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White Bead Hill
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Miss Ella Robinson,
Research Field Worker,
June 26, 1937.

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Interview with Mrs. A. N. Averyt
Fort Gibson, Oklahoma.

Reverend Albert Norris Averyt was born in Bradley County, Arkansas, 1854.

He attended the public schools of that state when a child. On reaching young manhood, he, perhaps attracted by the glowing tales of an undeveloped country, went to West Texas. There he met and married Miss Meddie Corley Baker at Montague, Texas, in 1879.

The sixteen year old bride was a daughter of Reverend W. R. Baker, a Methodist Minister, who had been sent from Mississippi as a missionary to the Choctaws and Chickasaws in 1845.

Mr. Averyt having decided on the ministry as his life's work, entered upon the course of Theological study prescribed by the Methodist Church. Having completed the course, he applied for admission to the Indian Mission Conference and was admitted in full connection, 1884, the Conference being held at White Bead Hill, Chickasaw Nation, and was assigned to Johnsonville Circuit.

On returning to Montague, Texas, he and his young wife loaded all their earthly possessions into a two-horse covered wagon and started for their first appointment.

On reaching their destination, they found that no house had been provided for them as no minister had ever lived on that circuit.

They were given shelter in the home of an Indian family. A terrible rain storm came, lasting for several days and Mrs. Averyt was taken ill and had to remain there for some time. That was not a pleasant experience for her as the women of the household did not speak English.

In the meantime, Mr. Averyt had secured a vacant one room log cabin in which to live. It had a leaky roof and he fastened the wagon sheet over it until he could secure boards with which to mend it.

As soon as Mrs. Averyt had sufficiently recovered, they moved into their first parsonage home. As his appointments were some distance apart, he necessarily was compelled to be away from home a greater part of the time.

He traveled in his two-horse, covered wagon, always taking an ax and shovel in case he had to clear a road or dig out of a snow-drift.

It was not long before the little cabin took on the appearance of a little home, because it was the delight of the young wife to transform the delapidated little cabin into an attractive place in which to live.

At the end of the Conference year, Mr. Averyt was assigned to Sorghum Flats in the Arbuckle Mountains near the Canadian River, Chickasaw Nation. There, they had a two room log house and felt that they were making an upward advancement.

He traveled this circuit on horseback much of the time as the mountain trails made that necessary. Here too, his appointments were a long distance apart and Mrs. Averyt was left alone with her baby boy. However, she was never afraid. Many calls came for the preacher, one Mrs. Averyt recalled, that he rode twenty-five miles facing a terrible blizzard to marry a couple for which he received "not a dime."

The preacher's wife, also, had many demands made upon her. She remembered quite vividly swimming the Canadian River, on horseback, on a cold day, to go to the bedside of a dying woman who had asked for her.

A small appropriation was always made by the Mission Board of the Church to ministers who served poor circuits on which they had almost entirely to depend. There was, also, an assessment made on the circuit but collections were almost impossible. The people in the country had an abundance of food but little money.

The custom of giving the preacher's family a "pounding" was in fashion then. All members of the church met at the parsonage, bringing a contribution, consisting principally of groceries. Occasionally the ladies would decide that the preacher must be in need of socks and ties and he would receive, perhaps, a dozen of each. In 1886, Mr. Averyt was sent to White Bead Hill as Superintendent of Pierce Institute, a Methodist School.

At the end of one year, he asked to be returned to a pastorate and was assigned to Wynnewood, Chickasaw Nation. It was there that their second son, Albert Norris, Jr., was born.

As a call for men in the western part of the Conference was great, Mr. Averyt was selected by the Bishop to take charge of the work among the Plains Indians or Wild Tribes as they were commonly known. Here, he had to speak through an interpreter. He visited the Indians in their villages and Teepees and made many friends among the leaders. After serving the time allotted to a minister (four years), he was appointed to the Duncan District where he served four years. He then, at the close of that time, served the Ardmore District for four years. In 1900 he was appointed to the Muskogee District where he also served four years. He made his home in Muskogee. At the end of that time, he was returned to the

Ardmore District where their youngest son, Dan, was born. Mr. and Mrs. Averyt were the parents of eight children, six boys and two girls. The little girls died in infancy.

Being a man of rare native ability and untiring energy, by close study Mr. Averyt developed into one of the strongest pulpit preachers in the Conference. By his consecrated life and devotion to his work, he was able to accomplish much. No task was too great or difficult for him to attempt. As he had the courage of his convictions, he succeeded where others failed.

With such men was the foundation of the Methodist Church laid in Indian Territory. The last charges that he served were Broken Bow and Fort Towson.

At the session of Conference held in Muskogee in 1916, he was granted the Superannuate Relation.

From the time he joined the Conference in 1884 to 1916 he had never missed attending a session.

On deciding to locate at Fort Gibson, he with his faithful wife and young son, Dan, moved there where the church, as is their custom, provided them with a modest cottage home.

As his health had failed during the past year, he continued to grow worse and died January 1917. His son, Albert Narris, Jr., is one of the outstanding ministers of the

Oklahoma Conference, now serving the Durant District, carrying on the work of his father.

Mr. Averyt had the satisfaction of living to see the results of his many years of hard labor. Small places where he served have developed into some of the strongest charges of the Conference.