In 1885 and 1886 Bacone wrote several letters to the OIA and asked for financial support for the Indian students. Bacone used the argument that the OIA could save money by allowing Indian students of Indian Territory to secure their education at

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Indian University. By being close to their families, the Indian students could serve as civilizing and Christianizing agents and impact their parents.¹⁵ In one of his letters, Bacone wrote:

Being nearer home, a closer sympathy would be maintained, and a better appreciation of the benefits received would be awakened on the part of parents and friends while the pupils were in process of training. As the pupils would have opportunities to go to their homes from time to time and parents and friends to visit them in their school, the influences of their training would be carried into those homes, and there would be a gradual uplifting of the people we desire to reach.¹⁶

As for the OIA, led by Commissioner John D. C. Atkins, it offered no support because part of Bacone's philosophy stood in direct contrast to that of the OIA. The OIA's philosophy was to remove young Indian students as far as possible from their home environments so that the parents would have absolutely no influence. Owing to this policy, Atkins supported at least four Indian students who attended the following eastern postsecondary institutions: Howard University in Washington, DC; the University of Pennsylvania; Wayland Seminary in Virginia; and the Women's Medical College in Pennsylvania.¹⁷ All four students were from far western Indian reservations and, of course, far removed from their home environments. Indian University received no OIA support because it was located in Indian country, and its students were too close to home. Even more, its president wanted Indian students to keep in close contact with parents. On the other hand, Atkins did favor Bacone's idea of the students' Christian influence because he wanted Indian students to serve as "civilizing" agents or role models who could erode the influence of traditional tribal ways on the reservations.¹⁸

Indian University was more than a four-year university, for it also offered students a lower-level education to prepare them for a regular college education. The university, with its mission to serve all Indian students of Indian Territory, established five feeder schools throughout Indian Territory in Anadarko, Atoka, Lone Wolf, Sasakwa, and Tahlequah. Little is known about four of these schools, but the one at Tahlequah, which was the original university campus from 1880 to 1884, became a successful operation and allowed a sizable number of Cherokee students to pursue a higher education at Indian University. Of the twelve students who earned AB degrees in the decade of the 1880s, ten of them were Cherokees, with one Ottawa and one white.

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There were no Creek graduates the first decade even though the university was located within Creek country.¹⁹

The university's Indian graduates went on to serve their own communities in a number of ways. Joseph M. Thomas (Cherokee), the first of two graduates in 1883, later pursued a medical career and became a physician to Indian students attending Cherokee schools within the Cherokee Nation. Bascom P. Rasmus (Cherokee) of the class of 1884 became a lawyer with his office in Tahlequah. Class of 1886 graduate Frank J. Boudinot (Cherokee) became active in the political affairs of the Cherokees for a number of years. He first served as the official secretary to Chief D. W. Bushyhead, then as clerk in the Cherokee Supreme Court, and later as an assistant editor of the *Cherokee Advocate*, the nation's official newspaper. He then edited his own newspaper named the *Tahlequah Capital*. After graduating from Michigan State University Law School in 1896, Boudinot became a well-known practicing attorney within the Cherokee Nation. Okla Spradling (Cherokee) from the class of 1895 became a school teacher at the Cherokee Female Seminary. In the end, many or perhaps most of the graduates became involved in secular pursuits and did not become preachers as Bacone first envisioned in 1880.²⁰

Even those Indian students who did not graduate also became well-known and visible figures within Indian Territory. One individual was Alexander Posey (Creek) who attended the university for five years from 1889 to 1894 before withdrawing because he felt the campus was too strict and did not help him develop a "free-thinking" disposition. After leaving campus he became deeply involved in Creek Nation affairs, served as an elected member of the House of Warriors, and then as superintendent of public instruction for the Creek Nation. Posey firmly believed that the future of American Indian people was to accept US citizenship and become private landowners like white Americans. For this reason he favored the work of the Dawes Commission, a federal body created in 1893 to enroll Indian Territory Indians and then to issue them small land allotments to become American-style subsistence farmers. Posey became a field representative for the commission, leading some Creeks to view him as a traitor since the tribe rejected the subdivision of native land and wanted to possess it communally or as a tribe.²¹

Although Indian University was supposed to be an all-Indian university, it actually ended up being an integrated Indian and white campus because of the sizable number of white students who enrolled. Increased white immigration into Indian Territory, especially in the 1890s and early 1900s when the United States began to erode the ter-

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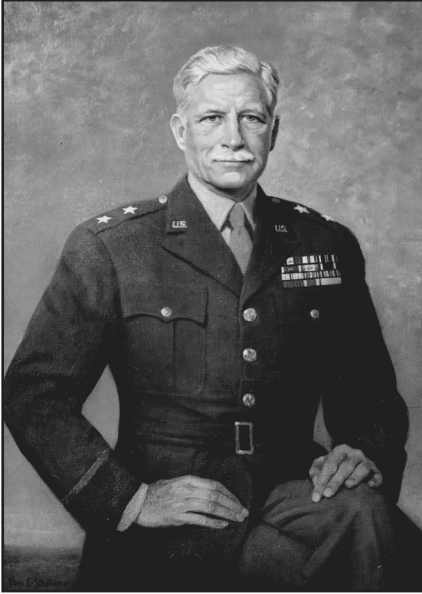
Alexander Posey (Creek) attended Indian University for five years from 1889 to 1894 (4213, Frederick S. Barde Collection, OHS Research Division).



ritory and open it up to white settlement, leading to a surge in white enrollment. There were only six thousand whites in Indian Territory in 1880. That number increased to two hundred thousand by 1894. The increased white population became visible even on the Indian University campus. In 1907, the last year that Indian Territory existed, Indian University had a total of 155 students, of which 92 were white and only 63 Indian. Because of the growing white population, the largest number of graduates of Indian University from 1880 to 1907 were white. Of the forty-three graduates who earned AB degrees in the twenty-seven year period, twenty-two were white, fifteen were Cherokee, four were Creek, one Ottawa, and one Choctaw. It must be emphasized, however, that Indian University was almost all Indian in the 1880s during its first decade of existence. As indicated previously, only one white student had graduated before 1890.²²

Interestingly, the ten individuals who earned AB degrees from 1901 to 1907 were all white. One of the non-Indians was Patrick Hurley, class of 1905, who later served as attorney for the Oklahoma Choctaws from 1911 to 1917 and then became the secretary of war under President Herbert Hoover from 1929 to 1933. There were at least three reasons why Indian University did not graduate Indian students by the first decade of the twentieth century and why fewer enrolled in the university. One big factor was competition from newer colleges and universities. As will be discussed shortly, the Presbyterian

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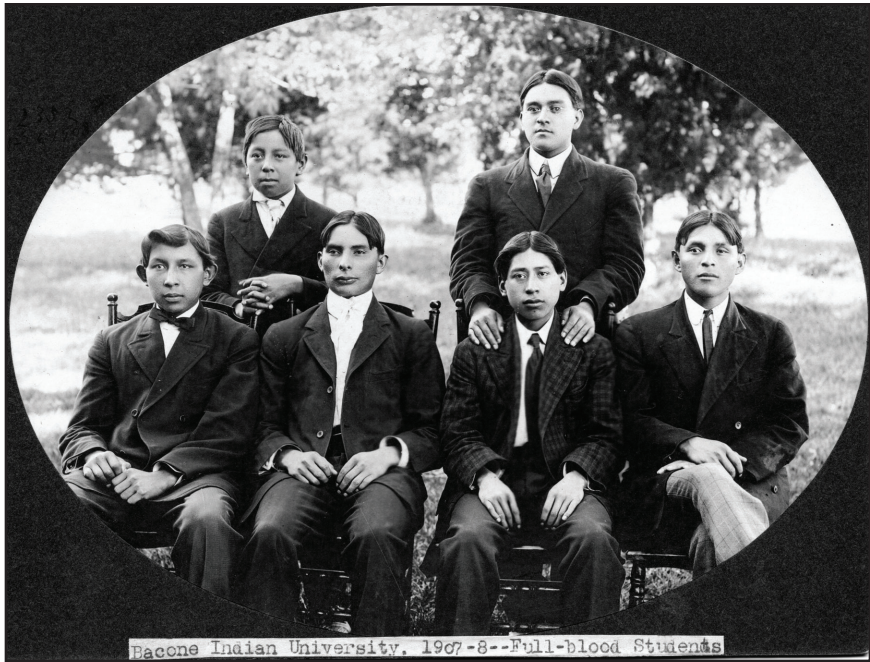


Patrick Hurley, a non-Indian graduate in the Class of 1905 at Indian University. Original portrait of Maj. Gen. Patrick J. Hurley, by New York City artist Thomas E. Stephens, presented to the board of the Oklahoma Historical Society in April 1945 (2012.201. B0271.0648, Oklahoma Publishing Company Photography Collection, OHS Research Division).

denomination established its own Indian college in Muskogee in 1894, thus invading the domain of Indian University. Additionally, potential Indian students were attracted to other newly established mainstream colleges and universities in the general region. Beginning in 1899 the University of Oklahoma (OU) allowed Indian students of the Five Tribes of eastern Indian Territory, including the Creeks and Cherokees, to attend the university under a free tuition policy. By 1905 OU began to recruit other tribal students from Indian Territory. This recruitment effort proved effective in the long run, for OU enrolled some twenty-eight Indian students by 1914. Of that number, fourteen were Cherokee, which was the tribe that provided Indian University the largest number of Indian students some years earlier. Even the University of Arkansas tried to attract Indian Territory students when it allowed them to attend with free tuition beginning in 1902. It becomes obvious why only white students were earning degrees at Indian University in the opening decade of the twentieth century.²³

But there was another important factor causing the dwindling numbers of Indian students at Indian University in the opening decade of the twentieth century, and that had to do with the destruction of the Indian national governments of Indian Territory with the passage of the Curtis Act of 1898. This act paved the way for the end of the governments of the Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, and Seminole Nations. Each of these tribes had created scholarship programs that

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Full-blood students at Bacone Indian University, 1907–08 (15208, E. N. Collette Collection, OHS Research Division).

existed for much of the nineteenth century following removal to Indian Territory, but all of these scholarship programs ended with the end of the tribal governments in the years between 1898 and 1907 when Indian Territory became part of the state of Oklahoma. The Indian nations, whose internal affairs were taken over by the OIA in the years after 1907, could no longer subsidize the higher education of their students.²⁴ Not until the post-1970 period would most of these tribes once again implement tribal higher education programs.

There was also a third reason for Indian University's low Indian student enrollment in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Before the tribal scholarship programs dissolved, those Indian nations who sponsored students sent them outside of Indian Territory for a higher education. These tribal scholarship programs went by the general name of "Students in the States." The Choctaw Nation sent several of its young men to Roanoke College in Virginia in the 1880s and 1890s. It sent other Choctaw students, both men and women, to Drury College and Baird College, both in Missouri, in the mid and late 1890s.²⁵ Sending Choctaws outside the territory explains why

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only one Choctaw earned an AB degree from Indian University before 1907. In the 1890s the Chickasaw Nation also sent its students outside the territory to a number of postsecondary institutions, including William Jewell College in Missouri, North Texas Female College, and Fort Worth University, also in Texas.²⁶ No Chickasaws graduated from Indian University before 1907. It was primarily the Cherokees and Creeks who sent their students to Indian University on a regular basis.

The elimination of Indian Territory to make way for the state of Oklahoma almost destroyed Indian University itself. To erode the Indian territorial landbase at the turn of the century, the federal government determined that the university could keep only 10 acres of the original 160-acre land grant it had received from the Creek Nation in 1881. This was a policy that applied to all schools within the territory. But the US government soon after reduced that amount to only 5 acres. Later it told the university it could purchase 40 acres of the original 160 acres. Finally, in 1914, Bacone College (or the former Indian University) was allowed to keep 157.12 acres of the original land grant, but only after a lengthy court case.²⁷

One historian, Guy William Logsdon, said it best when he wrote: "As Indian government collapsed, so also did Indian colleges. Only a few maintained their identity."²⁸ Although Logsdon did not mention Indian University, it was one of those Indian colleges that survived the federal government's elimination of Indian Territory as well as the Indian governments. But the university could not maintain itself as a four-year university because of lost financial resources and also the loss of students, especially Indian students. By 1906 there were only six freshmen, four sophomores, two juniors, and one senior in the collegiate division. To survive, the administrators made the decision to eliminate the four-year college program in 1908 but to maintain temporarily the junior and senior years upon the request of some students. Two years later, in 1910, the officials dropped the name Indian University forever and gave the campus a new name, Bacone College. Although called a college, it was actually a high school for a number of years until the campus administrators finally made Bacone College a two-year junior college in 1927.²⁹

In the end, the creation of Indian University partially fulfilled a dream of Principal Chief Samuel Checote, who wanted Indian University in the Creek Nation, for he wanted Indian students to pursue a higher education at home in Indian Territory, and he also wanted Indian women to pursue a higher education. As already mentioned, twenty-one of the forty-three graduates from 1883 to 1907 were American Indians who all came from Indian Territory. These students did

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not have to travel outside the territory for their higher education. Additionally, twenty of the forty-three graduates were women. Seven of them were tribal women: Lydia Sixkiller (Cherokee, 1883), Nannie M. Wilson (Ottawa, 1885), Anna E. Wade (Cherokee, 1888), Etta J. Scrapper (Cherokee, 1891), Okla Spradling (Cherokee, 1895), Lillora L. Morton (Creek, 1897), and Nettie Coleman (Choctaw, 1898). Unlike many mainstream colleges and universities across the nation at the turn of the century, Indian University developed an open door policy regarding the admittance of women.³⁰

In addition to Indian University, other Indian colleges came into existence in Indian Territory in the late nineteenth century, including Henry Kendall College. Established in 1894 by the Presbyterian denomination, this college, also located in Muskogee, was the dream of William Robert King, a Presbyterian minister elected to head the Presbyterian Synod of Indian Territory. Like the Baptists, the Presbyterians also wanted to establish a foothold within Indian country to convert and educate Indians. At the same time, they knew that many white people had settled within the boundaries of Indian Territory. Aware that other denominations had established schools and colleges, and concerned that the Presbyterians might have to send their children outside the territory for a denominational education, King proposed the creation of a Presbyterian-run college that would serve both Indians and whites. This college became Henry Kendall College, created “to give a broad and liberal education to every young man and woman of Indian Territory and Oklahoma who may come,” or to be a mainstream college.³¹

To establish Henry Kendall College, the Presbyterians made sacrifices by closing down some of their lower-level schools in Indian Territory. One of the schools was the Presbyterian School for Indian Girls in Muskogee that served Creek women from 1885 to 1894. Its campus became the Henry Kendall campus. The principal of the girls’ school, Alice Robertson, became professor of history and literature at Henry Kendall as well as an instructor of the Creek language. Additionally, the Presbyterians gave up control of Spencer Academy, which was the Indian high school and college preparatory school of the Choctaw Nation. The Choctaw Nation established this school years earlier in 1844, but due to various factors, the Presbyterian church became involved in operating the school in the late nineteenth century. With the establishment of Henry Kendall, the church returned Spencer to the Choctaws.³²

The Presbyterians also recruited the principal of Spencer, William Caldwell, to be the first president of Henry Kendall College. This hiring was significant, for Caldwell brought several Choctaw students to

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the college campus in the second half of the 1890s. The Choctaws included William Harrison, Oscar Krebbs, Norman Leard, Thomas McDaniel, Benjamin McCurtain, and Gabe Parker. They became some of the first graduates of Henry Kendall. In 1898 the first graduating class had three students, one white and two Choctaws: Benjamin McCurtain and Norman Leard. The second graduation in 1899 had four graduates, two whites and two Choctaws: William Harrison and Gabe Parker. After earning their bachelor's degrees, these Indian graduates returned to their native communities and became important leaders. A good example of this was Gabe Parker, an 1894 graduate of Spencer Academy who followed William Caldwell to Henry Kendall, and after graduating from college returned to the Choctaw Nation to become a teacher at Spencer. He then became principal of Armstrong Academy, a lower-level Choctaw school, from 1900 to 1904. In later life, from 1915 to 1920, Parker became the OIA superintendent of the Union Agency in Muskogee that served the five major tribal groups of eastern Oklahoma.³³

Although Henry Kendall College was supposed to be a mainstream college, both whites and Indians viewed it as an Indian college because of the sizable number of Indians enrolled in the four levels of the campus: the music department, the primary division, the college prep school, and the collegiate division that awarded bachelor's degrees. Additionally, the college was located in Muskogee, which was a major crossroads for Creeks and other Indian residents of Indian Territory. Historian Guy Logsdon wrote that "Henry Kendall College was for Indian Youth," and that it was regarded as an "Indian mission college."³⁴ Because of the Indian presence, many Presbyterian whites, including most members of the Synod of Indian Territory, initially showed little if any interest in the college. One Presbyterian minister, the Reverend Thomas Barrier, stated, "Presbyterians of Oklahoma will never to any extent send their children to Muskogee to college."³⁵ He gave two reasons why, one being poor transportation and the other the "Indian element." Barrier even suggested the creation of another Presbyterian college for whites, but nothing resulted from his idea.³⁶

As time progressed, however, more whites began to send their sons and daughters to the college, especially after 1900. Like what happened at nearby Indian University, the white students quickly outnumbered the Indian students at Henry Kendall. For example, in 1902, there were 144 whites to only 47 Indians. In the mid-1890s, the population was roughly equally divided between whites and Indians, with the Indian graduates slightly outnumbering the whites. This ratio changed by the first decade of the twentieth century.³⁷

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Henry Kendall College in Tulsa (18827.151, Albertype Collection, OHS Research Division).

Unlike Indian University, Henry Kendall College did not receive a land grant from the Creek Nation. Instead the college existed illegally on Creek land during its early years. But in a strange twist of events, the college received a legalized landbase owing to the federal government's policy to dissolve Indian Territory. Along with other schools, the government gave the college ten acres in 1899. On top of this, one Creek leader, Pleasant Porter, gave the college an additional seventeen acres, and the college ended up with an official twenty-seven-acre campus by 1904.³⁸

In the first decade of the twentieth century, some officials at Henry Kendall College became involved in the effort on the part of some American Indians to make Indian Territory into the Indian state of Sequoyah. This movement peaked in 1905 when many Indian delegates held a large convention in Muskogee in a last effort to prevent Indian Territory from being combined with Oklahoma Territory. The participants asked that Congress create the state of Sequoyah which would have the same status as other states. A. Grant Evans, the new college president, joined forces with Gabe Parker and other supporters of the movement, asking that the schools of Indian Territory become the public schools of the proposed state. By making this suggestion, Evans wanted Henry Kendall College to become the official state university of Sequoyah. This effort, however, failed, for the federal government had

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no plans to create Sequoyah. Instead, it was determined to combine the Twin Territories into the state of Oklahoma.³⁹

With the end of Indian Territory and creation of Oklahoma, Henry Kendall College shifted directions. Its officials, especially the Presbyterian synod that earlier did not favor the college, wanted the college to serve the white population of Oklahoma. Certainly, the synod had no interest in an Indian college. To solidify white control, the officials closed down the college in Muskogee and reestablished it in Tulsa, a community northwest of Muskogee. As an incentive for the move, the white citizens of Tulsa gave the college twenty acres of land and \$100,000 for campus buildings. The college officials sold the twenty-seven acres in Muskogee after the move.⁴⁰

The Creeks and other people of Muskogee were angry after becoming aware of the loss of the college. In fact, Creek leader Pleasant Porter became so angry that he took the Presbyterian Church to court in 1907 and argued that the officials of Henry Kendall College had no right to sell the twenty-seven-acre campus site. Porter maintained that the land was actually Creek land and should be given to the Creeks. But the court ruled in favor of the church.⁴¹

With its establishment in Tulsa, Henry Kendall College became a white college, although some Indians enrolled on occasion. In the years after 1907 the college officials made some meager efforts to encourage Indian participation. In 1915 the administration established the Committee on Indian Aid to convince Indians to support the college owing to the original purchase of the college. Nothing resulted. Some years later, Presbyterian synod officials wanted a campus facility called the Indian Historical Museum and Library to be built. Again, nothing resulted. Henry Kendall College thus lost its status as an Indian college, and it officially became the University of Tulsa in 1920.⁴² The university still exists today, but not many remember the earlier Indian history of the original campus.

Three other small colleges that served Indian students blossomed in the late nineteenth century in Indian Territory. One was Willie Halsell College, established in Vinita within the boundaries of the Cherokee Nation in 1888. It was a mainstream college serving both Indians and whites. The Cherokee national government donated 160 acres of land to the college under its surrender treaty of 1866 (the Cherokee treaty of 1866 specified that land would be donated to schools in the future). At least two well-known Cherokees attended the college, Will Rogers and John Oskison. Rogers became one of Oklahoma's best-known public figures in the early twentieth century, and Oskison became a noted writer and journalist after earning a bachelor's degree from Leland

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A. Grant Evans, president of Henry Kendall College in Muskogee and as the college moved to Tulsa in 1907 (15340, Joseph Thoburn Collection, OHS Research Division).



Stanford Junior College (today's Stanford University) in 1898. His philosophy was almost identical to that of Alexander Posey's, for Oskison maintained that Indians must be integrated into society and work on their farms. But at the same time, he accepted his Indian identity publicly. Like both Indian University and Henry Kendall, more white students ended up at Willie Halsell than Indian. In 1905 the campus had 122 white students but only 87 Indian students. The college closed in 1908 because it could not compete against rapidly growing mainstream colleges and universities in the new state of Oklahoma.⁴³

The second of these smaller colleges was El Meta Bond College, established in 1894 in Minco within the boundaries of the Chickasaw Nation. Its founder and chief administrator was Meta Chestnutt, who was successful in securing funds from both the federal government and the Chickasaw Nation to run her college. At the turn of the century, she traveled to Washington, DC, and met with various congressmen and OIA officials, resulting in the acquisition of some federal dollars to help run the college. Additionally, in 1903 she convinced the Chickasaw National Council, before it dissolved itself under the terms of the Curtis Act, to channel Chickasaw higher education funds to El Meta

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W. E. Halsell residence in Vinita, pre-1910. Photo by J. M. B. Fowler (2584, W. P. Campbell Collection, OHS Research Division).

Bond College for the benefit of Chickasaw students. Unlike the other colleges, El Meta Bond remained an all-Indian college serving primarily Chickasaw students. But the Indian enrollments always remained low: fifty-seven students in 1900, thirty-five in 1906, and twenty-three in 1914. In 1920 Meta Chestnutt Sager (her married name) closed the college forever due to her poor health. She made no effort to pass the college mantle to another person.⁴⁴ Perhaps she realized that the college could not survive in a state where the large, mainstream, post-secondary institutions had stolen the show.

Another small Indian college was Hargrove College, established by Methodist missionaries in Ardmore, Chickasaw Nation, in 1896. To support the college, the Chickasaw national government chartered it and sent a good number of its students there. In 1902 the Chickasaw government negotiated a contract with the college to fund between thirty and forty tribal students. But like the other small Indian denominational colleges in Indian Territory, more white students ended up in Hargrove than Indian students. In 1907 the college enrolled 132 whites but only 97 Indians. Like the other colleges, Hargrove also became a victim of changing times with the establishment of Oklahoma. In 1914 its officials closed it down, and the campus became Carter Seminary, a lower-level school for Chickasaw women.⁴⁵

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El Meta Bond College in Minco, Oklahoma (23196.42, Meta Chestnutt Sager Collection, OHS Research Division).

The public thus witnessed the rise and fall of Indian colleges after the collapse of Indian Territory in 1907. These small colleges were not the only victims of the elimination of the territory, for most tribal schools also disappeared. When Spencer Academy burned down in 1900, the Choctaw Nation made no effort to rebuild it, for it anticipated the end of its separate nationhood status. Three years later, in 1903, the Choctaw government abolished its position of superintendent of public instruction, a manifestation that the Choctaw-controlled school system had come to an end.⁴⁶ As for the male and female seminaries of the Cherokee Nation, they were purchased by the state of Oklahoma with the end of Indian Territory and then closed down in 1909. The female seminary became the campus of today's Northeastern State University, which had one of the highest Indian student enrollments in the nation in the 1990s.⁴⁷

What kind of assessment can be made about these small denominational colleges (with the exception of El Meta Bond, which was not affiliated with a denomination) before most of them disappeared? Some

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Meta Chestnutt, founder of El Meta Bond College in Minco, c. 1930 (23196.27, Meta Chestnutt Sager Collection, OHS Research Division).

individuals, both Indian and non-Indian, criticized them in the 1890s because they felt the Indians of Indian Territory were receiving too much missionary education. What Indians needed more, they argued, was a secular education to keep up with the white population. To a certain extent, there is some truth to this statement. In the case of some Indian graduates of the colleges, they developed a mindset of cooperating with the objectives of the missionaries who worked in close conjunction with federal officials. Thus, a certain percentage of graduates ended up supporting various government policies, including citizenship for Indians and the allotment of tribally held land, which led to the end of Indian Territory. These graduates did not oppose federal initiatives, but simply went along with government paternalism. On the other hand, some graduates of the colleges did stand up for Indian sovereignty. One of these was Gabe Parker, who supported the movement to create the state of Sequoyah in 1905. Other graduates, including Frank Boudinot, spent their lives defending the interests of Indians in the new state of Oklahoma. In short, the graduates took different paths in their adult lives.⁴⁸

What can be said about the missionaries who created these small Indian colleges is that they firmly believed in the intelligence of Indians and they favored a college-level education for them. This was something the federal government in general did not support for Ameri-

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can Indians across the nation in the same time period. Between 1879 and 1900 the OIA established numerous federally operated schools: 147 reservation day schools, 81 reservation boarding schools, and 25 large, off-reservation boarding schools. All of these schools, established to assimilate and Americanize young Indians, provided the students the rudiments of education, including basic math and the English language. The most advanced schools, or the off-reservation boarding schools, which included the Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania and Haskell Institute in Kansas, emphasized an industrial/vocational kind of education equivalent to an eighth-grade education.⁴⁹ The OIA's school system, which focused on a lower-level education, was the opposite of the Indian missionary colleges that existed in Indian Territory during the same years.

On the other hand, there were some rare federal officials who did favor a collegiate-level education for Indian students in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Two commissioners of the OIA, John D. C. Atkins (1885–89) and Thomas J. Morgan (1889–93), both favored some Indian students pursuing a higher education after leaving the OIA boarding schools. Atkins secured government funds to support four students and Morgan twenty-four students in the early 1890s to attend mainstream American colleges and universities.⁵⁰

As for Commissioner Morgan, he went further by wanting the establishment of Indian colleges. His first suggestion in 1892 was to encourage the administrators of the Santee Indian School, a missionary school for American Indians in South Dakota, to make their school into a college so that Indian students could be trained as “teachers and preachers and lawyers and physicians,—giving them that higher training which they cannot get in the government schools.”⁵¹ Morgan also suggested that the federal government could establish its own federally run colleges for Indians. He had in mind the Dawes Act of 1887, which authorized the allotting of reservation land, granting of individual allotments to the Indians, and the selling of any remaining surplus land to potential buyers. Morgan maintained that the proceeds from surplus land sales could be used to establish Indian colleges to benefit Indians in general.⁵²

Morgan's idea of an Indian college went nowhere because most people, including his coworkers in the federal sector, wanted Indians assimilated into the nation. They felt that the establishment of an Indian college only would perpetuate Indianness, something that the federal government did not want. Owing to the notion of assimilation, those whites who considered themselves as “Friends of the Indians” opposed Morgan's proposal.⁵³ At the Tenth Annual Meeting of the Lake Mohonk

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Conference of the Friends of the Indians in 1892, a gathering of white reformers who met to discuss what would be best for Indians, one participant, Alice Robertson, stressed the following:

But why could not the government provide for higher education? It has its West Point . . . why could not some such system be applied to its Indian educational work? . . . I most earnestly wish that a movement might be begun in this direction, not, however, in the establishment and endowment of an institution for the education of Indians exclusively, but rather in the establishment of a fund to be used as scholarships for individuals; not to send young Indians to associate entirely with Indians, 'comparing themselves with themselves,' but scattered here and there, singly, or at most in groups of two or three among your own schools and colleges.⁵⁴

Ironically, Robertson ended up being a professor at Henry Kendall College from 1894 until 1905. But her suggestion carried the day, for the Mohonk participants opposed the formation of an Indian college in 1892 and instead established a small scholarship fund for Indians admitted into mainstream colleges and universities.⁵⁵ The Mohonk participants initiated this action as an alternative to Morgan's proposal of an Indian college.

Within the OIA itself, Morgan faced even heavier opposition from his colleagues. Perhaps his most vocal critic was Captain Richard Pratt, who founded the Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania in 1879 and is credited as the father of the OIA boarding school system. Pratt firmly believed that Indians needed to be assimilated into the larger dominant society, and he coined the well-known phrase "Kill the Indian in him and save the man." He also firmly believed that the vast majority of Native Americans needed to be given the rudiments of education; that is, the three "Rs" combined with a vocational kind of education, or a lower-level education. On occasion, he did maintain that ambitious graduates of the boarding schools should pursue a higher education, but only in mainstream colleges and universities.⁵⁶

Because of his belief in the assimilation of Indians, Pratt opposed anyone, including Commissioner Morgan, who suggested the establishment of an Indian college. This kind of institution, he maintained, would only perpetuate Indianness among Indian students since they would still be grouped together as Indians. If Indians wanted a higher education, Pratt asserted, they needed to be scattered about the nation as individuals, not as Indians. Pratt's position became clear in 1897 when he made the following statement:

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Considerable pressure has been placed upon me at different times by officials and others interested to give this school [Carlisle] the character of an Indian college or institution for the higher education of Indian youth. These propositions I have always opposed, believing such a course to be antagonistic to the best interests of the Indians and the Government. What the Indians need is not Indian schools but an entrance into the affairs of the nation and the opportunity to utilize the public and other schools already established where race is not a qualification. Exclusive race schools narrow and dwarf, and no better means of perpetuating tribalism and Indianism can be inaugurated than a system of schools holding the Indians together. The association and competition in the public schools broaden the break up of tribalism and lead out into the general competition and life of the nation.⁵⁷

Because of the opposition, the OIA did not establish any kind of college for Indians in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Thus, a big difference between missionary groups and the federal government at the turn of the century can be observed, with the former firmly believing that Indians needed a higher education. In the end, it was the federal government that indirectly dissolved the existing Indian colleges of Indian Territory with the elimination of that territory.

In conclusion, various American Indian students benefited from a college education introduced by missionary groups in the late nineteenth century. Indian leaders came to view higher education as an important development because it helped train and educate leaders who could help sustain the Indian tribal governments in Indian Territory. This explains why Creek leader Samuel Checote favored the creation of Indian University within the borders of Creek country. Several of the graduates of the small Indian colleges became leaders as adults, including Gabe Parker. Although the Indians favored the colleges, they never ran them. Instead, the missionary groups, who had the financial resources and knowledge of how to run postsecondary institutions, founded and operated the colleges. Thus, none of the Indian colleges in Indian Territory in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were tribally-controlled. With the end of Indian Territory, most of the colleges closed.

Endnotes

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² Angie Debo, *The Rise and Fall of the Choctaw Republic* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1934, repr. 1961). As for the phrase "rise and fall," it is borrowed from historian Angie Debo who wrote a book entitled *The Rise and Fall of the Choctaw Republic* to describe the Choctaw Nation of Indian Territory, which possessed a nineteenth-century national republic that was dissolved by the United States in the opening decade of the twentieth century.

³ *First Annual Catalogue, Indian University, Tahlequah, Indian Territory, 1880–81* (New Bedford, MA: Knight and Howland Printers, 1881), 14.

⁴ "Literary and Theological University for the Indians," *Muskogee (OK) Indian Journal*, April 10, 1879, 4.

⁵ *Ibid.*; Bode, "The Origins and Development of Bacone College," 16–17.

⁶ "The Beginnings of Bacone College," 1, Glenn Jordan Papers, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK (hereafter cited as WHC, OU; Williams and Meredith, *Bacone Indian University*, 10–11.

⁷ Williams and Meredith, *Bacone Indian University*, 11; Bode, "The Origins and Development of Bacone College," 20–21; "Treaty between the United States of America and the Creek Nation of Indians," August 11, 1866, in *The US Statutes at Large* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1868): 790; "Concerning title to lands at Indian University," February 7, 1899, Bacone College Records, American Baptist Historical Society, Rochester, New York.

⁸ Williams and Meredith, *Bacone Indian University*, 11; Bode, "The Origins and Development of Bacone College," 21–22; Mary Jane Warde, *George Washington Grayson and the Creek Nation, 1843–1920* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), 106.

⁹ *Cherokee Advocate*, November 29, 1873, 4; William Unrau and H. Craig Miner, *Tribal Disposition and the Ottawa Indian University Fraud* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985).

¹⁰ Samuel Checote to Members of the National Council, October 27, 1881, Records of the Creek Nation, Doc 36083, CRN 43, Oklahoma Historical Society Research Division, Oklahoma City, OK (hereafter cited as OHS).

¹¹ Myra Alexander-Starr, "Youth-In-The-States: The Mvskoke Indian Nation's Nineteenth Century Higher Education Program" (PhD diss., Ohio State University, 2000), 113, 127; Warde, *George Washington Grayson*, 46–49, 132; Bode, "The Origins and Development of Bacone College," 22–23; Williams and Meredith, *Bacone Indian University*, 11–12; "Indian University (Bacone College)," folder 49, box 236, E. E. Dale Papers, WHC, OU.

¹² Theodore F. Brewer to Samuel Checote, June 10, 1881, Creek School Miscellaneous File, Records of the Creek Nation, Indian Archives, OHS; Warde, *George Washington Grayson*, 132, 190; Bode, "The Origins and Development of Bacone College," 11, 23; Williams and Meredith, *Bacone Indian University*, 12; "The Beginnings of Bacone College," 1.

¹³ "An Act Providing for the Founding of an Indian University for the Indian Territory," November 10, 1881, Glenn Jordan Papers, WHC, OU; Williams and Meredith, *Bacone Indian University*, 12, 14.

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¹⁴ Bode, "The Origins and Development of Bacone College," 20, 29.

¹⁵ A. C. Bacone, letter published in the *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs* (hereafter cited as ARCIA), July 16, 1885 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1885), reproduced in Letters Received, 16314-1885, record group 75, National Archives and Records Administration I, Washington, DC.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ ARCIA, 1886 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1886), lxxxiv.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Hoig, "A History of the Development of Institutions of Higher Education in Oklahoma," 54; *Baconian* 2 (May 1908): 46.

²⁰ Williams and Meredith, *Bacone Indian University*, 23-24; Daniel F. Littlefield Jr. and James W. Parins, *A Bibliography of Native American Writers, 1772-1924: A Supplement* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1985), 179.

²¹ Daniel F. Littlefield Jr., *Alex Posey: Creek Poet, Journalist, and Humorist* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 41-56, 187-204.

²² Joe C. Jackson, "The History of Education in Eastern Oklahoma from 1898 to 1915" (DE diss., University of Oklahoma, 1950), 187; Hoig, "A History of the Development of Institutions of Higher Education in Oklahoma," 51; *Baconian* 11 (May 1908): 46.

²³ Williams and Meredith, *Bacone Indian University*, 33-34; Bode, "The Origins and Development of Bacone College," 49; *Baconian* 11 (May 1908): 46; "University of Oklahoma," and "A New Move," *Purcell (OK) Register*, August 11, 1899, 1; *Cherokee Messenger* (Tahlequah, OK), August 11, 1905, 2; "Indians of State school organize," *Daily Oklahoman* (Oklahoma City, OK), April 5, 1914, B-2; "Territory Students," *Indian Chieftain* (Vinita, OK), August 28, 1902.

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²⁵ "Choctaw Graduates," *Roanoke Collegian* 19 (June-July 1893): 159-60; George Wright, US Indian inspector for Indian Territory, to S. H. Woods, auditor, Choctaw Nation, April 15, 1899, CTN 87-2, OHS.

²⁶ Caroline Leola Davis, "The History of the schools and the educational development in the Chickasaw Nation" (MA thesis, University of Oklahoma, 1935), 95.

²⁷ Williams and Meredith, *Bacone Indian University*, 37-38; Bode, "The Origins and Development of Bacone College," 42-43.

²⁸ Logsdon, *The University of Tulsa*, 68.

²⁹ Williams and Meredith, *Bacone Indian University*, 45; Bode, "The Origins and Development of Bacone College," 52.

³⁰ *Baconian* 11 (May 1908), 46.

³¹ Logsdon, *The University of Tulsa*, 31, 35, 37; William Robert King to Hall, October 1, 1928, William R. King Papers, University Archives, University of Tulsa, Tulsa, OK.

³² Logsdon, *The University of Tulsa*, 31, 34, 37-38; W. David Baird, "Spencer Academy, Choctaw Nation, 1842-1900," 37.

³³ Logsdon, *The University of Tulsa*, 35-36, 53, 61; "Gabe E. Parker, Father and Son Funerals Pend," *Daily Oklahoman*, May 10, 1953, 16A.

³⁴ Logsdon, *The University of Tulsa*, 39-40.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 69.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Jackson, "The History of Education in Eastern Oklahoma," 187.

³⁸ Logsdon, *The University of Tulsa*, 52-53.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 70-71.

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⁴⁰ Ibid., 89, 94, 96.

⁴¹ "Fraud charged against the Presbyterian National Board of Home Missions," *Daily Oklahoman*, May 25, 1907, 1; Logsdon, 77; "Creek Nation sues for Kendall site," *Muskogee (OK) Times-Democrat*, May 25, 1907, 3.

⁴² Logsdon, *The University of Tulsa*, 120, 162.

⁴³ Hoig, "A History of the Development of Institutions of Higher Education in Oklahoma," 55–57; Jackson, "The History of Education in Eastern Oklahoma," 105–06; Gretchen Lyn Ronnow, "John Milton Oskison: Native American Modernist" (PhD diss., University of Oklahoma, 1993), 1, 16–17, 113; Leonard Franklin George, "The Origin, Development, Discontinuation, and Influence on Oklahoma Education of the 'Old Willie Halsell College,' Craig County, Vinita, Oklahoma" (MS thesis, Oklahoma A & M College, 1939), 8.

⁴⁴ Hoig, "A History of the Development of Institutions of Higher Education in Oklahoma," 60; Meta Chestnutt Sager to Cato Sells, January 15, 1914, CCF, 18221-14-Chickasaw-803, record group 75, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC; "Only Memory of Christian College is left," *Daily Oklahoman*, September 9, 1928, C-7.

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⁴⁸ *Muskogee (OK) Phoenix*, August 18, 1892, 4; Littlefield, *Alex Posey*, 41–56, 187–204; Ronnow, "John Milton Oskison: Native American Modernist," 124.

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⁵² Richard Pratt to H. M. Teller, March 5, 1906, Richard Pratt Papers, MSS, S-1174, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, CT.

⁵³ For a good source on the so-called Friends of the Indians, see William T. Hagan, *The Indian Rights Association: The Herbert Walsh Years, 1882–1904* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1985).

⁵⁴ *Proceedings of the Tenth Annual Meeting, 1892*, 55–56.

⁵⁵ *Twenty-Fourth Annual Report of the Board of Indian Commissioners, 1892* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1893), 6.

⁵⁶ Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 52.

⁵⁷ *ARCIA*, 1897 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1897), 372–73.