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THE EARLY DAY MISSION SCHOOL LIFE AND WORK FOR BOYS

From interviews with former students of Wetumka Mission,  
Saber Jackson and Tingo Frank, Okemah, Oklahoma  
Coleman Byrd, Pharaoh, Oklahoma.

FIELD WORKER BILLIE BYRD.  
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The early schools were new to the Muskogee-Creek Indians and were the first steps in advance to keep pace with the whites. There were practically no educated Indians and most of them did not readily take to the white ways and manners. The Indian ideas were so deeply embedded that it was hard for an Indian to learn. In fact, there were not many classes or much school work.

The early day school teacher laid down the strict rule that the student should forget the native Indian language and learn and speak only the English. This was a difficult thing to do.

This rule and many other rules were strictly enforced by the students themselves. Certain students were appointed by the student body to act as officers and take into custody any students violating any of the many school rules. If the Indian language was spoken a severe punishment was given to the person speaking it.

The guilty students were taken before the officers acting much like a judge or prosecuting attorney whereby different

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sentences were passed upon those coming up for trial.

The sentences were often served out by sweeping the school floors, dusting, washing windows, scrubbing the floors and other duties. These small jobs were given to those violating a minor rule but those violating a larger rule were punished by whipping or being requested to pay a fine.

The only work for boys was farming, cutting wood, and clearing land to turn into farms. All this work was done by hand as there were no machines to make the work quicker or lighter.

Water was carried in buckets from the well to the buildings to fill the water tanks, and was carried morning, noon, and night. There was a certain person to look after the water tanks and as soon as the water passed a certain mark in the tank he would start yelling, "Water, water". This would bring the water boys to attention and to work.

The boys often went on hikes and pecan hunting in the fall along the Wewoka Creek. Eggs were gathered in the barns. Instead of taking the eggs into the kitchen, the eggs were taken away from the school grounds and a big feast of boiled eggs was held.

The boys made their own ball sticks and went off to enjoy this sport or slip off during the night to hold a tribal dance in the woods along the Wewoka Creek. When the teachers learned of these trips, a stop was soon made.