

NEW HOPE SEMINARY 1844-1897

By Carolyn Thomas Foreman

One of the most important transactions in the history of the Choctaw Nation took place just one hundred years ago when New Hope Academy was established, for this important school for girls in the nation added immeasurably to the advancement of the Choctaw people. The subject of education being of prime importance among the Choctaws, a school system was established in 1841. For many years the most celebrated Indian school in the United States bore the name of *Choctaw Academy*, although it was situated in Kentucky at a great distance from the home of these Indians and was patronized by lads of many other tribes.

Ten Mission schools were established by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in the Choctaw Nation between 1832 and 1837; but it was not until 1844 that the Methodist Church established Fort Coffee Academy for boys and contracted for New Hope Academy for girls. Authority for the two schools is included in *Constitution and Laws of the Choctaw Nation*, Session IX - - - 1842. Six thousand dollars per annum were allotted from the interest arising from Chickasaw funds, agreeable to the treaty concluded between the two tribes at Doaksville in January, 1837.

New Hope Academy, under the conditions, limitations and restrictions of the act of the council, was to be placed under the management of the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, provided, it contributed one thousand dollars per annum to the institution. Girl pupils were restricted to the ages of eight to fourteen, and no family was permitted to place more than one child in the boarding schools.¹

New Hope was located a mile from Choctaw Agency which afterward became known as Skullyville, because annuities were paid to the Choctaws at that place. The situation of the academy, appropriately named New Hope, "was an elevated plain, covered with a thrifty growth of young oaks, wild and beautiful, near a spring of pure, cold water . . . isolated and lonely, with but one indifferent Indian cabin in sight, which was untenanted most of the time." When the Quakers, John D. Lang and Samuel Taylor, Jr., made their *Report of a Visit to Some Tribes of Indian Located West of the Mississippi River*, they narrated that the Choctaw Gen-

¹ *Constitution and Laws of the Choctaw Nation*, New York, 1869, pp. 79, 82.

eral Council had decided to establish two manual labor schools on an extensive plan.² One was to be situated on Red River and the other at the abandoned Fort Coffee on the Arkansas, in Moshulatubbee District. These men noted with interest that an important feature of the scheme was that the female children were to have a school several miles distant from the boys' school. Eighteen thousand dollars had been appropriated for the support of the schools.

The Choctaws realized the need of education for the future mothers when their sons, on returning from schools in the East, united their lives with uneducated young women who were lacking in culture. A few Choctaw girls had been educated in the homes of missionaries or in small schools conducted by teachers sent out by the American Board of Missions, and when those young women were married they managed their homes in such an orderly manner that they contrasted strikingly with those of some of their neighbors.

There had evidently been a school at the place where New Hope was built, as *The Constitution and Laws of the Choctaw Nation* recited that "The Female . . . Academy is called New Hope at the old school house where Mr. Wilson formerly taught school, about one mile from Choctaw Agency."³ New Hope was a branch of the male academy under the same superintendency, and from every standpoint it would appear that it would have been better to have the schools near each other, if not in the same grounds. "The old sachems of the tribe, however, when met in council to determine on the location, were possessed of a terrible dread of the dangers attending a male and a female school in near proximity with each other. . ."⁴

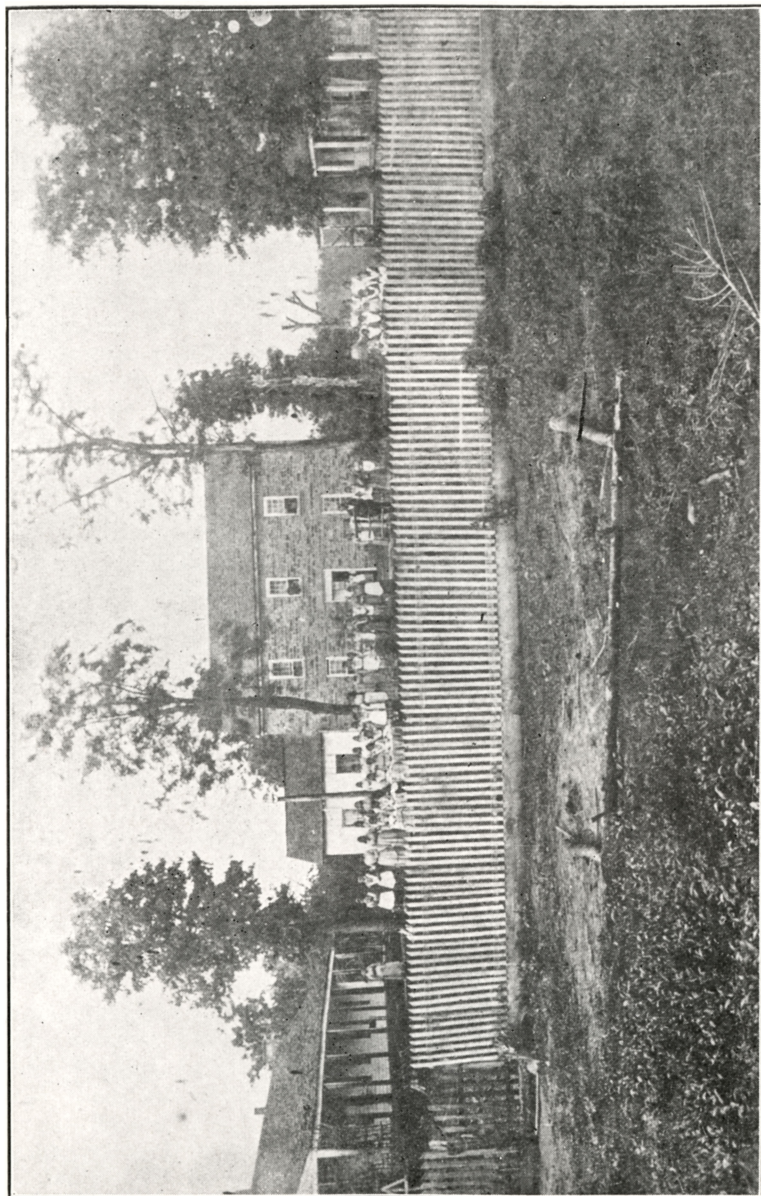
Two one-story frame buildings, each one hundred feet long, with broad piazzas on either side, were built for the school; they were parallel to each other and were located about a hundred feet apart. The plan, inconvenient and expensive, was apparently modeled after the barracks at Fort Coffee. The structures, rudely constructed, remained unpainted inside and on the outer surface. They were divided into dormitories, school room, dining room and kitchen. At Fort Coffee the buildings had stone chimneys with large fireplaces which gave the rooms sufficient warmth and a cheerful appearance, but at New Hope open stoves were used which did not heat the rooms and smoked in a most annoying way.

The school was inclosed with about two acres of land, in the form of a square, by a high picket fence. "The forest trees remained in the inclosure as nature had arranged them, not a foot of

² Providence, 1843.

³ Park Hill, Cherokee Nation, 1847.

⁴ Rev. William Graham, "Frontier Sketches", *The Ladies' Repository*, (Cincinnati, 1864), Vol. XXIV, p. 411.



NEW HOPE FEMALE SEMINARY, school for Choctaw girls, located near Skullyville. Contracted for in 1844, completed in 1845. The man in front to right is the Reverend Edwin R. Shapard, Superintendent.

ground being cleared away for the cultivation of fruit or flowers. The whole aspect was wild and romantic, and the singing birds built their nests and warbled forth their sweet and cheerful songs at our doors. . . ."⁵

The Reverend W. L. McAlister, first superintendent of New Hope Mission, sent his report for 1846 to Colonel William Armstrong, superintendent of the Western Territory, from Fort Coffee Academy on August 1, saying that New Hope closed July 25. Mr. McKenney, chief of the district, was the only trustee present at the examinations. Some of the captains "and other officiators of the nation," with guardians, parents and friends were in attendance. Text books used at both schools included Goodrich Readers, Ray's Arithmetic, Kirkham's prose or poetry lessons, Mitchell's Geography, Noah Webster's dictionary. Mr. McAlister considered it a mistake to send pupils as old as those then in the school. "They are confirmed in habits opposing close application, either in or out of schools; and I am decidedly of the opinion that neither they or the nation will ever realize much, though they spend *even* a series of years at the school. Better a thousand times for the nation that they send us children, by *no means* over fifteen years."

Six or seven acres were cultivated at New Hope to supply food. The girls rendered great service to the boys at Fort Coffee by making about one hundred pairs of trousers, shirts, and knitting many pairs of socks; besides making much of their own clothing. This was in line with the plans of Rev. William H. Goode, superintendent of Fort Coffee. He wrote in his *Outposts of Zion* that by careful economy the finances were in a condition that would justify commencing operations in the "Female department".⁶ He complained of the distance between the two establishments increasing their labors and expenses, but it had been determined "so to connect the interests and labors of the two as to render them mutually subservient to each other's support and advancement." He received proposals and finally let a contract for the erection of the two buildings at New Hope, but his connection with the school terminated before the buildings were finished.

Henry C. Benson, superintendent at Fort Coffee, related that the principal preaching places for the Methodists in the Choctaw Nation were at Fort Coffee, New Hope, Pheasant Bluff and the Council Ground. He and Mr. Goode had an arrangement by which one of them met John Page at New Hope to assist him in the services. One of the clergymen would preach a short discourse in English, to be followed by Page in Choctaw when he would give the substance of the sermon, followed by prayer in the language of the people. Mr. Benson said that Page was a full-blood "with no

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Cincinnati, 1863.

special love for half-breeds or mongrel races." He once said: "I no want to be rich; I no want farm; I no want to be chief; I no want big name; I want religion—religion just suit me. I want to be Christian, and *full-blooded* Methodist."

In May, 1845, Mr. Benson wrote that the New Hope buildings were enclosed and would be ready to receive pupils at the beginning of the autumn session. He said that they had substantial frames and were planned for the manual labor system of instruction. The girls were to be taught plain and fancy sewing, cooking, dairy and laundry work as well as "the mysteries of housekeeping in general." Mr. Goode went to Cincinnati after his connection with the school terminated, and while in that city he bought furnishings for the institution. Doctor and Mrs. E. G. Meek had been selected to manage New Hope.⁷

When William Graham was in charge of the school there were some thirty Indian girls of various ages from ten to eighteen at New Hope; they were lodged, boarded and clothed on the premises. Most of them were full-blood Indians, but a few were part white, and he noted that the Indian features remained prominent even if the skin was almost white. He described the Choctaw women as "less comely and symmetrical in figure than the males. They are generally low in stature and heavy, with short neck and broad across the shoulders. Their face is round and the expression somewhat dull, but the outlines are smooth and not unattractive." He thought them not inferior to the men in interest; they were "shy and reserved, but not timid; taciturn rather than loquacious, and somewhat sullen." Their manners were stately and they were deliberate in their movements. "Whoever imagines them fickle and easily moved, will soon learn his mistake."⁸

In the intervals between school hours the students were in charge of a matron who taught them cooking and other domestic duties. The kitchen and laundry were in charge of "Aunt Hetty", but were inspected by the matron. "Aunt Hetty" was a character; a tall, raw-boned, homely mulatto about forty years of age. She was intelligent, and having been raised as a slave among the Choctaws she spoke their language fluently and was "well acquainted with their peculiarities, tricks, and turns, but she also partook of them largely herself . . . Being the only servant at the place she became our factotum, and we had to depend on her even for interpreter, in which position she appeared to a surprisingly good advantage." The little girls were under the impression that "Aunt Hetty" had charge of New Hope and made all of their requests to her, while the older students used her as messenger and mediator

⁷ Henry C. Benson, *Life Among the Choctaw Indians* (Cincinnati, 1860), pp. 184, 225, 297.

⁸ Graham, *op. cit.*, p. 412.

with the missionaries. Mr. Graham thought her the most important person at the mission as she did more to govern the students than the teacher or matron.

The routine at New Hope on Sunday was the same as at the boys' school; Sunday school was held at nine o'clock, preaching at eleven and prayer meeting in the evening. More than a few of the pupils were converted and united with the Methodist Church. The Sabbath services were well attended by people from the agency and Skullyville, and also by Indian families in the vicinity. The merchant's family at the trading post were well educated, refined, and possessed the orderly habits and morals of New Englanders in vivid contrast to the reckless habits of some of the other white people. The Indian agent, a devout Presbyterian, had formerly been principal of Spencer Academy which was managed by the Choctaw Council. He had succeeded to his position after the death of Captain William Armstrong, but was soon ousted by politicians.

A regular exchange of products was maintained between Fort Coffee Academy and New Hope, much to the benefit of both schools; garments made by the girls supplied the wardrobe for the youths, while the latter furnished vegetables, corn and hominy for the tables at New Hope. This exchange stimulated great interest and industry in both places. As it was necessary to send the heavier articles by wagon once a week, there was rivalry among the lads to be chosen to drive the ox team; there was excitement among the girls when the farm products were expected, and they worked hard to have everything in order as the boys remained for dinner. Some of the boys had sisters at New Hope, and they were envied by the other students as they were allowed to visit the girls occasionally.

Quarterly meetings, held alternately at Fort Coffee and New Hope, were attended on Sundays by students from both schools. The minister wrote that there was always the best order maintained, some fine dressing and the visiting students were always entertained at dinner. As there were not enough tables in the dining room to accommodate all of the students from both schools at one time, the visiting students always ate first.

During the winter it was sometimes necessary to set apart a day for the lads to get fire wood for New Hope, and the boys set about the task with great glee, knowing that they were to be rewarded with a special dinner at which the young ladies would wait upon them.⁹

"In sharp contrast to their Arkansas neighbors, the Choctaws appropriated money freely for the education of their children. . . . In a girls' school superintended by a Methodist clergyman, the

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 413, 414.

sixty pupils all slept in a long hall. Sometimes at the dead of night one would strike up a sacred hymn; one by one the little sleepers would wake and join her, until the building rang with their voices." Then some small girl, in her night gown, would mount a chair for a religious exhortation, and other children would take up the service until the groans, shrieks and sobs resembled a camp meeting. On other nights some girl would start a low chant, and one by one the sleeping children would arouse and join her until all roared forth the old war whoop of their tribe. The teachers were unable to stop these midnight performances even by whipping. The girls were reported to acquire language readily, they were intelligent and in average capacity were equal to white children.¹⁰

From Fort Coffee Academy, on July 30, 1848, Superintendent McAlister sent Col. S. M. Rutherford, acting superintendent of Indian Affairs in Western Territory, a report of conditions at the Methodist schools. The examination at New Hope took place on June 28, a day later than the one at Fort Coffee. The affairs were more numerous attended by parents and friends which argued an increased interest in education by the Choctaws. The girls were tested in spelling, reading, arithmetic, geography, and grammar, and the missionary reported that the students far surpassed the most sanguine expectations. "Indeed many of the children in our schools manifest a capacity to receive a finished education. . . . it is due our teachers to say that they have laboured hard and constantly to advance the children, and appear determined in future, to do *even* more if possible." Ninety-five children were taught during the session; eighty-five of the students were furnished with board, clothing and all supplies. Some fine specimens of handwork were shown on examination.¹¹

The report sent by Rutherford to Commissioner of Indian Affairs W. Medill in October, 1848, said the examination given the female institution at New Hope gave full, complete, and entire satisfaction. "It has elicited public opinion strongly in its favor, and rendered the teachers universally popular with all, and especially so with those having children at it." At that period Mr. and Mrs. Maris were the teachers, and Miss Carter was responsible for the good conduct of the girls out of school when she instructed them in general domestic occupations. "It is not too much praise to say that the care and responsibility with which she has been charged was efficiently and well performed, and that the garments exhibited . . . were well and skilfully made."

¹⁰ Albert D. Richardson, *Beyond the Mississippi* (Hartford, Conn., 1867), p. 222.

¹¹ Office of Indian Affairs: School File R 343. Choctaw Agency, 1848. Copied from pages 290, 291, Vol. 7, Foreman Transcripts, Oklahoma Historical Society.

At the age of 112, Mrs. Elizabeth Jacobs Quinton, a one-eighth Choctaw, visited the home of the writer and related her experiences while a pupil at New Hope. She was fourteen when her family emigrated to the West and settled between Fort Smith and Skullyville. New Hope Mission was eight miles from her home, and her parents sent her to school there. Her account, carefully reported by a stenographer, was as follows:

“We had to make pants and coats—had to make all of the shirts for the boys at Fort Coffee.

“Old Man McAlister was principal of New Hope . . . The boys dassent come over to our school. No man person was ever allowed to come near our place. We went to school in the morning and then in the afternoon till about two o'clock, and then the seamstress would call us up to the third floor. The teachers at the school were all women . . . I don't remember the names, the last names. We called them by their first names; there was Miss Carrie, and Miss Helen Steele, who taught the big class. It wasn't a big school. About 198 . . . They had five teachers and four seamstresses who taught us to knit and sew. They made us do it right. If it wasn't right they made us rip it out. I've seen the girls have a sock almost done and the teacher would make her ravel it all out. Same way with the sewing . . . We made bed clothes, sheets and pillow cases. The girls all quilted after the seamstress would mark out the patterns with a saucer. Each girl would do her best and the best one got a premium.

“The first session we all liked to have starved, till the people got to cuttin' up about it, and after that we had plenty. They raised all of our food, vegetables, hogs, most everything. We learned how to do all kinds of work, take care of everything . . .

“During the week we went to church every night. On Sunday we went at eleven, at three, and again at night. We had to study every week night. There was a big bell, and when they pulled the rope we all knew what that meant. Every Friday evening four of the girls were chosen to cook, four to wash, and four for this and four for something else. We'd have to do the work all week, that is the big girls would. The little girls carried water to the rooms from the well or fine spring. We changed every Friday so that we could all learn how to do all kinds of work. The school building was of stone—it's all gone now.”

Speaking of how carefully the girls were trained in deportment, Mrs. Quinton said: “We were not allowed to laugh out loud, those big horse laughs like the girls do now.” The pupils were not permitted to speak Choctaw and it was difficult for the children as most of them knew no English. “If they talked Choctaw they gave them a teaspoonful of red pepper . . .”

For examinations the girls stood on a large stage to say their lessons. According to Mrs. Quinton, they wore a different colored dress for each subject: "We wore green with our grammar lessons and for the next class we all put on another colored dress. There were rooms right up the stairs and we would step into another room and all come out on the stage again with a different colored dress on." This was a clever way to display the work the students had accomplished during the session.

"We said our lessons on the stage and the people sat out in the yard on the ground or on chairs. The parents came and lots of people who did not have girls in the school came also . . ." After the examinations were finished, a big dinner was served in the yard on a long table, and after all of the good food was consumed school was dismissed until the new term in September.

Mrs. Quinton related that the small girls wore their hair cut short, and the larger ones had braids hanging down their backs with a ribbon bow on the end.

"My father was a Choctaw named Levi Jacobs. My mother's name was Rebecca Carroll. The people who lived at Scullyville were Col. Tandy Walker and Lanier and Massey. There was a cake shop there. No, it was not a bakery, just a cake shop where the woman made cakes and cookies, big ginger cakes. Her name was McDonald. There was a blacksmith shop there. Massey was a merchant, and Tebold also had a store, and old man Hale, also Nansley and Meinhardt. Bob Jones [Robert M.] had a store at Scullyville; he was a well-to-do man and a good person. He wasn't what I would call a rich man—owned seven slaves. He had three stores, one at Scullyville and I think one at Doaksville. . . ."

Mrs. Quinton described Choctaw Agent William Armstrong as a "tall, light-complected man; had kind of auburn hair who wore a moustache and sideburns for a while. He was a nice man to do business with. The Choctaws all liked and respected him highly. Peter Pitchlyn was an educated man; pretty smart man, but wasn't many people fancied him much."

The scourge of cholera invaded the Indian country in 1849, and fear of the disease was so great that the trustees of the Methodist schools ordered them closed on April 19. McAlister reported to Colonel John Drennen, superintendent of Indian affairs, that New Hope had done very well, and it was confidently believed that had school continued it would have shown an improvement on previous years. "Some of the children are respectable in the primary branches, a few rather more advanced. . . . Whether it is the better policy to give the children more than a business education, and thereby afford a like favor to a greater number of children, I leave others to judge." The missionary reported much illness during the past

season. One of the teachers, Dr. R. S. Williams, had been very successful, and to him and the other instructors the school owed its prosperity.¹²

In 1850 John Harrell was transferred from the Arkansas Conference by Bishop Robert Paine and put in charge of Fort Coffee and New Hope academies where he remained four years as superintendent. For one year, 1854-1855, he was presiding elder of Choctaw District, and he returned in the same capacity in 1869. The Reverend Mr. Harrell died at Vinita, Cherokee Nation, December 8, 1876, and the Committee of Memoirs of the Methodist Church made a report of his life and services the next year. This document, signed by Young Ewing, J. F. Thompson, W. A. Duncan and E. R. Shapard, was a beautiful tribute to the missionary who had devoted twenty-seven years to improve the condition of the Indians.

A comprehensive report of the state of affairs at New Hope Seminary made by Trustee Edmund McCurtain from Red Oak, March 10, 1877, was published in *The McAlester Star-Vindicator*, March 24, 1877.

Nathaniel M. Talbott made the report in 1852 to Agent William Wilson. The school opened on October 1, 1851, and closed July 7 the following year. The examination was well attended and the visitors expressed entire satisfaction with the progress shown by the students in spelling, reading, writing, arithmetic, geography and grammar. Three quilts nicely pieced, shirts, coats and pants were on exhibition, and Talbott said that as opportunity presented the department of domestic economy would be enlarged.

When the Misses Mary H. P. Talbott and Elizabeth Tramell were in charge of New Hope, they were said to have been "diligent, have spared no means, and left untried no auxiliary, that might facilitate the advancement of the girls." Miss Frances Sawyers, engaged in teaching sewing, had performed her part well. "The year that is past and gone has been one of deep suffering and affliction. The pneumonia and measles, through all the year, has raged throughout the school, and the teachers embarrassed in their progress." The missionaries were cheered and encouraged by the presence of the chief and Indian agent at the closing ceremonies.¹³

In the absence of the Reverend Mr. Talbott from New Hope, Thompson McKenny, trustee of the Choctaw public schools, and

¹² *Report*, Commissioner Indian affairs, 1849, p. 1109. "Jesse S. McAlister was received on trial in the Indian Mission Conference in 1847, and appointed to the New Hope Female School and Station. In 1849 he was transferred to the Arkansas Conference." After being connected with several colleges in Arkansas, he died in 1864. He was said to be a preacher of superior ability, noted for his amiable disposition and fine social qualities, and recognized as a superior educator.—Horace Jewell, *History of Methodism in Arkansas*, (Little Rock, 1892), p. 184.

¹³ *Report*, Commissioner of Indian affairs, 1852, p. 416.

the Reverend W. L. McAlister, presiding elder of the Choctaw district, sent a report of New Hope to Choctaw Agent Douglas Cooper, on August 29, 1853, stating that the past year had been one of more suffering than any since the school commenced operations. Early in the session their beloved teacher, Mary Talbott, died, and half of the fifty students suffered from pneumonia and whooping cough; four children died, and others were brought to the brink of the grave, and it was only by unflagging care by the superintendent and teacher that their lives were spared.

On October 1, 1853, Talbott wrote that the girls at New Hope were "taught with equally as much care and success in the domestic as in the scientific department. We instruct the hands to work, and work properly, as well as the mind to think, and think properly." The department showed unmistakable evidences of improvement and there were samples of sewing that would put to blush the best efforts of white girls trained under the eyes of eastern seamstresses.

The next session of New Hope started with fifty-four students, but death again invaded, and there were only forty-two when school closed July 6, 1854. Seven girls died—three of tuberculosis, one of dropsy, two of typhoid fever, and one of congestion of the brain. Evidently Mr. Talbott had become discouraged, as he announced that he was leaving the school so his family could have more of the comforts of life, and he be where he would have "greater privileges in preaching the Gospel."

Miss Ellen N. Steele, Miss E. Foster were the teachers, and Miss Elizabeth Sorrels had charge of the domestic economy department. Talbott reported: "I take pleasure in saying there were many intelligent natives . . . who expressed themselves highly pleased with the marked improvement of many of the pupils. It is true, however, a few self-conceited persons, who think nothing is well done unless they do it, or it is done according to their whims, were disposed to murmur; but fault-finding, discontented poor souls are found everywhere." The Reverend John Page, interpreter for Agent Cooper, visited New Hope almost weekly, and Talbott thought him a reliable man.¹⁴

Presiding Elder McAlister advised Douglas H. Cooper, in October, 1854, that greater success would result in the Methodist schools if the number of students were reduced by half; he suggested sending the younger children to the neighborhood schools and "not burden these academies with little boys and girls that you are compelled to nurse almost literally for a long time before they are anything like prepared to enter an academy." He proposed applying

¹⁴ Report, Commissioner of Indian affairs, 1854, p. 146.

to the general council and the board of missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church South to make the change.¹⁵

Trustees and other guests were present when New Hope closed on June 28, 1855. Arithmetic had not been taught during that session, as Superintendent McAlister thought the girls were too young. Spelling, First Reader, geography and writing occupied the time of the pupils who were also engaged in making clothes for the boys at Fort Coffee as well as their own garments. The faithful teachers were Misses Steele and Sorrels. The latter exhibited with pride handsome shirts and numerous articles of fancy work made by her students. A new teacher had been added to the staff that year in the person of Miss Crocket. Four young Choctaw women had been sent in 1854 to schools of higher learning in Tennessee and Mississippi to be educated gratuitously by the Methodist Episcopal Church South.

From forty to forty-five pupils attended New Hope during the next term, and Superintendent T. W. Mitchell considered them a very promising set of girls who were regular in attendance, orderly in conduct and proficient in their studies. He reported that some of the larger students did honor to themselves and their teachers in grammar and geography. Good health among teachers and Indians was remarked, although three of the girls died—two of typhus fever in November. A vivid account of the death of one girl was given by the superintendent in his report. "A short time before she died she would say 'my sense is not gone yet.' 'Now,' said she, 'I am dying.' 'Tell my uncle when he comes tomorrow that I am dead and gone to heaven.'" The third was a sister-in-law of the Reverend D. W. Lewis; she was an intelligent young woman whose death was lamented by all who knew her.¹⁶

When Bishop George F. Pierce made an Episcopal journey in the Indian Territory in the autumn of 1855, he was accompanied part of the time by "Brother McAlister". On October 15 they left North Fork Town for the Choctaw Agency, spending a night in a one-room house of a Choctaw family which the Bishop described as neat and comfortable. The Indians understood English, but the missionaries were unable to get one word of that language out of them; when they left the following morning Bishop Pierce inquired "What do I pay you?" and the Choctaw replied, "*Two dollar.*"

Bishop Pierce described McAlister as full of dry, sly humor, and he added much to the interest of the long, hard journey. "Early in the afternoon we reached Scullyville, the Choctaw Agency. Here is quite a village—stores and private dwellings. We stopped a while,

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 147.

¹⁶ *Report*, Commissioner Indian affairs, 1856, p. 154.

and a glance at the interior of the trading establishments satisfied me that the merchants knew how to cater to the tastes of their customers. All the gaudiest colors known in the world of calico flash upon the eye, and are displayed in the most tempting form.

"A mile or two more brought us to New Hope Academy, where we proposed to rest a day or two to examine the school and to visit the school at Fort Coffee. . ." The Bishop was fortunate in being present at the time the agent paid the annuity, and he described the scene most graphically. "The Indians were assembled in crowds. Such a company of *men, squaws, papooses, ponies*, I never saw before. . . . There was the Christian Indian dressed like the white man; there was the half-civilized, an odd combination of the apparel of the two races, and here was the genuine man of the woods, strutting in the costume of his ancestors—*hunting shirt, buckskin leggings, moccasins, and all*. I saw one magnificent-looking fellow; he had the step of a chief, the air of a king; and he moved about as if he felt himself to be the embodiment of every thing which had been the glory of an Indian. . . . *face painted, scalp-lock on the crown of the head, bow and arrows swung upon the back.*"

At New Hope the good Bishop heard classes in several subjects, made a little speech, prayed and bade them farewell. "These schools, well managed, will do wonders for this people in the progress of time. We must wait, pray, and hope."¹⁷

In the 1857 report Mitchell gave a few personal facts concerning himself and the staff of New Hope, which was composed entirely of citizens of Tennessee recruited in Missouri. Mitchell was forty-one; he was appointed November 1 1855, and received \$600 a year; Mrs. Mitchell, six years younger than her husband, was the seamstress, and she was paid \$100 per annum; Miss M. A. Mather, principal teacher, was employed September 1, 1856, at a salary of \$300.; the assistant teacher, Miss S. A. Mather, arrived at New Hope the same date, and she was paid \$150 a year. These two teachers were only twenty-five and twenty-one years old.

Fifty girls, from seven to eighteen years of age, were in attendance, and the Choctaw Nation taxed itself \$6,000 out of the annuities, and received \$1,000 from the Methodist Church. Mitchell thought the Indians were eager to educate their children, especially their daughters. He considered the Choctaws very civil, said they were improving in industry. Most of them had fairly comfortable homes; they were temperate, with a few exceptions; the majority

¹⁷ George G. Smith, *The Life and Times of George Foster Pierce, D.D. LL.D.*, (Nashville, 1888), pp. 232-237.

followed farming and their principal commerce was in ponies, beef cattle and hogs.¹⁸

The Reverend F. M. Paine, first teacher and physician at the Chickasaw Manual Labor Academy in 1857, was appointed superintendent of Fort Coffee and New Hope academies October 11, 1858. The two schools had been in a temporary state of suspension, by order of Acting Trustee McCurtain, until the new superintendent arrived with his family and a corps of teachers, on November 7; he notified the trustee that they were prepared for the reception of pupils, and school was opened November 29, 1858.

It had been decided to limit the students to fifty; but some were removed because of sickness, others ran away, so the number was not maintained. Paine considered that the girls had demeaned themselves well, "have made proficiency in all their studies," as well as in the domestic department which was directed by Mrs. Paine "in person". The staff was made up of Mrs. M. J. Scannell, principal; Miss Zorade Bruce, assistant; and Mrs. Jane Guymon, in charge of sewing.

An unusually large concourse of patrons and friends attended the examination exercises and ". . . the trustee, Hon. R. McCurtain, who discharged his duties faithfully and expressed himself as being well pleased with the . . . improvement made by the girls." The fancy work shown by proud pupils would have done credit to any class of girls of a similar age. There had been some illness in the school, but no deaths, and the session had been most harmonious and pleasant.¹⁹

Governor Basil L. LeFlore, on October 24, 1859, approved an act recommended by a committee composed of Joseph Dukes, Cornelius McCurtain, Jack Shotubbe, Capt. John Anderson and Jackson McCurtain, by which three thousand dollars were to be paid to Superintendent Paine, to enable him to pay the debts owed by New Hope Academy. It appeared that a large part of the first appropriation for the academies had been applied to annuity purposes, after the contract had been made with the Methodist Board.²⁰

The two academies opened the first Wednesday in October, 1859, with every prospect of a successful year; the pupils arrived in good health, and there was a full corps of teachers; but about three weeks after the beginning of the term whooping cough spread through the school and continued all winter; there were other diseases, and one pupil died. The school was suspended by advice of the trustee, the first of March, when the measles appeared in the neighborhood;

¹⁸ *Report*, Commissioner Indian affairs, 1857, pp. 532-33.

¹⁹ *Report*, Commissioner Indian affairs, 1859, pp. 564-65.

²⁰ *Choctaw National Council*, No. 18301, p. 48. Indian Archives Division, Oklahoma Historical Society.

the Choctaws became apprehensive and wished their children at home, where some of them contracted the disease; other students had measles after the school was resumed on May 1, and there were still cases in June. Mrs. Molloy, the principal, probably overworked, "so declined in health that she was compelled to give up teaching" in April, and retired. Miss Virginia Tackitt of Van Buren, Arkansas, became principal when the academy reopened, and acquitted herself to the satisfaction of all concerned. The annual examination, held on July 5, made use of *Davies' Arithmetic*, *Mitchell's Geography*, and *Parley's Universal History*.

The financial status of New Hope was greatly relieved by the action of the general council; the buildings were in a delapidated condition, the farm and apparatus generally run down so that there was a continual necessity of making repairs and buying implements. Dr. Paine made a supplemental report to Agent Cooper on September 14, 1860, in which he gave his age as thirty-eight, his birthplace as Tennessee, and that he had received his appointment from the presiding bishop of the Indian Mission Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church South. Miss M. C. Paine, seventeen, and probably his daughter, was born in Missouri. Mrs. M. J. Molloy, a native of Ohio, was twenty-five. Paine had employed several other white persons at different times during the session.²¹

The general council passed an act authorizing the Governor to appoint two suitable persons to make a full and complete settlement with the proper representatives of the American Methodist Missionary Board in all affairs pertaining to the New Hope and Fort Coffee academies; the persons appointed were to have power to receive and execute a receipt for the nation and a report was to be rendered to the General Council. The act was approved on October 15, 1862, by Z. Harrison, Principal Chief, pro. tem.²²

Some Choctaws living in the neighborhood of Skullyville, becoming discouraged with the alliance with the Confederacy, held a convention at New Hope in the spring of 1864, and tried to repudiate the stand of their nation during the Civil War. The faction set up a provisional government headed by Thomas Edwards and other officials but their movement was not recognized by the Federal government.²³

²¹ *Report*, Commissioner Indian affairs, 1860, pp. 365-68. F. M. Paine, of the Arkansas Conference, became a traveling preacher in 1872 and was still at work in 1877, according to Horace Jewell, *History of Methodism* (Little Rock, 1892), p. 428.

²² *Choctaw National Council*, No. 18304, Indian Archives Division, Oklahoma Historical Society.

²³ *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, "Historic Places on the Old Stage Line from Fort Smith to Red River", by Muriel H. Wright, June, 1933, p. 818.

Because of the unsettled condition of the Indian country during the Civil War, many of the Cherokees left their nation and went south, and they were afraid to return home for several years. The Reverend Thomas B. Ruble, of the Methodist Church, wrote an article for the *Fort Smith Herald*, June 6, 1867, signed OBSERVER, in which he reported that several Cherokee families and other people were occupying the old school buildings at New Hope.

On June 7, 1871, Colonel Campbell Leflore of Skullyville and Miss Ida L. Tibbetts of Providence, Rhode Island, were married at New Hope by the Reverend J. Y. Bryce who had become superintendent of the academy.²⁴

New Hope was the first boarding school for girls reopened after the Civil War in the Choctaw Nation. A contract was entered into by Forbis LeFlore and the Methodist Church South on July 25, 1871, by which the church agreed to assume charge of the academy, furnish a superintendent and teachers; board, clothe and teach fifty pupils.²⁵

The Reverend John Harrell, superintendent of the Indian Mission Conference, acting on behalf of the Board of Missions, agreed that the church would pay salaries of the superintendent and teachers as well as their expenses to and from the Choctaw Nation; medical supplies and everything else necessary for the comfort of the pupils was to be furnished.

The General Council, on November 2, 1870, set apart five thousand dollars to be paid in quarterly installments for running the school, and two thousand dollars was placed in the hands of the superintendent of public schools for repairs on the building and for the purchase of necessary furniture. The superintendent agreed to furnish a full statement of the expenditures of the school, and the condition of the seminary at the end of each session. The agreement was to continue for ten years, and it was agreed that when circumstances warranted, the number of students should be increased to sixty.²⁶

In "Memories of my Childhood" by Emma Ervin Christian, she relates how thrilled she was to start in a covered wagon from her farm home, three and a half miles from Doaksville, in the latter part of August, 1871, to enter school at New Hope. The party in which she traveled was made up of her father, Mrs. William Byrd, whose husband became governor of the Chickasaw Nation, an orphan girl of the name of Carrie Stewart, a hired boy and young Emma

²⁴ *Fort Smith Herald*, June 17, 1871, p. 2, col. 6.

²⁵ *Report*, Commissioner Indian affairs, 1871, p. 618; Angie Debo, "Education in the Choctaw Country after the Civil War", *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, June 1932, p. 385.

²⁶ Indian Archives Division, OHS, *Choctaw-New Hope Seminary*, No. 19878.

who was born in the early sixties. There were practically no roads over the mountains they crossed until they reached the stage line running from Fort Smith to Stringtown. Wild game was seen in abundance. They saw a bear, and at night the piercing scream of panthers was frequently heard. They were received at New Hope about the first of September by Mr. Bryce and a bevy of Indian girls—"some were fair, some very dark, some fat, some lean, tall, short, some pretty and some monstrously ugly." After nine months at the academy Emma made her first visit home and she made the hard trip twice a year for five years.²⁷

A letter dated December 4, 1871, to Rev. Willis F. Folsom from Edmund McCurtain, Trustee, Mosholatubbe District, notified him that he had selected Folsom's daughter, Serena, to attend New Hope School.²⁸

Another pupil during the seventies was Carrie Walton (Bruton) Breedlove, the daughter of Thomas H. Chisholm and Jane H. Bruton, a Cherokee. Her father was medical missionary to New Hope and Fort Coffee schools. "Our dearly beloved, and well remembered old pioneer Methodist preacher, John Harold [Harrell] was in charge of both schools at that time."

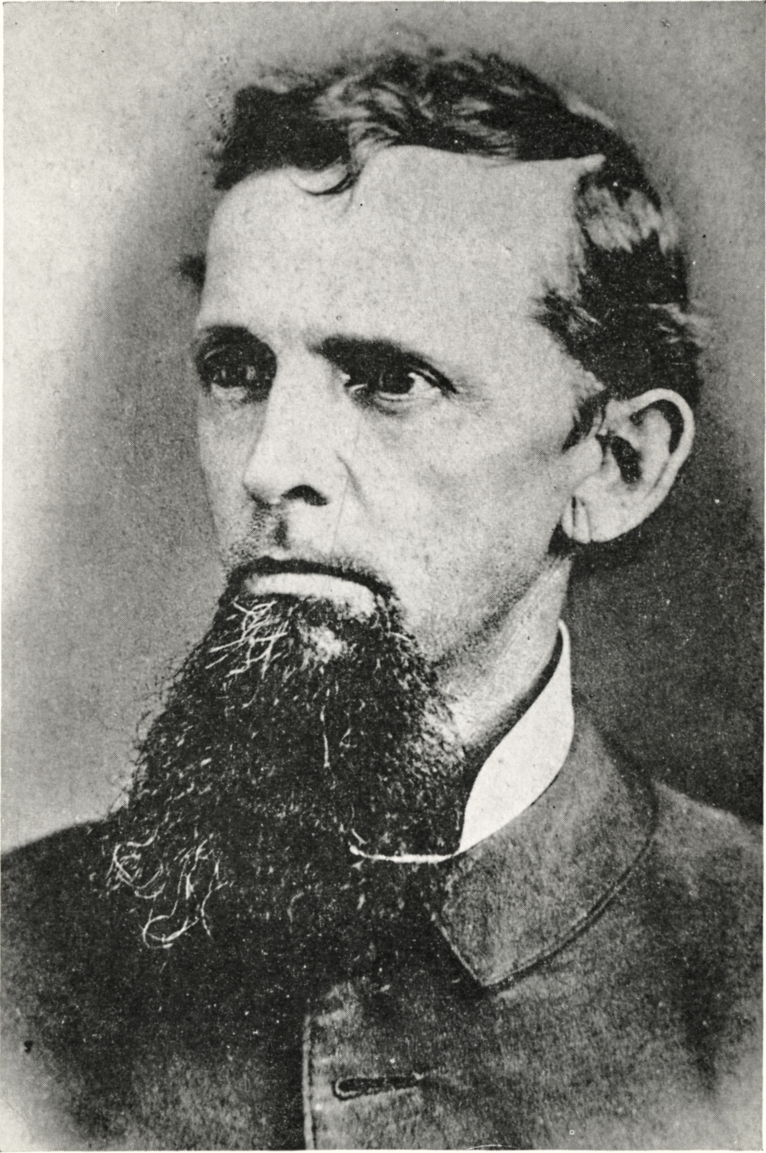
In 1872 there were forty girls at New Hope. A. Parsons, Indian Agent, in 1873, reported that the teachers at New Hope and Spencer Academy were not selected by officers of the Choctaw Nation, and he was of the opinion that the neighborhood schools would reach a higher standard if the missionaries were permitted to select the teachers.

From a letter written at Boggy Depot, December 8, 1873, by T. J. Bond, Superintendent of the Public Schools of the Choctaw Nation, to Rev. E. R. Shapard²⁹, superintendent of New Hope Seminary, it would appear that the boys' school was not flourishing; Mr. Bond wrote: "In compliance with a Resolution passed at the last General Council of the Choctaw Nation, on the 22nd day of October, 1873, . . . I do hereby transfer Fort Coffee to New Hope Seminary—and you are hereby authorized, by virtue of said Resolution, to take possession of the premises known as Fort Coffee,

²⁷ *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, June, 1931, p. 160.

²⁸ *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. XI, No. 4, p. 1122.

²⁹ Edwin Ruthven Shapard was born in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, December 16, 1838, but spent a large part of his life at Shelbyville in the same state. He received a classical education and was proficient in Greek and Latin. He possessed a good library for the time in which he lived. Mr. Shapard admired the Indians, and once remarked that he felt safer at a gathering of red men than he did at a frontier camp meeting of whites. He was transferred to the Indian Mission Conference in 1872, and he managed New Hope and the Fort Coffee farm so successfully that he was able to turn over substantial sums to the Board. Mr. Shapard passed to his reward in 1889, at his home in Fort Smith, Arkansas. He and Miss Jennie Hall of Madison, Tennessee, were married June 15, 1869.



THE REVEREND EDWIN R. SHAPARD

and to apply the same to the use and benefit of New Hope Seminary.'³⁰

It developed that the missionaries had trouble in ousting some of the intruders who were occupying the school building. On January 29, 1874, Superintendent T. J. Bond wrote from Boggy Depot to Circuit Judge Jerry Ward of Mosholatubbe District that Mr. and Mrs. George T. Lincoln had failed to give possession; he had been notified to that effect by Mr. Shapard, and he called upon the judge to carry into effect the resolution passed in October, 1873.³¹

Judge Ward, on February 20, 1874, wrote Superintendent Bond that he could act only if the matter were brought into open court, and he advised him to make a demand in person on the Lincolns to give possession, and in case of refusal, for him to take up the case with the attorney general or the district attorney.³²

The Choctaws had progressed so far in educational concerns by the autumn of 1875 as to hold a teachers' institute in Mosholatubbe District. Mr. Shapard reported the meeting in a letter to J. H. Sparks, editor of the *Fort Smith Herald*, on September 21, from Oak Lodge in the following words: "We do something else besides quarreling and murdering in the Indian country. We are quite a civil and hospitable set generally, though we acknowledge that when aroused, the people of this country do some fighting. There is one characteristic among the Indians that should be commended that is—they are very quiet and orderly at all public gatherings. Among many illustrations of this fact, we had one last week at a Teachers' Institute, a synopsis of the proceedings is presented below. We would be glad if you would give publicity to it in the form in which it stands, as it would be of interest to your many Indian readers, as well as to your readers throughout the States." The institute met at Rock Creek on September 13, 1875, with Trustee Edmund McCurtain presiding; Houston McCurtain was elected secretary; E. R. Shapard, upon motion of B. C. Heard, was elected chaplain with the privileges of a teacher. The meeting was called every morning and opened with prayer and singing. Committees were appointed, speeches were delivered; several teachers and Captain Chinnup, Mr. Page and Col. Jackson H. McCurtain, favoring and encouraging the efforts of the teachers of the district. By acclamation, James Merryman was elected interpreter for the institute. Among the various talks made on the best methods of teaching Choctaw children were: "Progress in learning without being able to speak the English language, difficult," by Peter Folsom; "Mode of teach-

³⁰ Indian Archives Division, OHS, No. 19879, *Choctaw-New Hope Seminary*.

³¹ Indian Archives, OHS, No. 19880, *Choctaw-New Hope Seminary*.

³² *Ibid.*, No. 19881.

ing English grammar" was discussed by E. R. Shapard, who also spoke on methods of teaching geography.

Mr. Shapard, C. C. Holmes and Peter Folsom were appointed an executive committee to give publicity to the proceedings of the institute through the *Fort Smith Herald* and *Choctaw Vindicator* (Atoka).³³

From the Union Agency, Muscogee, Indian Territory, August 31, 1876, Agent S. W. Marston reported that there were fifty pupils in New Hope Seminary for which the Choctaws were still appropriating \$5000 per annum, while the Methodist Board of Missions paid the salaries of the teachers and all other expenses which the Choctaw appropriation did not cover. The number of white missionaries had greatly decreased since the Civil War, and religious instruction was being given by native preachers directed by white missionaries.³⁴

George T. Lincoln was still in possession of Fort Coffee Academy in the autumn of 1876, and in order to force him to release the premises an act was passed by the General Council ordering the superintendent of public schools to proceed to Skullyville and make a verbal or written demand for the place and improvements; in the event of Lincoln's refusal to vacate, the superintendent was instructed to apply to the county judge of Skullyville County for a writ of ejection to be served by the sheriff demanding that the trespasser leave the place within twenty days. If Lincoln refused to obey the sheriff, the officer was instructed to take forcible possession of Fort Coffee and turn the place over to the superintendent of New Hope. The act was proposed by J. F. McCurtain and approved by Coleman Cole, Principal Chief, on October 28, 1876.³⁵

A comprehensive account of New Hope Seminary, made by Superintendent of Schools Edmund McCurtain from Red Oak, March 10, 1877, was published in the *McAlester Star-Vindicator*, March 24, 1877, by Editor G. McPherson. The visit was made in company with District Trustee Green McCurtain, and their arrival at the school was wholly unexpected by Superintendent Shapard. "We therefore had the satisfaction of knowing that we saw the daily routine of the seminary. We were more than pleased with its management. Everything was in perfect order. Every department had its head, and the head of every department seems to devote all of his or her energy to that department. The school room is under the management of two accomplished and energetic ladies, and the students are progressing rapidly in their studies. The sewing room is

³³ *Fort Smith Herald*, October 5, 1875, p. 3, col. 4.

³⁴ Report, Commissioner Indian affairs, 1876, pp. 63, 64.

³⁵ Laws of the Choctaw Nation passed at the Choctaw Councils of 1876 and 1877, p. 35, Indian Archives Division, OHS, 16338, *Choctaw National Council*,

also under the management of a competent instructress who has long filled that position with credit to herself and benefit to our young ladies.

“The dining room and kitchen are also under excellent control, and all is ably presided over by Rev. E. R. Shapard, the efficient superintendent. We were especially pleased with the cleanly aspect of every place we visited. The school room, bed rooms, store house, meat house, etc., were as tidy and clean as possible. The students are required to keep themselves and clothes clean and neat. They are also taught economy—nothing is wasted, but everything, even the scraps in the sewing, are utilized. The sick are also well cared for, and are daily visited by a physician. There were three sick when we visited—Misses Willis, Turnbull and Dickson—and I feel sure they could not have had better attention at home—possibly not so good.

“In truth we have a right, and ought to be proud of New Hope under its present management, and I think we all owe a debt of gratitude to its able superintendent and his efficient corps of assistants.³⁶

A touching account of a New Hope girl appeared in the *Christian Advocate*, Nashville, February 3, 1877; written by Edwin Ruthven Shapard, who told of preaching the funeral sermon of Nancy LeFlore, “whose life and character was an exhibition of the good which is being done in this country by the grace of God, using the ministry and schools as means. Nancy was a pupil at New Hope for four years. . . . One year ago the Superintendent of Public Schools asked me to select some young ladies whom he proposed to send away to receive a more advanced education. . . She was among the number selected. Every one expected that she would, if spared, return to honor and benefit her people. Her Heavenly Father took her away to himself last April, while she was in Columbia, Mo. . . .”

In June, 1879, the family at New Hope numbered sixty-three, and Circuit Rider John T. Pittman frequently joined them to play with the children. He described a large rock building, two stories high with walls two feet thick. The building was furnished with three rows of desks, a blackboard, and on the whitewashed walls were needle work inscriptions. The windows were hung with beautiful embroidered curtains made by the girls under the supervision of Mrs. Nickell. On the west end of the building was a room where Miss Holmes of Murfreesboro, Tennessee, heard recitations. The library was housed in that room and consisted of a varied assortment of books. There was a busy scene upstairs where Mrs. Nickell taught. Around the wall were shelves on which were piled materials, and

³⁶ Indian Archives Division, OHS, Litton Choctaw Papers, 1872-1937, pp. 160-162.

finished garments. At five-thirty in the morning the girls were aroused and at six they marched to prayers in the school room. An hour later breakfast was served with the four long tables presided over by Mrs. Nickells, Miss Lucile Holmes, Miss Rankin, Mr. and Mrs. Shapard. School commenced at nine and continued until noon, when dinner and recreation occupied an hour and a half. Lessons went on until four o'clock, when sewing filled the hours until dark; after supper study was resumed until eight-thirty, when the household was called to prayer which finished the day.

The Indian Journal of Muskogee, Indian Territory, November 6, 1879, contains a description of a visit paid by Bishop George F. Pierce to New Hope in which he appeared greatly pleased with ". . . a hearty welcome from Rev E. R. Shapard . . . This school is doing a great work for the rising generation. It is a school for girls only . . . The Board of Missions, by contract, is bound to board, clothe and teach eighty pupils, and to supplement the [Choctaw] appropriation as may be necessary. It costs the church about six hundred and fifty dollars a year. The investment pays and will pay more, as the tribe sees and feels the elevation of their people. In social life the influence must be salutary. The girls are taught cleanliness of person, neatness in apparel, propriety of manners, learned to cut and sew and cook and house in order."

During the General Council in 1880 Peter Nod introduced a resolution that the sum of fifty dollars be appropriated to pay Edmund McCurtain for extra services in securing the national property at Fort Coffee for the use and benefit of New Hope Seminary. Principal Chief J. F. McCurtain approved the act October 16, 1880.³⁷

A notice appeared in the Nashville *Christian Advocate* in 1877, calling for a teacher for New Hope Seminary; Miss Lochie Rankin was chosen from twenty-five applicants, and at the end of her first year her eighteen-year-old sister Dora became assistant teacher. Miss Lochie was called to serve in China and Miss Dora became principal. Mr. Shapard recorded that she managed the school with judgment and discipline which might have been expected of one far beyond her years. "Their names are held sacred to the Choctaw people. Loved by their pupils, the memory of them is cherished around the rude hearth-stones, and in many places do we hear now little children called by the name of Lochie or Dora."³⁸

Miss Dora Rankin joined her sister in China when she was nineteen; she devoted her life to the mission work there until 1886 when she fell at her post. She was described as "Handsome in person, beautiful in spirit . . . a grand missionary." Miss Lochie is

³⁷ Indian Archives, OHS, Acts and Resolutions passed at the Regular Term of the General Council of the Choctaw Nation, October, 1880, No. 18348.

³⁸ E. R. Shapard, Eufaula, C.N. January 18, 1887.

said to have borne her loss heroically, and she notified the bishop that she would stay at her post in China.³⁹

John Q. Tufts, United States Indian Agent, from the Union Agency at Muskogee, October 10, 1880, stated that the Choctaws had fifty-nine common schools and two seminaries, New Hope, with fifty-one girls in attendance, and Spencer Academy where there were sixty boy students. The schools were flourishing, and the Choctaws saw to it that the persons who managed their financial and educational interests attended strictly to their duties.⁴⁰

Early in 1883 New Hope was visited by Rev. J. N. Moore, who reported "Brother Shapard and family well, and the school in excellent condition." *Our Brother in Red*, Muskogee, May, 1883, contained the news that since Conference of the previous autumn, the Reverend Jacoway Billy, supply on the Mashulatubbe circuit, had died. Of the New Hope Seminary, Brother Shapard wrote: "Our school is full. Music-class fills up every minute. There has not been a death at New Hope among the pupils for seven years. The average yearly mortality for the last twelve years has been four to the thousand."⁴¹

In August, 1883, the Reverend Edward A. Gray arrived at New Hope to become superintendent, and the Choctaws were favorably impressed with him, although they were reluctant to part with "Brother Shapard, who has served them so faithfully and efficiently for eleven years."⁴¹

Mr. Gray belonged to the North Georgia Conference, and when he and his wife came west they were accompanied by Miss Anna M. DeWees who was sent as a missionary teacher by Bishop Pierce. She remained at the school three years before being transferred to another station. In her old age she recalled that Mrs. Fuller and her daughter, Miss Fannie Fuller, were matron and assistant matron at New Hope. The Rev. Mr. Folsom, presiding elder, lived near the seminary. A certain Indian was to be hanged, and Mr. Folsom remained with him all of the day and night before the execution. Miss DeWees was first married to Isaac W. Bruce, who died in 1894. After serving as matron at Armstrong and Jones

³⁹ Young J. Allen, Shanghai, China, December 10, 1886; E. R. Shapard, Eu-
faula, I. T., December 18, 1886. The above articles from a scrap book compiled
by Miss Lizzie Shapard are now the property of Mr. Edward Ruthven Shapard, Jr.,
Muskogee, Oklahoma.

⁴⁰ *Report*, Commissioner Indian affairs, 1880, pp. 95, 96.

⁴¹ *Our Brother in Red*, August, 1883, p. 2, col. 1.

academies, she became the wife of Judge Stocton S. Fears of Muskegee, Oklahoma.⁴²

The committee on education wrote the Indian Mission Conference in October, 1883, that the New Hope Seminary, under the superintendency of Brother Shapard had a year of prosperity equaling any other of its history. Much regret was expressed that Mr. Shapard had been compelled to relinquish his position on account of the ill health of his wife. "For eleven years he has faithfully filled this position, in which he doubtless had accomplished great good for the cause of Christ. . . . we are glad that his place has been filled by Rev. E. A. Gray, who, doubtless, will be fully competent to meet the demands of the school in the future."⁴³

In the autumn of 1883, Mr. Shapard wrote that his family was living in Fort Smith where he spent about half of his time. The remainder was devoted to making the rounds of quarterly meetings. He reported that Mr. Gray was preparing for the opening of New Hope, and that he and his teachers had every qualification for success. "I think that the school is in safe hands. A revival spirit pervades almost all of the district. New ideas, new views, and renewed resolutions are taking hold of the members of the Church."⁴⁴

New Hope Seminary resumed work on September, 1883, with forty-eight pupils present and five delayed because of illness. "Our entire Faculty have entered upon their respective duties with much interest and enthusiasm. We are gratified at the cheerful obedience and general good deportment of our scholars. We trust that, day by day, we are sowing seed that shall bring forth sheaves for the Master."⁴⁵

New Hope had a full quota of pupils in December, 1883, and affairs were moving smoothly in all departments. There had been a few cases of chills and rheumatism, but no serious illnesses.

⁴² *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. XI, No. 2, p. 878. Willis F. Folsom, born in Mississippi in 1826, came west with his father who first settled on Brazile Creek near the crossing of the Fort Smith and Texas Road; they later removed to Fourchmaline, where they made a permanent home. When Willis was seventeen he married, and shortly afterward he was selected as a student at Spencer Academy, where he was converted. The Rev. John Harrell convinced Folsom that the Lord had work for him, and he was placed on a circuit when only an exhorter. He was able to preach in English or Choctaw, and he acted as interpreter for white ministers. He was often destitute for the necessaries of life, but refused political office; the members of the General Conference, at Memphis, were electrified when Brother Folsom raised his hands and exclaimed, "I am a lost Indian, saved by Grace" (Shapard Scrapbook).

⁴³ *Our Brother in Red*, October, 1883, p. 2, cols 2 & 3.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, September 1883, p. 4, col. 1.

⁴⁵ E. A. Gray to Rev. T. F. Brewer from Oak Lodge, Choctaw Nation, October 12, 1883, published in November, 1883, issue of *Our Brother in Red*.

"We are now enjoying a revival of religion in our school; not having a protracted-meeting, but experiencing the presence of the Spirit at our morning and evening prayers. . . . There seems to be a serious earnestness manifest among all the scholars. Brother W. F. Folsom has been with us frequently, and has preached, and talked, and prayed, with peculiar power and influence. Quite a number have been converted, and I received ten young ladies in our church last night. . . .

"What mighty agents for good in this Nation will these girls be if we can send them all back to their homes full of love to God and immortal souls! There can be no surer or more speedy way to spread Christianity over this whole Territory than by making religious instruction a prominent feature of all the schools. . . . the late Choctaw Council appropriated sufficient funds to increase our number from fifty-three to one hundred. We shall begin very soon to enlarge and build to meet these demands, for there are numerous applicants now begging admission, but our rooms are more than full.

"We are taking steps toward building a chapel church near us, so that all our school can attend preaching regularly. We hope to get it ready for our Commencement exercises next June. I know you will rejoice with us in these bright prospects for New Hope; and we hope there may continue to go out from this Institution those who will be a blessing to their race, and even in the retired sphere of women be eminently useful."⁴⁶

The new school building was commenced early in the spring of 1884, but heavy rains and bad roads greatly retarded the work, and it was not expected to finish the construction before summer. Mr. Gray was encouraged and delighted with affairs in his school; the health of the girls had been remarkably good during the winter, in fact there had been only one or two cases of serious illness. Measles was wide-spread that spring, and Mr. Gray trusted that "a kind Providence will continue to shield us from the contagion." Some twenty of the girls professed religion and joined the Methodist Church, while several others wished to join the Presbyterian and Baptist churches.

A parsonage and memorial chapel were to be built at New Hope and help was coming from many sources. Mr. Gray was hopeful of having the Indian Mission Conference represented in the church building by a donation. The church was to be a memorial to the senior bishop whose deep interest in Choctaws was well known.⁴⁷

April 13, 1884, was a great day at New Hope, as the corner stone of the new building was laid in the presence of three Methodist

⁴⁶ *Our Brother in Red*, December, 1883, p. 2, cols. 2 & 3.

⁴⁷ *Our Brother in Red*, March, 1884, pp. 3 & 4.

clergymen—Messrs. Gray, Atkins and Folsom, who made addresses and readings from the Bible. At the October meeting of the Choctaw Council an appropriation of \$5000 had been made for the erection of the building and the number of pupils increased to one hundred. The corner stone contained a copy of the original contract between the church and the nation, a photograph of the superintendent, several ancient coins and Indian curiosities, and a copy of the *Choctaw Hymn Book*. After music and a prayer by the superintendent, Miss Mary Cakes, a student, gave a history of the seminary “in which she displayed both talent and training.”

Ralph King, who was present at the ceremonies, wrote an account of the school for the *Fort Smith Elevator*, which was copied in the *Indian Journal* of Muskogee, May 8, 1884, p. 1, columns 2 and 3. Among other items of interest, he stated that Mr. Clayborn Lewis who had died a few years previously at Witcherville, Arkansas, had charge of the agricultural department of the school, and that Colonel E. T. Walker, of Scott County, was also connected with New Hope. According to this writer, the seminary was closed at the beginning of the Civil War, and the building used as a Confederate hospital. “Mr. Shapard did much to build up the school and regulate the different departments, which are divided into literary, musical and industrial pursuits. . . .”

During 1884 serious differences arose between the Methodist Church and the Choctaw Council over the management of New Hope; the Council voted to abrogate the contract with the church at the end of the school year in 1886. The autumn term of the seminary began September 7, 1885, with a competent faculty and a hundred students were present to occupy the new dormitory. Eighty-two pupils were converted and joined the church. The Rev. John Jasper Methvin, the superintendent, was obliged to “shape his course toward the closing of the school rather than the development of it.”

Mr. Methvin, a native of Georgia, was born December 17, 1846; after the Civil War, in which he served two years, he attended college and studied law, but the church drew him in a short time, and he was licensed to preach in 1870. In 1873 he was married to Miss Emma Louise Beall, and to them three sons and one daughter were born before they moved to the Indian Territory in 1885. A fourth son, H. A. Methvin, was born soon after their arrival at New Hope.

Mr. Methvin's first year at the seminary was so successful that many of the prominent members of the council regretted rescinding the contract with the church. “Nevertheless, after forty years of service to the Nation, the school closed. The last year was the best year.”⁴⁸

⁴⁸ *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, “John Jasper Methvin” by Sidney H. Babcock, June, 1941, pp. 114-15.

The above statement appears to be a mistake, since the Choctaw Auditor, Napoleon B. Ainsworth, paid to Dr. Alfred Griffith from September 1, 1886, to January 31, 1887, the sum of \$5,000 for support of New Hope.⁴⁹ A warrant was issued at Tushkahoma to reimburse Fort Smith merchants for goods received from February 1, 1887, to July 31 of that year.⁵⁰

The staff at New Hope who receipted for salaries December 9, 1887, were Mittie S. Burton, Nettie M. Russell, Carrie C. Shank, Neely F. Carpenter (ironer), Jane C. Carpenter, cook; A. M. Fuller, matron. Doctor Griffith receipted for \$265.09 for his services as physician.⁵¹

Repairs were being made at New Hope in 1889, since B. C. Blakely, Master of the "Regular Fort Smith and Fort Gibson Packet", *Border City*, rendered a bill to the school for \$104.87 for lumber and shingles shipped by Miller and Dyke.⁵²

Miss Burton was still employed at the seminary in March, 1889, but new teachers were Gertrude Brandeberry and Eva Mai Pierce. The treasurer of the Choctaw Nation paid \$10,000 for support of the school, and \$105.80 was received from other sources. Repairs and improvements were made in 1888-89 to the amount of \$497.04⁵³ Griffith, on August 13, 1890, paid H. Waite \$70.00 "for an yoke oxen".

New Hope opened September 1, 1890, with "the students reporting more promptly than usual, and exhibiting a spirit of industry and obedience, enabling us to maintain proper discipline and carry on the work, both in the school room and elsewhere, successfully." Attendance was remarkably good, being one hundred and nineteen for the year with an average of one hundred. Measles, that scourge of boarding schools, invaded the seminary in the latter part of January, and the regular work of the school was seriously interrupted for two weeks. The general health of the pupils was fairly good, except for the death of one girl and of several others who, "owing to feeble constitution, were sick a large portion of the year."

According to a new law approved by Principal Chief W. W. Jones, October 31, 1890, each student before admission to a Choctaw boarding school, was required to undergo a "creditable" phy-

⁴⁹ Indian Archives, OHS, New Hope, No. 19883. Napoleon B. Ainsworth was born in 1856 at Skullyville; at the age of fifteen he entered Roanoke College at Salem, Virginia. After graduation in 1880, he attended the University of Virginia where he studied law. He was appointed auditor of his nation to fill the unexpired term of Leflore, and in 1887 was elected to the office (H. F. O'Beirne, *Leaders and Leading Man of the Indian Territory*, Chicago, 1891, p. 106).

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, No. 19886.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, No. 19889.

⁵² *Ibid.*, No. 19891.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, No. 19901.

sical examination before a competent physician selected by the superintendent of schools, as well as a mental test, the standard to be fixed by the Board of Education. Doctor Griffith was heartily in favor of the law, as persons physically unfit by chronic disease would be excluded.

Steam heat was installed in the New Hope school before the close on June 18, 1891, and that innovation saved the students from much extra work and exposure during cold weather. The moral and religious training had brought encouraging results and graded reports of the standing of each student had been carefully compiled according to a new school law.

Doctor Griffith called the attention of the Board to the abuse of the hospitality of the seminary by many persons who attended the annual examinations, although they had no interest in the institution, and only crowded out parents and relatives who had a legitimate right to be there. He suggested that a plan be adopted by which the annoyance might be avoided.⁵⁴

Many well known Choctaw names appear on the list of students at the school at that period: Hudson, LeFlore, Jones, Garland, Byington, Tocubbe, Pickens, Folsom, Chubby, Harkins, Wall and Pitchlynn.

The sixth annual report of Doctor Griffith to the Board of Education carried the information that New Hope was in a prosperous condition. One hundred sixteen pupils had attended although the average was ninety; this doubtless was due to a severe form of malarial fever during October, which resulted in the death of four girls, and the return home of several students during the prevalence of the disease. Systematic physical training had been introduced and kindergarten methods adopted in the primary department, which materially increased its efficiency. Doctor Griffith's plea for regulating non-citizen guests at the school had been heard by the Board, and he followed the instructions sent him with satisfactory results.

"The contract between the School Board of the Choctaw Nation and the Missionary Society of the M. E. Church for the management of New Hope Seminary expired June 15, '92, and according to agreement with the Supt. of Public Schools, on the 9th of June I transferred all property belonging to the school to Mr. T. D. Ainsworth, who had been designated to receive the same. Respectfully Dr. A. Griffith."⁵⁵

Thomas D. Ainsworth of Skullyville, the next superintendent, was the first man of Choctaw blood to fill the position. During the

⁵⁴ Indian Archives, OHS, *Choctaw-New Hope Seminary*, No. 19907.

⁵⁵ Indian Archives Division, OHS, *Choctaw-New Hope Seminary*, No. 19917. \$10,136.29 had been expended at the school, leaving a balance of \$19.87.

next term goods were bought for the school from Ainsworth Brothers, Oak Lodge. That year beef cost three and a half cents per pound. Henry Sutherland was the principal teacher and Lena Sutherland the matron. Other instructors during 1892-1893 were Minnie E. Nichols, Mary E. Thompson and M. Stalcup.

Ainsworth's report to the Board for the 1892-93 session of New Hope was unique and deserves to be quoted: ". . . on account of political prejudice or Christian intolerance or both combined the school was not full—I believe the attendance would not average over seventy-five for the entire term—but I am happy to say under these adverse circumstances I succeeded in spending the entire appropriation—and without levity—or fear of successful contradiction—that the girls intrusted to my care had more opportunities for study—and were treated better and more like people who were paying their way than ever characterized the management of any of our Boarding Schools."⁵⁶

A curious letter, preserved among the Choctaw records, was sent from New Hope Seminary, October 28, 1892; it shows that all was not as smooth as the superintendent reported. "What you have been hearing about our school is *False*.

"We have seen no drinking here except by Mr. John Garland one time and no whiskey at all. We have seen no drinking before or since. And as to *dancing* there has been *none* except by some of our small girls off in their rooms when the teachers knew nothing about it, and Mr. Ainsworth was not at home. And when he came home he put a stop to their playing dancing in their room. The teachers knew nothing about it, and no music except by five cent harp. And you can imagine what kind dancing was done among our small girls.

"We are not allowed to go outside without permission by Supt. and some of the teachers go with us. Some girls may slip off and go outside without permission.

"Everything you have heard about our school is *false* except few things what we mentioned. We send this letter by Mr. Amos Henry."

(Signers)

Mary Leflore Blue County
 Sophie Hayes " "
 Ethel Ross, Cache, Skullyville Co.
 Allie Wall, Skullyville Co.
 Mollie Bacon, Wade Co.
 Lecina Hudson, Eagle Co.

⁵⁶ Indian Archives Division, OHS, *Choctaw-New Hope Seminary*, No. 19921.

Ainsworth's statement⁵⁷ to the General Council, July 31, 1894, showed New Hope in debt for the sum of \$623.80. Teachers and employees had been paid \$2492.70; Mr. and Mrs. Southerland (*sic*) had received ninety dollars a month; Belle Falconer, the seamstress, thirty dollars; Ralda Nichols, teacher, \$35.00; Ernestine Williams, teacher, \$30; Minnie Nichols Enaligh, "@15 sick"; Mrs. Long and family cooks, \$45; J. C. Martin, hired man, \$25. Sutherland had quit two months before school closed, and his wife had lost enough time to cover the discrepancy, so they received only \$702.95 for their services.

One hundred sixteen pupils had been enrolled, but the average attendance was ninety-two. The highest class, numbering nine, studied algebra, arithmetic, grammar, physiology, composition and rhetoric. Thirty girls were in the Third Reader and below, while the remainder ranged from the Fourth Reader to History of the United States, with corresponding studies.⁵⁸

Superintendent Ainsworth in submitting his report for 1894 and 1895 to the General Council, stated that the average attendance for five months was about eighty; progress of the students in several studies had been commendable, and the health of the girls very good. The clothing and food furnished was the best the appropriation justified, and teachers, superintendent and pupils were given the same fare.

When the boarding schools were established, they were located in different parts of the Nation so as to be as close to the pupils as possible. Ainsworth thought it advisable to reapportion the children at the boarding schools so that no great expense would be incurred by parents in taking them to school. The council was indebted to Ainsworth for expenses which were heavier than they would have been if the school had been continued the full ten months.

Henry Byington, chairman of the committee on schools, in a report to the General Council, stated that the committee, after a careful examination found that expenditures had exceeded receipts at New Hope to the amount of \$696.76 owing to the closing of the school on January 31, 1895, and recommended that the report of Ainsworth be accepted as correct. The committee later asked the council to pass a bill for the relief of Superintendent Ainsworth in the sum of \$1306.70 to reimburse him for expenditures during 1893 and 1894 term, and for the two following years in excess of the appropriations which had been made for the seminary.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Indian Archives, OHS, *Choctaw-New Hope Seminary*, No. 19918.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, No. 19924.

⁵⁹ Indian Archives, OHS, *Choctaw-New Hope Seminary*, Nos. 19926, 19927, 19928.

Ainsworth's final report as to the financial state of New Hope for the year ending July 31, 1896, showed that he had a balance of \$340.00 on hand which he wrote astonished him. He requested payment for his two last reports as he needed the money in his business.⁶⁰

From Oak Lodge, September 30, 1897, R. J. Ward wrote to "The Hon. Board of Education of the Choctaw Nation I taken charge of New Hope Seminary on Nov. 24th and continued in charge until the night of Dec. 30, 1896, when it was destroyed by fire . . ." Ward rendered a bill for \$900 to the nation for superintending the New Hope property from January 1 to September 30, 1897.⁶¹

The end of New Hope was the same as many other early schools in the Indian Territory; Dwight was burned with a loss of life among the students; both fine buildings of the Cherokee seminaries were lost by fire; Asbury Mission and Tullahassee in the Creek Nation were burned as well as Bloomfield in the Chickasaw Nation, and perhaps there were others.⁶²

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, No. 19930.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, No. 19931.

⁶² Principal Chief Green McCurtain, on June 2, 1899, sold rails and railings from New Hope to J. H. Bowman for ten dollars. Bowman wrote to G. W. Scott, treasurer of the nation, June 15, 1900, relative to the sale of the New Hope property; "I am anxious to know the conditions of said [property] and what there is to sell, and who will be the salesman and what their (*sic*) is to sell, and when to be sold whether Public or Private Sale. I will send you the copy of the letter the Hon. Green McCurtain wrote me giving me possession of the above named Premises New Hoper. Will inform you that under contract between Gov McCurtain that I have the exclusive right to said New Hope Premises and will contend for the same it being my wifes allotment.

"Let me hear from you and please inform me who has bid on New Hope and their bids and their names . . ." —Indian Archives, OHS, Choctaw-New Hope Seminary, Nos. 19932, 19933.