

was a time in history where a people who had been displaced and removed to another land by strong oppressors. To salve the government's action, the Indians were to be left alone to try to build a new nation for themselves. After some 50 years the Cherokees had built a new nation complete with an excellent government, organized courts and geographical districts, good educational facilities and a respected society. The progress and attainments made by the Cherokees in 50 years in their new homeland must have made the rest of America look like "Ned in the first reader". This the government just could not stand. So here comes the Dawes commission and a horde of other white guys to divide up land that was not even theirs. Many Cherokees did not understand what it was about, many did not speak or read English, and many were content with the homes and little patches of land they had spent a lifetime grubbing and hoeing out of the wilderness. Few, if any, Indians were advised, counseled, or given adequate explanations of the Dawes commission and its activities. Had the Cherokees been on equal bargaining footing with the whiteman, many could have investigated, observed, and learned of the Cherokee Nations lands and had the opportunity to select and be allotted good productive land. Yet, it all came about almost overnight. This was a once-in-a-life-time event. Add too, many Indians did not trust the government, whatever they said or promised. Again, it was the beginning of troubles for the Indians. Some lands allotted to the Indians, who did not want a change from their established home, were immediately the victims of whitemen who bought the land for nearly nothing. These facts are related by this full-blood Cherokee who lived and saw them happen.

Mrs. Ross has seen many things in her lifetime. She was at Tahlequah when the Wickliff brothers were on trial. Their story has been told many times. Starting from an unwise move of U. S. Marshalls attempting to force the parents of the Wickliff brothers to tell of some alleged whisky movement of which the boys were under suspicion, turned three good Cherokee boys into outlaws and killers. Few men of that day would have stood by meekly while their old mother and dad were pistol whipped for no cause. So began the hunt by U. S. Marshall Tom Gilstrap and his deputies, that ended years later with two of the Wickliff boys giving themselves up at Tahlequah. The boys were tried, with W. W. Hastings as one of the legal representatives. The trial was held in the Old Opera House in Tahlequah, Mrs. Ross recalls. The boys were freed and each given a bouquet of roses. The boys left the trial without comment and returned to their home in the Spavinaw Hills. The third brother of the Wickliff family disappeared while he was being hunted, and many believe he went into Old Mexico, never to return.

Sometimes people foreign to the Indian Nation had to have a rugged set of insides to cope with conditions encountered in the early days. Such was the case of a whitewoman teacher who came from the east to teach at the Cherokee Female Seminary around 1897. A group of Indian boys planned to initiate the lady by scaring her, Indian style. The boys showed up one night painted and ready to scalp in jest. War whoops, Indians on racing horses, and war dancing was enough to freeze the blood. During this time, not all the girls at the Seminary were informed of the activity, when someone yelled "mad-dog!". The stampede that followed caused some of the girls to get hurt, and the lady from the East nearly died of fright. The Indian boys disappeared into the night.