



Miss A. P. Panton

J. H. Leman

THE HON. ALICE M. ROBERTSON

The New England missionary spirit that did so much for the education and advancement of the southern Indians inspired Rev. Samuel Austin Worcester to leave his home with his young bride for the Cherokee Nation in Georgia where they arrived in the autumn of 1825. They took up their work at Brainerd, afterwards locating at New Echota where largely through the efforts of Mr. Worcester the Cherokee people acquired and set up their press that performed prodigies for the education and culture of the members of the tribe. It was while serving here and because of his obstinate devotion to the service in which he was enlisted that the State of Georgia caused him to be arrested, tried and sentenced, and he served a martyrdom in the penitentiary of that state. During this painful period of Cherokee history their newspaper was suppressed, and because of the disturbed conditions in Georgia, Rev. Mr. Worcester was invited to a more useful field in the West.

He arrived at Dwight Mission in May 1835, and immediately began his labors to establish a printing press in the West in connection with his missionary work which was continued at Park Hill. Here developed into young womanhood, his daughter, Ann Eliza, who maintained the traditional missionary spirit of her parents, and taught at the mission school at Park Hill. On April 15, 1850, Ann Eliza was married to Rev. W. S. Robertson, a teacher at Tullahassee Mission School in the Creek Nation on the north side of the Arkansas River, near Muskogee.

At Tullahassee, Mrs. Robertson joined her husband in the responsibilities of the school and for many years was not only a devoted teacher and disciplinarian for the Creek children but contributed much to the welfare and education of the Creeks by her translation of portions of the Scriptures and texts.

It was in this atmosphere that there were born to them among others, two daughters, Ann Augusta and Mary Alice, both of whom in their youth became teachers and workers in the Tullahassee Mission School. They were

still children of about seven and nine years when the breaking out of the Civil War compelled their family to leave, as the loyal Indians were driven out of the country. Upon their return to the devastated Creek Nation, the school property was in a dilapidated condition and much of the labor of former years had to be performed again in order to get the school going and to return it to its former usefulness. During the succeeding years, the daughters taught in the school and upon the death of Mr. Robertson, Ann Augusta who had married Mr. Craig managed the school for a year.

At the age of seventeen Miss Alice entered Elmira College, New York, where she studied history, English and civics, and in 1873 she was employed in the Indian Department in Washington. While there she learned shorthand and took lessons in Domestic Science which in later years she taught the Indian pupils in Tullahassee. From 1880 to 1882 she was employed as secretary to Superintendent R. H. Pratt in the Indian Training School at Carlisle, Pennsylvania. During her service there in 1880 Tullahassee Mission burned and Miss Alice then obtained a leave of absence and went to Washington. There she got permission from the Indian Department to have entered at the Carlisle school twenty-five of the Tullahassee pupils now deprived of a place to continue their studies. She then obtained from Russell Sage and E. D. Worcester transportation for these pupils from Indian Territory to Carlisle.

During the school year of 1882 and 1883, Miss Alice taught a Creek school at Okmulgee and when it was planned to construct Nuyaka Mission School she went East and secured the money from her friends with which to erect this school of which her sister, Ann Augusta, was superintendent for seven years. In 1885 the Presbyterian mission board called Miss Alice to Muskogee to take charge of a boarding school for girls of the Five Civilized Tribes. Again she raised money, this time from a wealthy cousin, and built Minerva Home, making two homes for her growing school of girls. The funds she secured provided scholarships for promising youth. Minerva Home later became Henry Kendall College and is now Tulsa University.

In 1889 she employed her knowledge of stenography with the Indian commission sent out to negotiate with the Cherokee Nation for the cession of their Outlet. The commission was composed of Gen. Lucius Fairchild, ex-governor of Wisconsin, Gen. John F. Hartranft, ex-governor of Pennsylvania, and Alfred H. Wilson of Arkansas. Governor Fairchild resigned the next year and was succeeded by George W. Jerome, Ex-Governor of Michigan.

In 1900 Miss Alice became United States School Supervisor for Creek schools and served until 1905. She looked after the appointment of teachers, visited schools, audited accounts, prepared statistics, made quarterly and annual reports, and each summer handled two normal schools. Her work required her to drive with horse and buggy in all kinds of weather through the Creek country into sparsely settled communities but she was never molested. There were few hotels and she accepted the hospitality of Indian friends who were always glad to welcome her.

Miss Alice was intensely patriotic and not being able to serve her country in the ranks she devoted her energies to giving comfort and good cheer to the boys in uniform. When troops L and M of the Rough Riders were recruited at Muskogee for service in the Spanish War, she took a deep interest in looking after some of the Indian soldiers who had been her pupils, and in speeding them on their way to service in the war in Cuba. Her helpfulness to these troops became well known to Col. Theodore Roosevelt of the regiment, and after he became President one of his early appointments was that of Miss Robertson as Postmaster at Muskogee in 1905, which gave her the distinction of being the first woman to hold that position in a first class postoffice.

On historic Agency Hill west of Muskogee in 1910 Miss Robertson built from the stone quarried in the neighborhood a spacious residence which she called Sawokla. The name is a Creek word meaning "gathering place" and the huge fireplaces and broad porches overlooking the wooded slopes below lent themselves to the purpose for which it was erected and it became indeed a gathering place for many and varied occasions, from the meetings of veterans

of two wars to the Oklahoma Press Association. At the termination of her service as postmaster in 1913, Miss Robertson took up her residence at Sawokla where she looked after a fine herd of Guernsey and Jersey cattle. The milk and butter and other produce from her farm, she later employed in furnishing supplies for the cafeteria she operated in Muskogee.

When troops began to mobilize during the World War they passed through Muskogee to the many training camps in Texas, first in small numbers and then by train loads. The Red Cross Chapter in Muskogee was among the first in the state to organize for war service but Miss Alice did not wait for Red Cross funds or assistance. Taking her Ford car and loading it with good things from her restaurant, candies, cigarettes, post cards and chewing gum, and towering over all a big smoking can of hot coffee—the car driven by her colored boy, Harry, and convoyed only by her, set forth to be on time for every regular or special train that might carry a soldier. At first a strange spectacle, it was not long before the fame of Miss Alice extended to all the southwestern training camps and passing troops began to look forward to Muskogee and to the motherly woman who would greet them. Meeting trains became a matter of first importance with her. In addition to this phase of the work Miss Alice fed, in her cafeteria, thousands of soldiers and their families, passing through Muskogee, without charge.

As the work grew, the railway company placed an old fashioned coach on the siding for the canteen in which Miss Alice presided over a crew of efficient Red Cross workers. Later a building was erected for the work through the generosity of a Muskogee man and the Muskogee canteen became a pattern for others set up in towns that were not so early in the field of Red Cross work.

When the autumn election of 1920 became imminent Miss Alice, while a declared opponent of woman suffrage, announced as a candidate for congress from the Third District and made a vigorous campaign. The wide acquaintance of Miss Robertson in the state in which she was born and reared, and her reputation for patriotic and public

services, easily accounted for her majority in the election in 1920, in a normally Democratic district. Miss Alice went to Washington, the second woman to sit in the House of Representatives, and early established herself as a practical and useful public servant. She attracted particular attention because, in spite of her devotion to the soldiers, she voted against the bonus bill, and contrary to the assumption of her leaning toward the views of women's organizations, she also voted against the maternity bill.

During the term of her membership in Congress, in 1921 President Harding appointed her as his personal representative to attend the Rose Festival at Portland, Oregon, where honors were accorded her that would have been given to the President himself.

In 1929, the Business and Professional Women's Clubs of Oklahoma took Miss Alice to their national convention at Mackinaw, Michigan, where a pageant was presented by the Oklahoma delegation depicting her life. On this occasion Miss Alice was the recipient of most distinguished honors. Miss Robertson was in fact a business woman and for a number of years owned and operated a photograph gallery in Muskogee. She served as regent of A. H. Yastee Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution. She was a member of the Rebeccas; member of the Business and Professional Women's Club; member of the Missionary Society of the First Presbyterian Church in Muskogee; a vice-president of the National Education Association; member of the committee to nominate candidates for the Hall of Fame and sent in nominations while in the hospital during her last illness; a member of the Spanish War Veterans, and in the summer of 1922 was the guest of the Spanish War Veterans' camp at Panama where she was presented with a gavel of native wood by the camp. She was lately employed by the Oklahoma Historical Society to compile historical data within the period of her acquaintance with Indian Territory history.

Miss Robertson died July 1, 1931, in Muskogee. Impressive funeral services were held in the Presbyterian Church and the burial ceremonies at Green Hill Cemetery, Muskogee, were in charge of the Milo E. Hendrix Post of the Spanish War Veterans.

G. F.