

DR. AND MRS. RICHARD MOORE CRAIN

*By Carolyn Thomas Foreman**

The attention of the author in her travels around the world was frequently centered upon missionary families returning to their stations in the far interior of some country after a short vacation in the United States. The hardships and loneliness of these brave souls brought to mind days in the past when the Indian Territory was a wild frontier, distant from the comforts of civilization; when great suffering was experienced by the pioneer missionaries and teachers.

The Jesuits, first missionaries among the Indian tribes in western United States, were shortly followed by scholarly New England teachers, many of whom had first braved the wilds among the Indians in the southeastern part of our country. Some of these people followed their Indian charges west to the frontier in what is now Oklahoma, and fought a losing fight with disease and hardships for many years. Some of them lost husbands, others wives. One missionary family among the Osages counted five small graves in a rocky burying ground before their services were ended.

A young woman who was brought to the Indian country from North Carolina by her parents, after a sojourn in Arkansas, spent the remainder of her life in this state. She was Miss Anna Rebecca Neal who started her career as a teacher not knowing a word of the language spoken by her pupils. They were equally ignorant of English, but she was ingenious enough to arouse their interest by bringing a crate of gingerbread cakes to the little school and she gave half a cake to each pupil for every day's attendance. Her salary depended upon the number of her students.

Miss Neal lived in the home of Mrs. Rachel Reed, a full blood Creek who came west at the time of the Creek removal. She occupied a small log house near the main dwelling and there was a fireplace where she cooked her food. When Miss Neal questioned Mrs. Reed about her favorite food she was informed: "Sofky you eat um, no smell um." She remained with this kindly Indian woman three years and soon learned enough of the Creek language to understand her pupils.

On one occasion Miss Neal was obliged to spend the night in a primitive hotel in Okmulgee. The next morning at breakfast a

* Through the courtesy and assistance of Mrs. Agnes Crain Moore, the daughter of Dr. and Mrs. Richard Moore Crain, the author presents this sketch of Dr. Crain's life in the Indian Territory. Acknowledgement is also made to Mrs. Reila Looney, Archivist in the Oklahoma Historical Society, for kind co-operation in furnishing data from the Society's collections.

young man offered to drive her to Muskogee. Mr. Clarence W. Turner heard the invitation and when Miss Neal accepted he had his team hitched to his buggy and followed the young people the forty miles to Muskogee as he had no confidence in the proper behavior of the young man. Mrs. Crain never forgot this kindness although she did not realize her danger at the time she took the all day trip.

Miss Neal's back was injured when she was thrown from her horse on her way to school one day and she was attended by a young physician, Dr. Richard M. Crain, who promptly fell in love with his patient. They were married September 4, 1878 by the Reverend Theodore F. Brewer who later became superintendent of Harrell Institute in Muskogee.¹

Dr. Crain, a native of Hogestown Cumberland County, Pennsylvania, was born October 20, 1844. Some of his papers are preserved by his daughter, Mrs. Thomas H. Moore of Muskogee, all of these documents speaking in the highest terms of the young man. One recommendation given June 1, 1870, was from the citizens of Cumberland County, Pennsylvania, who had known Richard Crain from his childhood, stating that "his moral character was good, his habits and conduct praiseworthy, and that he had been practicing medicine successfully for the past three years." The signers were Geo. H. Bucher, Wm. S. Parker, James Anderson and Dr. J. B. Herring.

Young Crain attended Bellevue Hospital Medical College in New York and his study there is evidenced by other documents. Several catalogues among Dr. Crain's papers furnish interesting facts regarding Bellevue Hospital Medical College:

Requirements for graduation are: twenty-one years of age; three years pupillage with a regular physician in good standing, inclusive of the time of attendance at medical lectures; attendance on two full courses of lectures, the last being in this College; proper testimonials of character; an acceptable thesis in handwriting of the candidate; and a satisfactory examination in each of the departments of instruction. 5 professors of surgery; 3 Departments of Obstetrics.

Dr. J. Crain is shown as the preceptor of Dr. Richard M. Crain. One catalogue listed names of students from Canada, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward's Island, Cuba and England. The majority were from the United States. There were no students from the Indian Territory but there were six from Missouri and one from Kansas.

Data from New York University, Bellevue Medical Center, New York, show that Dr. Crain's essay entitled *Infantile Convulsions*, in

¹The Creek Council granted permission for a school and Harrell International Institute, named in honor of the Rev. John Harrell, and established on November 2, 1881 by the Methodists. This well patronized institution, managed by Mr. and Mrs. Brewer, prospered until May 26, 1896. The three story brick building was burned September 20, 1899 (Grant Fotsman, *Muskogee the Biography of an Old-Home Town* [Norman, 1943], pp. 33-55.).

his own handwriting, is on file in Volume 37, pages 250 to 277, "Bellevue Medical College Theses."²

There were twenty-four graduates listed in 1867, and "Richard More (sic) Crain" of Pennsylvania was No. 26 among the names of his class, given in alphabetical order. It is interesting to note that Daniel Franklin Coolidge of Vermont was a member of this class. Tickets for Lectures cost \$140.00. Separate tickets for Diseases of the Mind and Nervous System were \$10.00. Fee for dissecting \$10.00, and Graduating Fee \$30.00.

In addition to his diploma from Bellevue Hospital Dr. Crain received the following certificate from the "Chemical Laboratory of the Bellevue Medical College, New York":³

This is to Certify, That Richard M. Crain has attended a Course of Instruction in Medical and Toxicological Chemistry.

Has performed the necessary Analytical Manipulations in the Laboratory, and has passed a satisfactory examination in these departments.

In Testimony Whereof, the Seal of the Laboratory is herewith affixed this Twenty seventh day of January A. D. 1867.

Although it can not be confirmed by Bellevue College, it is probable that Dr. Crain was the first graduate of this medical school to practise in Indian Territory. Most of the early practitioners were the missionaries from New England or some of the southern states, who were likely trained near their homes.

Dr. Crain was given a "Certificate of Private Instruction in Auscultation and Percussion by Austin Flint, M. D." This document states: "I certify, that Richard M. Crain has attended one of my Courses of Private Instruction in Auscultation and Percussion; a Course consisting of Twenty Lessons in the Wards of Bellevue Hospital, New York, January 11, 1867."

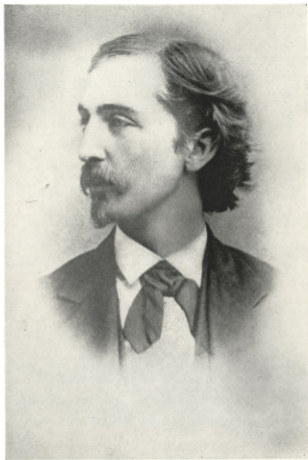
A third certificate issued to Dr. Crain and signed by Alex. B. Mott, M. D., dated from New York, February 18, 1867, states that young Crain "attended my Lectures on Surgery at the Bellevue Hospital Medical College New York during the Session 1866, and 67. Also my private examinations on the various branches of Medicine."

²Sincere thanks are due to Helen Bayne of the Research Library of Bellevue Medical Center for her kindness in furnishing information concerning Dr. Crain.

³In a list of the faculty members Dr. Crain wrote the city address of R. Ogden Doremus, M.D., Professor of Chemistry and Toxicology, 70 Union Place; and A. W. Wilkinson, M.D., Assistant to Chair of Chemistry and Toxicology.

At that time George F. Twyman, Esq., was president of the Board of Trustees which also included Robert S. Hoag, Esq., treasurer; four commissioners of Public Charities and Correction; Matthew T. Brennan, Comptroller of New York; Most Rev. Archbishop McCloskey, John J. Astor and ten other prominent citizens of New York.

Among Dr. Crain's papers is his diploma of graduation from Bellevue Medical College in Latin, showing his graduation March 1, 1867, and signed by thirteen professors and six members of the Executive Board.



(From original photo, courtesy of Mr. Whitfield Crain)

DR. RICHARD MOORE CRAIN

After graduation Dr. Crain practised medicine with his father, Dr. Joseph Crain, in Hogestown. He married Miss Mary Anderson and they became parents of two children, Anderson and Elizabeth. After the death of his wife Dr. Crain removed to the West to join his elder brother, Alexander Wills Crain, then in the Seminole Nation. The sight of Indian children running about without a stitch of clothing was a shock to the young doctor, and he advised clothing them with belts as youngsters were in India.

The following letter was addressed to Governor Cyrus Harris of the Chickasaw Nation, by the United States Indian Agent Breiner at the Seminole Agency, the latter himself a physician:

Seminole Agency, I. T.

June 30, 1874

To His Excellency, Gov. Harris.

Sir: It affords me pleasure to recommend to your favor the bearer of this, Dr. Richd. M. Crain and his brother Alex W. Crain, of Harrisburgh, Pa. I have been intimately acquainted with them for the last year. They have been here in the capacity of teachers, the former in the Seminole and the latter in the Creek Nation, and both have conducted themselves in a manner which has met with my entire approval.

They propose to go into your country, the Dr. as a practitioner of Medicine, and his brother as clerk and student of Medicine; and anything you can do for them in their profession will be kindly appreciated.

I will say that I have examined the Dr.'s Diploma and find that he had received a regular Medical Education, has had several years practice, and is specially prepared for the practice of Surgery.

I have the honor to be

Very respectfully

Your Obt. Servant

Henry Breiner M. D.

U. S. Indian Agent.⁴

After Dr. Crain and Miss Neal were married they began house-keeping in the home of Elisha J. Brown in Wewoka, Seminole Nation. The Browns needed a large house as they were the parents of three sons and two daughters. Lilley, the elder daughter was named for the Reverend and Mrs. John Lilley, noted missionaries in the Seminole Nation. The younger girl was called Maynee which was Mrs. Lilley's given name. Mrs. Maggie Washburn, widow of Henry E. A. Washburn, and a sister of Mrs. Brown, kept a diary in a large ledger and faithfully wrote an account of affairs in it every evening before retiring. Unfortunately this valuable history was lost.

Elisha Brown was a white man and not related to the Seminole family of that name. He was owner of much stock and he had a store in Econtachka. At his home he had constructed a large pit where

⁴ Dr. Henry Breiner took charge of the Seminole Agency at Wewoka December 12, 1870 when he relieved Captain T. A. Baldwin of the United States Army.

he raised many plants which would not thrive in that climate in the open. He was the man who brought the Seminoles back from Kansas after the Civil War.

On July 8, 1880, United States Indian Agent John S. Shorb, wrote from the Sac and Fox Agency to Hon. R. E. Trowbridge, Commissioner of Indian Affairs:⁵

I have the honor to enclose the diploma of Dr. R. M. Crain, whose appointment I herewith forward for approval, and request the return of the diploma.

He is an excellent Physician and Surgeon, and having practiced for sometime in the Territory is well known, and liked by the Indians.

Dr. W. T. Robinson resigned and left for Mineral Springs, Ark., where he hopes to do better than here.

I would be pleased to have your honor give this your early attention, as I have no Physician at Shawnee & Kickapoo now.

By the same mail Agent Shorb sent a "descriptive Statement of proposed changes in Employees at Sac & Fox Agency" In that document he nominated: "Richard M. Crain, white, 36 years of age, married. Birthplace Pennsylvania. Employed Shawneetown. For what tribes Employed: Shawnees & Mexican Kickapoo. Date of Commencing Services: July 20/80. Compensation \$1,000 per annum."⁶

Jacob V. Carter was agent for the Sac and Fox Indians when he wrote Commissioner of Indian Affairs H. Price, November 8, 1882:⁷

Dr. Crain, the Agency Physician for the Mex. Kickapoo and Ab. (Seneca) Shawnee Indians, has for some time past, furnished his own team, and *ford*, for some, while engaged in his public duties as Physician among the above mentioned Indians. In view of these facts as stated above, I respectfully request, that Dr. Crain have the privilege of feeding his team, the coming winter, with the Gov't. horses at Shawneetown.

Agent Carter wrote to Dr. Crain September 2, 1882, introducing Benjamin Miles, Superintendent of West Branch School and asking the physician to examine the children Miles proposed to enroll in the school, and to render him all the assistance he was able.⁸

During 1882, there arose the sensational "grandmother story" told by a Shawnee woman, in an attempt to prevent the Indians from adopting the white man's dress and ways. She declared that

⁵Oklahoma Historical Society, Indian Archives Division, Sac & Fox, Vol. 8, pp. 3 and 4.

⁶*Ibid.*, "Sac & Fox & Shawnee Doctor" file.

⁷*Ibid.*, Sac & Fox Vol. 9, pp. 110, 111.

⁸*Ibid.*, Sac & Fox Vol. 9A, p. 215. Carter reported to the Indian Commissioner in September, 1882 that the Sac and Fox school had been kept open during the greater part of the year, with an average attendance of twenty-three students. "A good degree of interest in schools is manifested, and the prospect for this winter is rather flattering in this direction."

"eternal judgments were to be visited upon the unfortunate heads of each and every Indian" and her prophecy had some influence on the people as well as upon neighboring tribes. Agent Carter reported that "the effect seems to be gradually wearing away, and the prospect is now that the school will again be liberally patronized, and the former interest in civilized pursuits in general be re-established."

The *Report of 1883* contains a letter from William Hurr, missionary to the Sac and Fox Indians, in which he wrote:⁹

Two years ago last March I came to this agency as missionary, and was somewhat discouraged in finding so great opposition to religious work of every character. The former agent was an irreligious man, who had no sympathy whatever with attempts to christianize the Indian. During his stay both civilization and Christianity were greatly hindered. These Indians were thrown back several years in their progress during his administration.

About the time he was removed by the Department another draw back occurred. An old Shawnee woman pretended to have had a vision, in which she was told by the Great Spirit that the Indian should not adopt the ways of the white man, but go back to and continue in the old ways So when one obstacle was removed, the devil threw another in the way. There have been dark days to the mission work among the Sac and Fox Indians. The work has been against a strong current, but now the prospect is brightening. . . .

A contemporary of Dr. Crain at the Sac and Fox Agency, in 1885, was the Shawnee teacher Thomas Wildcat Alford whose story has been so delightfully written by Florence Drake.¹⁰ Agent Taylor stated that the school at Shawneetown, "under the charge of Thomas W. Alford . . . is doing as well as could be expected considering the unsettled state of affairs existing among its patrons."

When Dr. Crain arrived at the Kickapoo Reservation he was astonished to learn that the accepted slogan of those Indians was: "Do not steal on the reservation, but take anything you wish outside." The Doctor's office was adjoining the agency building and one day when an Indian woman came in covered with a big blanket, he tossed the corner aside and discovered that the woman had hidden his small daughter's little doll under it.

A Seminole man told the Doctor that he was blind in one eye and he said: "Tother eye just like dat eye and dat eye just like dat eye." While living at the Kickapoo Reservation the Crains

⁹*Report, Commissioner of Indian Affairs 1883*, pp. 86, 87. In 1883 seven children were removed from the agency school and sent to White's Manual Labor School at Welsh, Indiana.

¹⁰Thomas Wildcat Alford, *Civilization*, as told to Florence Drake (Norman, 1936), pp. 126-33. Mr. Alford was a descendant of Tecumseh, the noted Shawnee chief who was born in Ohio in 1768 and commissioned as brigadier-general in the British Army during the War of 1812. Tecumseh was killed in the Battle of the Thames River, Canada, with American forces in 1813, under the command of General William H. Harrison. The Kickapoo Station where Dr. Crain served as physician was located about five miles east of the present City of Shawnee and near the then Kickapoo Village of wigwags and bark covered lodges, northeast of present McCloud in Pettawatomie County.—Ed.

hung blankets at their windows when it was time to light the lamps so drunken men would not shoot out the lights.

On November 24, 1883, Agent Carter dispatched a letter to Dr. Samuel Coffin, Fairmont, Kansas, stating:¹¹

Esteemed Friend:

Dr. Crain Physician for the Ab. Shawnee and Kickapoo has informed me that he will tender his resignation some time shortly if he should get a position in the Senate Nation; I write to know if the Sen has a position? or if he would like to have the position at Shawneetown at a salary of one thousand Dollars (\$1,000.00) per annum? If he would I would be pleased to have him appointed; please inform me by the earliest opportunity.

Dr. B. B. Fenn, physician for the Sac and Fox Indians had notified Agent Isaac A. Taylor that he would not be an applicant for the position the coming fiscal year as he intended returning to his home in Kansas. Taylor notified the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, John D. C. Atkins on June 26, 1885 that this was a "sickly time" of year in the locality.¹²

I hereby call special attention to the necessity of some one being appointed to be on the ground by the time Mr. Fenn leaves.

In this connection I wish to add in the way of a recommendation that in the event the position of Physician for the Ab. Shawnee and Mex. Kickapoo located at Shawneetown, thirty five miles south of this Agency, is not allowed for the next fiscal year, on account of an insufficient appropriation, that Dr. R. M. Crain who is now filling said position at Shawneetown, be appointed Physician for the Sac & Fox Indians, as by his long experience among Indians and professional ability, he is in every way qualified for the position.

Agent Taylor reported in 1885 a great number of people in the vicinity of the Sac and Fox Agency suffering with malarial diseases and that for this reason the schools would not be filled. The report accounts for the fact that Doctor Crain was relieved of his position on January 14, 1886. He was replaced by Dr. C. A. Peyton, thirty-three years of age and a native of Illinois, who started work at the agency on January 15, 1886, at the same salary which Dr. Crain had been paid.¹³

Three days after Dr. Peyton took charge as physician at the Agency Dr. Crain died. He had not filled out his quarterly returns because of this illness and Agent Neal wrote the department to learn how the matter should be handled.¹⁴

¹¹ Indian Archives, O.H.S., Sac & Fox Vol. II, pp. 105, 106. (The Sac and Fox Agency, established in 1869 about five miles south of the present City of Stroud in Lincoln County was on the Sac and Fox Reservation to which the members of this tribe removed from Kansas and were making their homes by the winter of 1870. Other tribal groups living on neighboring reservations here were placed later under the supervision of the Agent at the Sac and Fox Agency, and included in addition to the Sac and Fox: Absentee Shawnee, "Mexican" Kickapoo, Iowa, Oto, Potawatomi. The villages of these groups or their stations were located in different parts of what are now Lincoln and Potawatomi counties, some of them miles away from the headquarters' office at the Sac and Fox Agency.—Ed.)

¹² *Ibid.*, Sac & Fox Vol. II, pp. 105, 106.

¹³ *Ibid.*, "Sac & Fox & Shawnee—Doctors." Peyton's appointment was approved January 22, 1886.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, Sac & Fox Vol. II, pp. 364-65.

No settlement was made to Dr. Crain's widow when Agent Neal wrote Commissioner Atkins, May 11, 1886. He stated that since Dr. Crain was a white man and did not die in the service he could not make payment "to his wife the amt due him as salary but that it belonged to the Treasury Department to pay the sum due on presentation to that office of the proper letters of administration" Therefore the amount due him for his services \$38.85 was deposited "to the credit of the U. S. Treasury with Asst. Treasurer St. Louis Mo.—April 9, 1886."¹³

Dr. and Mrs. Crain became the parents of twin boys on December 15, 1880. They were born in Shawneetown, and named Richard Moore and Alexander Willis Crain, the latter in honor of Dr. Crain's brother. Both of these babies died in August, 1881. An account in the Sae and Fox sales shop states that \$3.00 was spent for material and making of a coffin for the Crain's little daughter, Ruth, who was a year and a half old. She died the day before her father and was buried in the yard of the house where the Crains lived.

Dr. Crain died January 18, 1886 and the amount charged for making his coffin was \$6.50.¹⁴ On June 3, 1886, Agent Moses Neal wrote the department that when "Dr. Crain and child died—the weather was exceeding cold and disagreeable and situated as we are about 65 miles from the Rail Road it was not possible to get coffins to bury them—therefore I had the Agency Blacksmith to make the said coffins using lumber and etc. belonging to the Agency. Hence the claim against the estate."¹⁵

On the death of her husband Mrs. Crain moved to Muskogee with her three children, the eldest Agnes was only six years old. Addie died in Muskogee as a young girl and Whitehill, named for a distinguished family on his father's side, is still living in Muskogee as a retired Presbyterian minister.

Agnes Crain inherited her parents love for teaching, and upon graduation from Henry Kendall College in Muskogee, was an instructor in the Muskogee High School where she earned a fine reputation. She was the much-loved teacher of two generations of families in the city. Upon her marriage to Mr. Thomas H. Moore, a former citizen of Cane Hill, Arkansas, she continued teaching until her retirement in 1950. Mr. and Mrs. Moore live in a delightful stone house east of Muskogee, surrounded by books, family portraits, flowers and other adjuncts for a comfortable living. Both are deeply interested in the history of their country, and particularly of Oklahoma.

¹³ *Ibid.*, Sae & Fox Vol. 12, pp. 13, 14.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, Sae & Fox Doctors, March 31, 1886.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, Sae & Fox Vol. 12, p. 50. Dr. Crain played the violin and he made a flower garden wherever he lived.