

## "TALLAHASSEE MISSION"

By Virginia E. Lauderdale\*

In 1833 the Western Foreign Missionary Society of the Presbyterian Church established its first mission among the Weas,<sup>1</sup> a small band of Indians living in northeastern Oklahoma. Within a few years, the Society had established missions among many of the tribes in this same region and elsewhere. It was in 1850 that "Tallahassee Mission," by far the most important school among the Creeks, was opened.<sup>2</sup>

Other denominations had earlier established missions among the Creeks, but because of unfavorable relations with the Indians, the chiefs had forced these missionaries to leave. Thus, the Creeks were without any such service and were dependent upon themselves for schools, so that following their removal west of the Mississippi, education in their nation lagged far behind that of their neighbors.

Such were the conditions when the Reverend Robert M. Loughridge made his trip to the Creek Nation in the winter of 1841, to ascertain the possibility of establishing a mission there as a project of the Western Foreign Missionary Society which had by then changed its name to the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church.<sup>3</sup>

The original home of Mr. Loughridge was Lawrenceville, South Carolina, where he was born in 1809, of Scotch-Irish Presbyterian parentage. In 1832 he joined the Presbyterian church in Mesopotamia, Georgia, and began the study of Latin and Greek with his pastor. Five years later he was graduated from Miami University at Oxford, Ohio, and then studied for a year at Princeton.<sup>4</sup>

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\* Virginia E. Lauderdale was commissioned an ensign in the Supply Corps of the United States Navy, and was promoted to the rank of lieutenant (junior grade) before her separation from the service. She was born at Pocasset, Oklahoma, and attended the public schools of Minco, Grady County, the Oklahoma College for Women at Chickasha, East Central State College at Ada, and received her master's degree from the University of Oklahoma. She is now teaching in Northern Oklahoma Junior College at Tonkawa.—Ed.

<sup>1</sup> John W. Lowrie, *A Manual of Missions* (New York, 1854), p. 16.

<sup>2</sup> The Reverend Robert M. Loughridge spelled the name of this place "Tallahassee." The noted Creek school at Tallahassee was referred to in the early official reports as "Tallahassee Manual Labor Boarding School" or "Presbyterian Manual Labor Boarding School." Variants of this name used commonly in referring to the institution included "Tallahassee Mission" and "Tallahassee Mission," though it was a tribal boarding school supported largely by appropriations from the Creek educational funds, made by the National Council. The work of the superintendents and teachers in the institution was missionary, under the auspices of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions.—Ed.

<sup>3</sup> Lowrie, *op. cit.*

It was in response to a call from the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions that he came to the Creek Nation to establish a mission where he could teach and preach.<sup>5</sup> On his arrival he found only one school among the Creeks and that was a rather poor one. It was later revealed that the man operating it was a counterfeiter.

The Indians had had unpleasant experiences with their former missionaries and would agree to a school but would allow no preaching because it interfered with some of their customs, including their dances and games. Loughridge told them that his primary purpose for coming to their country was to preach, so, if they would not allow preaching, there could be no school. The Indians at last agreed to let him preach but only at the mission station. A contract was made with the Creeks providing for a mission with a maximum of four missionaries at the beginning.<sup>6</sup> It was clearly understood, however, that the missionaries were not to interfere with tribal affairs or government schools. The Indians on their part were to protect the mission and the missionaries, and the latter were given the right to use as much tribal land as they wished for fields and pastures.

Loughridge then returned to his home and in 1843 moved with his bride to the selected site of the new mission at Coweta. Log buildings were erected for their home and the school. Loughridge, assisted by his wife, was so successful in his work that in 1845 a boarding school with twenty pupils was begun and a church organized.<sup>7</sup>

In 1847 Walter Lowrie, secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions, visited Koweta Mission, near the present town of Coweta, in Wagoner County. He was favorably impressed with the work being done and made an agreement with the chiefs to establish another mission to accommodate eighty boarding pupils.<sup>8</sup> Loughridge chose the site for the new school sixteen miles east of Koweta Mission and one-half mile north of the Arkansas River. The location was twelve miles from Fort Gibson.

The contract provided that the new school would be maintained jointly by funds from the Presbyterian Church and the Creek school

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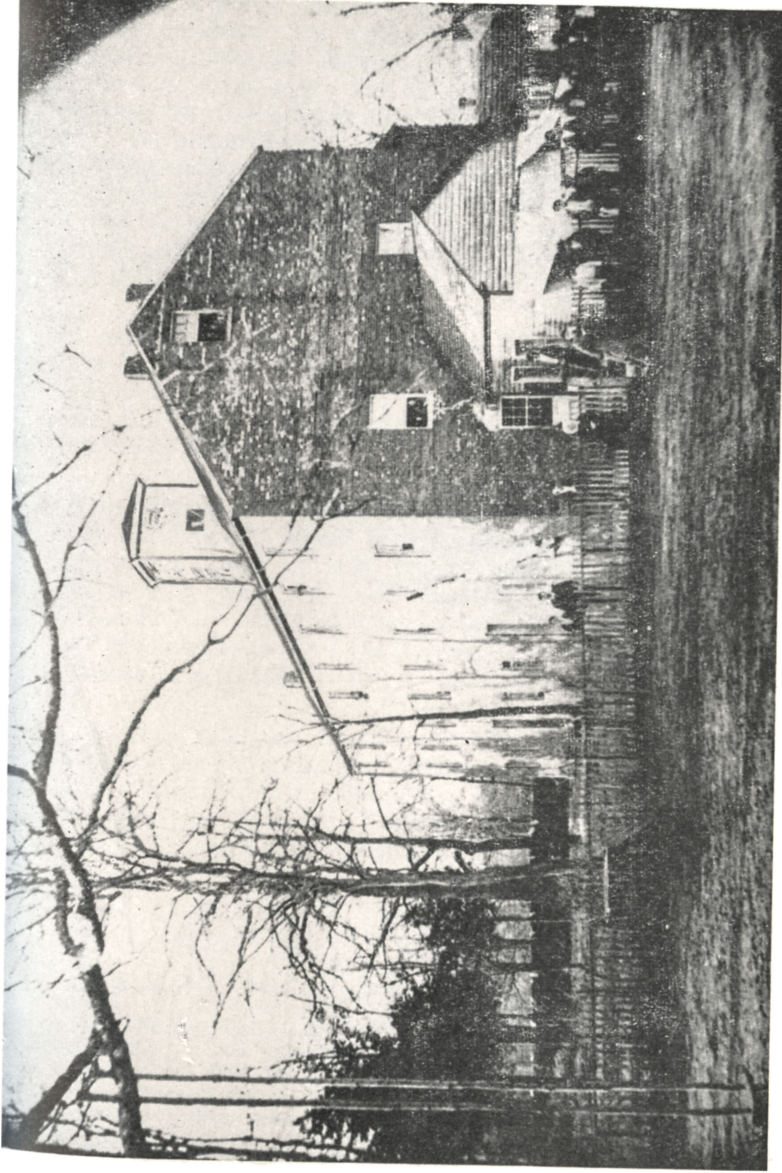
<sup>4</sup> H. F. and E. S. O'Beirne, *The Indian Territory: Its Chiefs, Legislators and Leading Men* (St. Louis, 1892), pp. 475-76.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 476.

<sup>6</sup> Lowrie, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> O'Beirne, *op. cit.*, p. 477. (In early official reports the mission is referred to as "Koweta Mission," having been named thus by the Reverend R. M. Loughridge when he began his missionary labors here.—Ed.)



Tullahassee Mission, Original Building (destroyed by fire December 19, 1880)

fund. In 1845 the Creek Nation had made a new treaty with the United States government.<sup>9</sup> One provision of this treaty was that the United States would annually appropriate \$3,000 for the education of Creek children. The expenses of the institution were shared by the Board of Foreign Missions, the Creek government, and the United States government.<sup>10</sup> The Board chose the teachers and paid their salaries; the Creek government paid the general expenses and attended to the material needs of the school. The Creek Nation chose a board of five trustees who acted with the Superintendent of Public Instruction for the Nation in managing the affairs of the school. One boy and one girl from each of the forty Creek towns were selected to attend the school, and for each student enrolled, the Creek Nation paid fifty dollars a year to the Mission.<sup>11</sup>

The construction of Tallahassee was begun in 1848 under the supervision of Loughridge. The main building was a three-story brick structure measuring seventy-six by thirty-four feet, located in the midst of a grove of cedar, oak and hickory trees.<sup>12</sup> Wild life abounded in the woods nearby.

William Schenck Robertson came to Tallahassee as principal teacher, and Loughridge served as Superintendent of the two schools. Robertson, born January 11, 1820, was graduated from Union College, Schenectady, New York, in 1842, then completed two-thirds of a course in medicine. After teaching in various New York academies, he offered his services to the Board of Foreign Missions and was sent to Tallahassee as a teacher.<sup>13</sup>

On April 15, 1850, Mr. Robertson married Ann Eliza Worcester, the daughter of the Reverend Samuel Austin Worcester, a missionary among the Cherokees. Mrs. Robertson was born at Brainerd Mission in the Cherokee Nation in Tennessee in 1826. She received her education at St. Johnsbury Academy in Vermont, and after gradua-

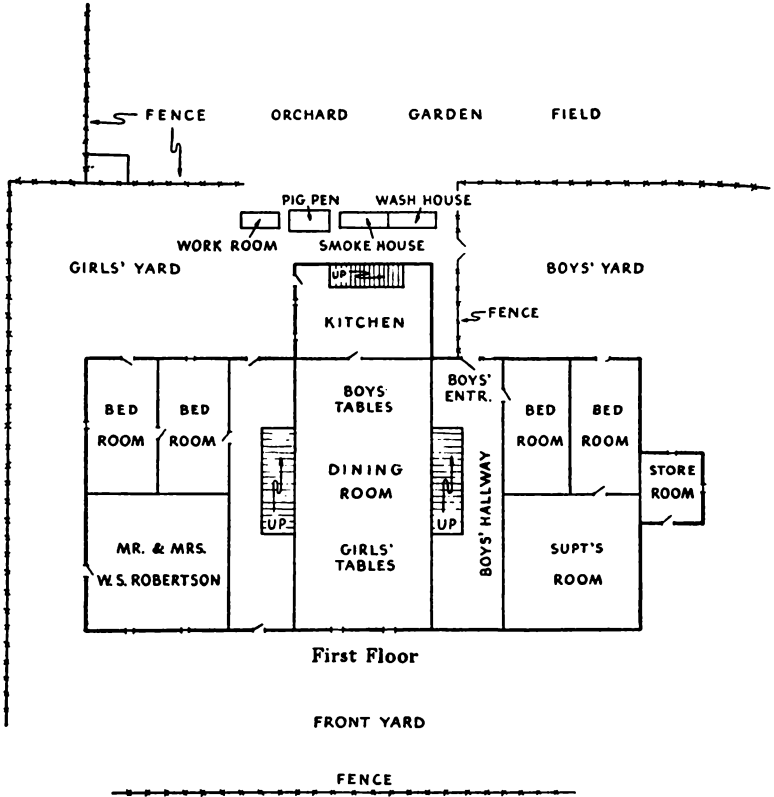
<sup>9</sup> Charles J. Kappler, *Laws and Treaties, Indian Affairs* (Washington, 1904) Vol. II, p. 408.

<sup>10</sup> John H. Beadle, *The Undeveloped West or Five Years in the Territories* (Philadelphia, 1873), p. 380. (None of the Creek tribal schools received direct support by appropriations from the Federal government. The \$3,000 to be paid annually by the United States for education of Creek children, under the terms of the Creek Treaty of 1845, was in lieu of just payment due the Creek Nation for the unsatisfactory settlement made by the United States in determining the boundary lines of the Creek country by the terms of the Treaty of 1833.—Ed.)

<sup>11</sup> *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs*, 1869, p. 415.

<sup>12</sup> O'Beirne, *op. cit.*, p. 478.

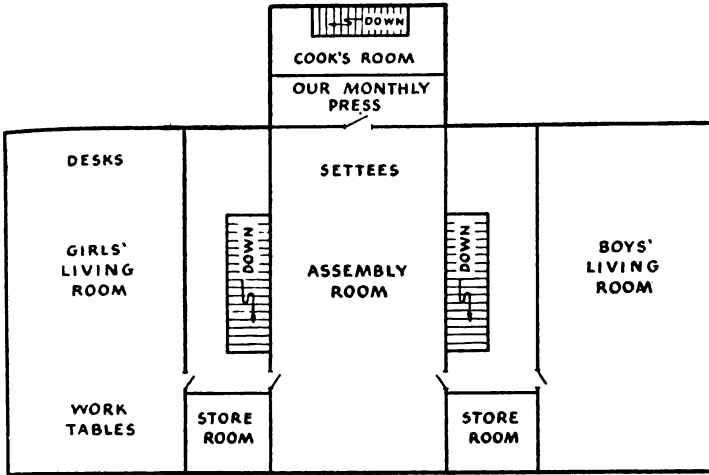
<sup>13</sup> Edward E. Dale, "William Schenck Robertson," *Dictionary of American Biography* (New York, 1929), Vol. XVI, p. 30.



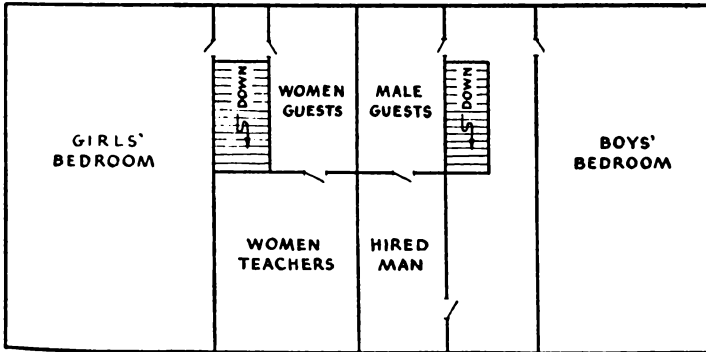
40 ACRE FIELD

(Frank Phillips Collection, O. U.)

Plan of Tullahassee Mission  
From pencil sketch made by S. W. Robertson



Second Floor



Third Floor

# Tallahassee Mission

tion in 1846, joined her family and became a teacher among the Cherokees in Indian Territory.<sup>14</sup>

Another interesting person in the mission work was Miss Nancy Thompson.<sup>15</sup> Her missionary life began among the Cherokees in 1826. When the Cherokees moved west in 1839, she moved with them, and in 1849 joined Mr. Robertson at Tullahassee to aid him in his work. She continued her labors there until her death at the age of ninety-one.

Tullahassee was first opened as a day school on January 1, 1850, before the building was completed.<sup>16</sup> On March 1, the boarding school received its first students. The number was limited to thirty because it was believed that the school would be more successful if begun with only a few pupils.

Since none of the teachers spoke the Creek language, it was necessary to use Creek children who spoke both languages as interpreters. The course of study was necessarily limited. Only reading, arithmetic, geography, English grammar and composition were taught the first year, but by 1858 the curriculum was expanded to include spelling, writing, algebra, natural philosophy, "Watts on the Mind," history, declamation, and Latin.<sup>17</sup>

The activities at Tullahassee were closely supervised. A bell, donated by the Board, "regulated all the exercises of the school and church."<sup>18</sup> The school was conducted on the manual labor plan. Classroom activities occupied six hours of the day and two or three hours each day were spent on outside work. Mr. Loughridge described the activities at the school in a report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1851:<sup>19</sup>

The pupils rise, make their beds, wash and comb, sweep their rooms, &c. Then the boys engage in feeding the stock, drawing water, cutting fire-wood, &c. The girls assist about the breakfast, setting tables, sewing, knitting, attending to dairy, &c.

Breakfast about seven o'clock in winter, and earlier in summer. Immediately after breakfast we have family worship, consisting of reading the scriptures, singing and prayer; then work for about one hour and a half; recitation and study from 9 to 12; then dinner and recreation until 1 p.m.; then recitation and study again until 4 p.m., when all are required

<sup>14</sup> James C. Pilling, *Bibliography of the Muskogean Languages* (Washington, 1889), p. 78.

<sup>15</sup> Ann Eliza Worcester Robertson, "Mrs. Ann Eliza Worcester Robertson," in the Samuel W. Robertson Papers, Typed transcript, Frank Phillips Collection, University of Oklahoma, Norman, 17-18. A description of Miss Thompson is also given in Augustus W. Loomis, *Scenes in the Indian Country* (Philadelphia, 1859), pp. 87-91.

<sup>16</sup> *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs*, 1851, p. 391.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 391; and *ibid.*, 1858, p. 150.

<sup>18</sup> O'Beirne, *op. cit.*, p. 478.

<sup>19</sup> *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs*, 1851, p. 392.

to work again for one hour and a half. Supper about dark; immediately after supper the children and teachers each repeat a verse, or part of a verse, of Scripture; then family worship, as in the morning; then study until 8 or half past 8, then all retire to rest. On Sabbath we have Sunday school in the morning, and usually preaching at noon and night.

The first school year closed July 17, 1850, with a public examination which was attended by the principal and second chiefs, the board of trustees of the school, and the leading men of the district. The students were examined by the board of trustees; this and an address by Sear Hardage, one of the chiefs, were the principal features of the day.

Mr. Loughridge reported that by the end of the first session most of the students were no longer bothered by homesickness, but during the year "about seventy were attacked with measles, and afterwards thirty or thirty-five with dysentery."<sup>20</sup>

The girls rose early to prepare breakfast. Loughridge wrote that the "children were provided with three good substantial meals a day,"<sup>21</sup> but Samuel Worcester Robertson later suggested that they were not very palatable.<sup>22</sup> Breakfast usually consisted of griddle cakes made of coarse corn meal with little shortening and flavored with New Orleans molasses, coffee, parched and ground by the girls, coarse corn bread made with too much soda, and occasionally, meat.

In 1854 Walter Lowrie wrote of the progress being made at the two schools:<sup>23</sup>

These schools have proved a means of great good to the youth connected with them. A considerable number have become members of the church; "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord" have caused the hearts of the missionaries to rejoice in their work, many of their beloved scholars have sought and found the way of life. No one of the Indian missions of the Board has been more honored in the hopeful conversion of souls. Some of the converts, as well as the missionaries, have died in the triumphs of faith. Two young men, formerly pupils of the school, have been taken under the care of the Presbytery as candidates for the ministry. And the missionary work is still going on with marked encouragement and success.

This mission, according to the Report of this year, 1854, now consists of two stations, two ordained missionaries, nine male and female and two native assistant missionaries, fifty-five communicants, and one hundred and twenty scholars in boarding school.

In the years before the Civil War, Mr. and Mrs. Robertson, working with Mr. Loughridge and other missionaries, began the task of translating the Holy Scriptures, hymns, stories from the Bible, a catechism, and other works into the Creek language. Before any

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 393.

<sup>21</sup> O'Beirne, *op. cit.*, p. 479.

<sup>22</sup> Samuel W. Robertson, "The Story of My Times," MS., Frank Phillips Collection, p. 22.

<sup>23</sup> Lowrie, *op. cit.*, p. 18.



translating could be done by the missionaries, the English alphabet had to be adapted to the Muskogee language. In 1856 the *Creek First Reader*, prepared by Mr. Robertson and David Winsett, a Creek who later became a minister, was published.<sup>24</sup> It is believed that the *Creek First Reader* contributed more toward the advancement of the Creeks than almost any other factor.<sup>25</sup>

Then came the Civil War to interrupt the work at the mission. The Creek Nation split into two factions, and on July 10, 1861, the chiefs of the Nation took over the Presbyterian Manual Labor School at Tullahassee, then valued at \$12,270, and also Koweta Manual Labor School.<sup>26</sup> The division of the Nation even touched the people of the Mission. Loughridge, with southern sentiments, and Robertson, accused of being an ardent "Abolitionist," both left the Mission and never again did they combine their talents in the great task which they had begun.

The Robertsons spent the first winter of the war in Wisconsin—Mr. Robertson's original home. The rest of the time was spent in teaching in Mattoon and Centralia, Illinois, and the Indian Orphan Institute at Highland, Kansas. In 1866 Augusta, their oldest daughter, left for Dayton, Ohio, to attend Cooper Seminary.<sup>27</sup> At about the same time, the Robertsons were asked to return to Tullahassee to reopen the mission and school. They were eager to continue their work, and in 1867, set out for Indian Territory in a wagon drawn by a team of two horses and with what possessions they were able to take with them.

During the War the main building was used as a barracks and hospital. The larger rooms on the first floor were at times used as stables. Some of the bricks from the kitchen had been torn out and removed to Fort Gibson to be used to build a bakery. By the end of the war, the windows were without glass and the door casings and window frames had been torn out and used as fuel.<sup>28</sup> The rail fence around the grounds was no longer standing, and when the Robertsons arrived, they had to make their way through the tall dead weeds surrounding the building. To add to the desolate condition of the Mission, the nearby forest was overrun with wolves. The Robertsons tied their horses to posts in the yard. One of the horses accidentally hung himself one night, and was partly devoured by wolves.

<sup>24</sup> Pilling, *op. cit.*, p. 78. The *Creek Second Reader* was published in 1871.

<sup>25</sup> Ann Eliza Worcester Robertson, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

<sup>26</sup> O'Beirne, *op. cit.*, p. 479. (The school was officially referred to as "Koweta Manual Labor School.—Ed.)

<sup>27</sup> Carolyn T. Foreman, "Augusta Robertson Moore," *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. XIII, No. 4 (December, 1935), p. 402.

<sup>28</sup> *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs*, 1869, p. 416. (Report signed by Leonard Worcester, Superintendent, Tullahassee Manual Labor School, appointed to the position by the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions, the school having begun its second session in October, 1868, with 40 girls and 41 boys enrolled.—Ed.)



(Frank Phillips Collection, O. U.)  
"David and Goliath," from *Creek Second Reader*,  
published by William Schenck Robertson

Much of the original work of construction had to be done all over again. Mr. Robertson received permission to buy a set of buildings nearby but they were destroyed in a prairie fire on the day after the approval was received.<sup>29</sup> The institution had earlier acquired a saw which was still there. At once work was begun making tables, chairs and desks from native lumber, but doors, windows and other supplies had to be ordered from Cincinnati. These were shipped by water to the Verdigris landing where they were left to be hauled the remaining distance by wagon. By accident, much of the badly needed supplies of one of the shipments was soaked with the muddy river water, but Mr. Robertson accepted the goods (including bedding) from the insurance company, at reduced prices, thus saving money for other needs.<sup>30</sup>

The work of rebuilding Tallahassee Mission continued. One good carpenter was hired to superintend the work. He was paid two dollars a day and keep. The other employees were local laborers who were paid from fifty to seventy-five cents a day. The rail fences had to be rebuilt. Although the smoke house and wash house were still standing, they needed repair. The grist mill had to be put in working order, the wells cleaned, the orchard and garden needed attention, and the forty acre field in front of the Mission had to be cleared and planted.

Tallahassee Mission was reopened on the same plan as had been used before the War. The boys and girls had separate classes as well as separate yards for play, and a third yard was fenced off for the missionary children.<sup>31</sup> In the spring of 1868 a call was sent out for fifteen boys and fifteen girls to enter the school. Those who were sent to Tallahassee ranged in ages from twelve to twenty. Again many of them could not speak English. A primer, especially prepared to meet the needs of these pupils, was used to teach them to read Creek and English at the same time.<sup>32</sup> It contained pictures under which there appeared words and short sentences in both languages.

In October the second session began with eighty-one students enrolled at the school.<sup>33</sup> Samuel Worcester Robertson was seven years old at the beginning of this session and has left an account of life at Tallahassee. The daily schedule was the same as before the War. Classes began at nine o'clock and dismissed at four-thirty. The boys were divided into companies under captains and worked at the different tasks about the Mission. Chopping wood and splitting

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<sup>29</sup> Samuel W. Robertson, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>33</sup> *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1869, p. 416.*

rails for fences were their favorite tasks. The fences were supposedly "pigtight" but frequently proved to be otherwise. The work about the Mission was often long and tiresome. By the time the evening devotionals were finished everyone was usually ready for bed and the smaller children often had to be awakened and sent on their way.

Sunday and Monday were holidays from school.<sup>34</sup> On Sunday the children attended the church services and performed a minimum of daily tasks. Monday replaced Saturday because the morning was used for doing the laundry. Monday afternoon was set aside for play. The boys were allowed to wander in small groups and could hunt, or fish, or play as they chose, but the girls had to stay in one group and were always accompanied by a teacher. Their chief form of recreation was walking.

Christmas was the outstanding holiday of the year at the Tullahassee Mission.<sup>35</sup> Excitement increased as the day approached. Packages containing gifts for the children from missionary societies in the East were deposited at Verdigris landing and brought to the Mission where they were carefully hidden from the children. The chief worry of the missionaries was whether there would be enough gifts to go around. Appropriateness was secondary, for although the missionaries tried to distribute the gifts to the children for whom they were best fitted, it was an ideal situation for teaching the true spirit of Christmas giving: not the gift, but the spirit in which it is given.

Then just before Christmas two trees were cut and brought in, one for the boys' classroom and one for the girls'. A few selected students dipped candles, and decorated the trees with ornaments made by the children. Then the gifts were placed under the trees and no one was allowed to go into the rooms until Christmas Eve. The boys and girls then assembled in their respective classrooms for the Christmas program. Afterwards the gifts were distributed and each child was given one doughnut and a piece of mince pie, the only time of the year that such food was enjoyed at the boarding school.

S. W. Robertson's description of the lives of the boys at Tullahassee affords an interesting study.<sup>36</sup> Emphasis was placed on the educational and religious phase which continued throughout their years spent there. It was for the successful fulfillment of this that the Robertsons devoted their lives. Their sincerity and competence were shown in one of the experiences of Samuel Worcester Robertson who was more surprised than embarrassed when scolded by two visiting ministers. The two ministers brought their hunting dogs with them from Kansas, and while being driven to a meeting ten miles from the Mission by Samuel, they reprimanded him for going so fast that

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<sup>34</sup> Samuel W. Robertson, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14.

he frightened the birds "before their dogs had a chance to 'point them.'" <sup>37</sup>

Other interests in recreation and work developed with the child. The youngest boys found great delight in fishing with the simplest of equipment. Their methods consisted of utilizing a bent pin as a hook or in stirring the water until the fish became so dizzy that they floated on top of the water where they were easily caught by the boys with their bare hands.

As the boys grew older they gave up fishing for hunting with clubs and bows and arrows. Accidents were not unknown. Samuel received a minor wound by standing between one of the Indian boys and an animal at which the boy was shooting. Rather than move and frighten the animal, he stood still and took a chance on being missed. The result was that the animal escaped unharmed, but Samuel was not so fortunate.

Then came the "pastoral stage" of life. After the Civil War, there were no fences in the country. Livestock ran loose. Calves were kept up so that the cows would return at night, but sometimes they strayed too far and could not find their way home. The boys loved to climb on the back of a pony and hunt the strays. Sometimes, whether at work or play, they could not resist the thrill of chasing the wild hogs that roamed through the woods and fields.

Another phase was also a part of the boys' education. It consisted of their agricultural tasks: work in the apple orchard, in the one acre garden, and the forty acre corn field and in the small flower beds in the yards. For implements they used crude hoes and plows made by former slaves, an old hay rake, and a mower. For beasts of burden they had horses, mules and oxen.

In 1870 the first issue of *Our Monthly*, the Mission paper, appeared.<sup>38</sup> There was only one copy and it was handwritten. Other issues appeared at irregular intervals. Late in 1872, the Mission acquired a printing press from the Creek government, and in January, 1873, there appeared the first printed copy of the paper. Although Mr. Robertson was the editor, Mrs. Robertson was the principal contributor.<sup>39</sup> Samuel was the chief printer and he was ably assisted by Augusta. The type was set by the boys who understood both Creek and English. The paper was almost wholly printed in the Muskogee language. It consisted of four pages, eight by eleven inches, each page containing three columns. The press printed two pages at a time and often an ink shortage prevented clear printing. The main features of the paper were lessons in English, hymns translated by

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>38</sup> Pilling, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

<sup>39</sup> Carolyn T. Foreman, "Augusta Robertson Moore," *op. cit.*, p. 404.

Mrs. Robertson, poems by Grace Robertson, and news of local interest.<sup>40</sup> In 1874, the Creek council appropriated one hundred dollars to be used to print one thousand copies of the paper to be distributed among the Indians free of charge.<sup>41</sup> In addition to the paper, the press was used to print school programs, announcements, and sometimes advertisements for the local business men.

The history of *Our Monthly* is well recorded in two editorials of the paper. The first printed issue carried the following article:<sup>42</sup>

A little more than two years ago, when the first number of "Our Monthly" was read as a part of our Christmas exercises, we said "The main object of our paper will be the moral and intellectual improvement of our Tullahassee boys and girls. We hope that the prospect of getting their compositions once a month into our paper will be a motive which will urge them on to greater painstaking in writing them." Nor were we disappointed. From month to month quite a number of very creditable compositions found their way into our little paper, and the interest increased, rather than diminished during the term.

But now that the nation has kindly given us the use of a press we have tried to enlarge the original design, and in some degree to remove the complaint among the Creeks that they have no paper.

We wish to try to interest and instruct our people, and to encourage all especially the young, to improve their minds and hearts, in order that they may be better fitted to assume the duties and responsibilities that will so soon devolve upon them.

In 1875 arrangements were made for publishing a weekly paper, the *Indian Journal*. The last issue of *Our Monthly* was printed in October of that year, and in it appeared a summary of the objectives attained by its publishers.<sup>43</sup>

This number closes our contract and the Monthly ceases. During the short period in which it has been published we have not done all we hoped to do, yet we have done something.

We have established the National Alphabet, and have taught hundreds to read and write, and have improved the reading and writing of hundreds more. We have done much to create a love of reading, and excite thought.

We have given thousands many pages of choice reading; we have given many telling blows to the superstitions and vices of the country; have done something to elevate and enlighten the people.

The Creek columns of the coming weekly will draw out words that breathe and thoughts that burn—influences that will sway the nation as the wind does the willow—mold it as the potter does the clay. If it does not it will not be for want of readers, but because the men whom the Nation has educated are blind to their own interests, and recreant to their own duty.

<sup>40</sup> Samuel W. Robertson, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

<sup>41</sup> Carolyn T. Foreman, "Augusta Robertson Moore," *op. cit.*, p. 404.

<sup>42</sup> Samuel W. Robertson Papers, Frank Phillips Collection.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

One of the most interesting events at Tallahassee was the missionary meetings.<sup>44</sup> One Sunday evening each month the children and teachers and the people from the surrounding neighborhood met to offer prayers and raise funds for foreign missions among the heathen in Africa, Asia, and other foreign lands. Each of the Robertson children had to donate twenty-five cents to the cause. If they lacked the money, they made their contributions in the form of promissory notes that were later redeemed by Mr. Robertson. Sometimes he did not have the necessary funds and payment was delayed longer.

In the summer of 1870, Augusta returned to Tallahassee Mission to join the staff of teachers after completing her college education. Although Mrs. Robertson had not seen her daughter since the family's return to Indian Territory, she was quite put out with her because she made the last of the trip on the Sabbath.<sup>45</sup> Alice was attending Elmira College at this time and later taught at Carlisle, Pennsylvania, at the Indian training school. The Robertsons insisted that their children should receive a sound education. Grace attending Wheaton Seminary in Massachusetts, and Samuel chose St. Johnsbury Academy and Dartmouth.<sup>46</sup> The three girls became teachers in Indian mission schools, but Samuel became a teacher in the public schools. He felt that much of his parents' work was unappreciated. Mrs. Robertson was especially disappointed that he did not choose the mission field since she was the eighth generation of her family to follow that profession.

The winter of 1880 and 1881 was a time of tragedy for the people at Tallahassee. On December 19, a fire caused by a defective flue destroyed the school building.<sup>47</sup> The laundry was converted into a dining room and the work shop and wagon shed were used as classrooms and sleeping quarters, and school continued.<sup>48</sup> Alice Robertson, then at Carlisle, secured permission from the Indian Department for twenty-five of the students to enter that school.

Soon after the burning of the building, Miss Nancy Thompson died of pneumonia and in June Mr. Robertson died from overwork and anxiety.<sup>49</sup> After his death, Augusta was made temporary superintendent and principal, serving in this capacity until the school was rebuilt for a Negro school.

In January, 1881, Loughridge returned to the Indian Territory to assume the superintendency of Tallahassee,<sup>50</sup> but it was decided to build a new school south of the Arkansas to accommodate one hundred

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<sup>44</sup> Samuel W. Robertson, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

<sup>45</sup> Carolyn T. Foreman, "Augusta Robertson Moore," *op. cit.*, p. 403.

<sup>46</sup> Samuel W. Robertson, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

<sup>47</sup> O'Beirne, *op. cit.*, p. 479.

<sup>48</sup> Carolyn T. Foreman, "Augusta Robertson Moore," *op. cit.*, p. 406.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> O'Beirne, *op. cit.*, p. 479.

students, and Mr. Loughridge devoted his time to the construction of this school. In March, 1881, the Creek council appropriated \$5,000 to rebuild Tullahassee for the education of the children of their Negro freedmen, the institution remaining in operation until 1907 when Oklahoma was admitted to the Union.<sup>51</sup>

"Tullahassee Mission" symbolizes the great genius of the many teachers, doctors and missionaries who devoted their lives, their labor and their love to the task of educating and civilizing the North American Indian. Most of the leaders of the Creek Nation attended the school, and many of its graduates became teachers and ministers among their own people.

Bette Major described the three types of service rendered by the tribal boarding schools in Indian Territory and by the people who labored there under the auspices of the mission boards.<sup>52</sup> First was the work of translating religious works to the native tongue of the Indians. Second, the missions served as "centers of social service." Many orphans of the war were sent to the missions by the Indian governments. There they were cared for and taught the means of supporting themselves. Finally, they served as almost the only facilities for the education of Indians and whites during the period of white settlement.

The Robertsons were remarkable in their devotion and service to the Indians. Mr. Robertson served as teacher, superintendent, minister, and physician at Tullahassee Mission, and as missionary preacher to outlying districts. He and Mrs. Robertson and Augusta

<sup>51</sup> Ora E. Reed, "The Averted Catastrophe," *Sturm's Statehood Magazine* (April, 1906), p. 89.

<sup>52</sup> Louise Whitham, ed., "Educational History in and about Tulsa," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. XVIII, No. 1 (March, 1940), p. 79.

Additional information concerning the missionaries and teachers who carried on the mission and school at Tullahassee may be found in the following articles in *Chronicles of Oklahoma*: Hugh T. Cunningham, "A History of the Cherokee Indians," Vol. VIII, No. 3 (1930); Carolyn Thomas Foreman, "Journal of a Tour in the Indian Territory," Vol. X, No. 2 (1932); ....., "The Cherokee Gospel Tidings of Dwight Mission," Vol. XII, No. 4 (1934); ....., "New Hope Seminary," Vol. XXII, No. 3 (1944); Grant Foreman, "The Honorable Alice M. Robertson," Vol. X, No. 1 (1932); "Report of Grant Foreman, a Director of the Oklahoma Historical Society, to the Board," Vol. XIV, No. 1 (1936); "Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Board of Directors of the Oklahoma Historical Society," Vol. XII, No. 1 (1934); "Minutes of the Oklahoma Historical Society Quarterly Meeting of the Board of Directors, April 23, 1933," Vol. XI, No. 2 (1933); "Minutes of the Oklahoma Historical Society Quarterly Meeting of the Board of Directors, October 26, 1933," Vol. XI, No. 4 (1933); Ohland Morton, "Early History of the Creek Indians," Vol. IX, No. 1 (1931); "Report of the Necrology Committee of the Oklahoma Press Association," Vol. XI, No. 2 (1933); Alice M. Robertson, "The Creek Council in Session," Vol. XI, No. 3 (1933); Muriel H. Wright, "Wapanucka Academy, Chickasaw Nation," Vol. XII, No. 4 (1934).



devoted much time to translating works into the Creek language and at the same time urged that the Indians prepare themselves for citizenship by learning the English language.

Mr. Robertson and Samuel Austin Worcester prepared an almanac for the Indians.<sup>53</sup> The two men saw a close connection between agriculture and religion, and the almanac contained Christian instruction as well as agricultural advice. Mr. Robertson was also a close friend of the entomologist, Asa Fitch, and sent him many specimens from the Indian Territory. In 1857 Mr. Fitch wrote Mr. Robertson that nearly half of his American collection was the result of his interest.<sup>54</sup>

Mrs. Robertson did a great deal of work with the Smithsonian Institution concerning the languages of the Indians at the Mission. The translation of the new Testament, on which she spent many years, was published in 1887. During the years from 1860 to 1889 she produced an English and Creek vocabulary.<sup>55</sup> She was the first American woman to whom the honorary degree of doctor of philosophy was granted. Wooster University conferred the degree for "superior attainments especially in linguistic studies and of enlarged influence as a result of the studies and writings."<sup>56</sup>

Samuel W. Robertson, in tribute to his father and mother, wrote the following description of them and their work:<sup>57</sup>

My father was a wonderful man. How little I appreciated as a boy, his limitless kindness of heart; his complete devotion to the cause to which he had given his life; his sagacity in handling men; his all-around education and his ability to adapt his knowledge to the needs of the children he was teaching. When years later I myself was a teacher of New England youth, I found that methods used by my father in teaching Indians, were brought forward as something new.

My mother was of a different type from that of my father. She thought and lived a religious life based upon faith in the Presbyterian creed, the Bible as the literal word of God, and the prime necessity of giving to the Muskogee Indians a translation of the Bible, just as her father had done before her for the Cherokees. . . . Memory depicts her to me . . . struggling to find Muskogee words that could express the true meaning of the Greek version . . . .

Augusta, Alice and Grace were equally devoted to their work. Alice later served as United States Supervisor for Creek Schools, and was the first woman elected to represent the State of Oklahoma in Congress.

<sup>53</sup> Althea L. Bass, *Cherokee Messenger* (Norman, 1936), p. 332.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 332-333.

<sup>55</sup> Pilling, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

<sup>56</sup> Samuel W. Robertson, *op. cit.*, p. 52; and Ann Eliza Worcester Robertson, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-14.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 12, 52.

The work of the Robertsons did not always run smoothly. Epidemics of colds and childhood diseases plagued the Mission. Some of their own children died there. The tragedy of war and fire brought discouragement and more work. Yet in spite of these adversities, they continued to give liberally of their talents and money to the Mission and outside interests, and managed a college education for their four children—all this on an annual salary of one hundred dollars.<sup>58</sup>

After the destruction of Tullahassee and the death of Mr. Robertson, the sentiment of the people connected with the Mission was expressed by Grace Robertson Merriman in the following poem:<sup>59</sup>

A TRIBUTE

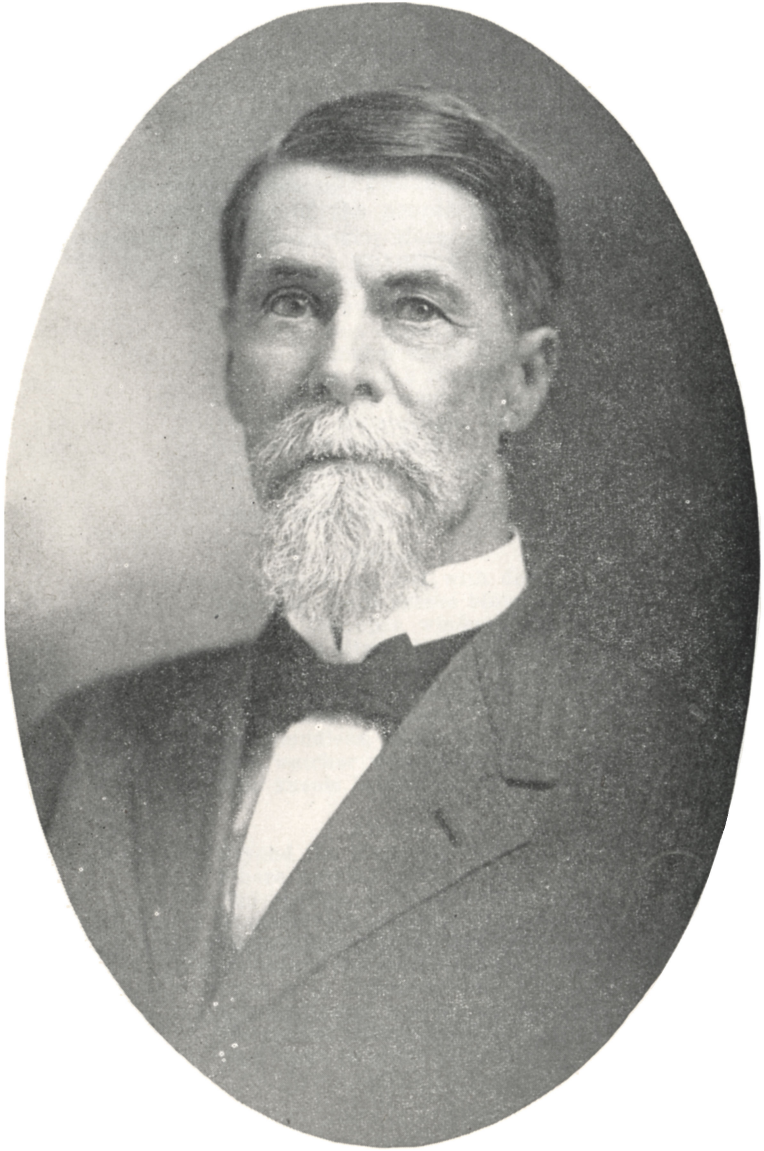
Without,  
 A mass of ruined brick,  
 With here and there a stick  
 Of timber charred by fire,  
 Lies like a funeral pyre;  
 And those tall, crumbling walls  
 O'er which the starlight falls  
 Wondrously fair, arise  
 Like monuments, the ties  
 Which bind us to the past,  
 Whose mem'ries, only, last.

Within,  
 From fields all wet with dew,  
 The cool, south breeze blows through  
 The open windows, all  
 Is silent there, the call  
 Of a lone bird, away  
 In the dim woods, the sway  
 Of the slow pendulum  
 Are soundless, to the dumb,  
 Pale watcher with bowed head  
 Who kneels beside her dead.

Above,  
 Beyond the gleaming stars  
 Where nothing ever mars  
 The endless, painless rest,  
 Another soul is blest;  
 Earth's heavy cross laid down,  
 He wears the starry crown  
 That is to victors given.  
 His real home was in heaven:  
 We cannot wish him here  
 Who waits to greet us there.

<sup>58</sup> O'Beirne, *op. cit.*, p. 479.

<sup>59</sup> Grace Robertson Merriman, "A Tribute," Samuel W. Robertson MSS., Frank Phillips Collection.



WILLIAM BAY ROBE