

RICHARDS, ROD (MRS.)

INTERVIEW.

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RICHARDS; MRS. ROBERT

INTERVIEW

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Ella Robinson

Interviewer

November 9, 1937

Interview with Mrs. Rob. Richards
Muskogee, Oklahoma.

My parents were Martin A. and Julia Roper Shilace.
My father was born in Cherokee County, North Carolina,
in 1847. Mother was born in Tennessee. When her father
had moved after the war, he settled in North Carolina. Her
grandmother died when my mother was a baby, and she went
back to their home in Cherokee County, in North Carolina
where she grew up. My parents were married soon after the
close of the Civil War. In 1871, they became citizens of
the Cherokee Nation and lived among their own people. They
had one child, a little boy two years old. He settled on
land where the Gauthier Club is now located, and lived there
for fifteen years; then they bought a farm nine miles south
of Tahlequah where they lived the remainder of their lives.

They were the parents of twelve children, nine of whom
lived to be grown. Father engaged in farming and stock rais-
ing. By close attention to his business and untiring energy he
managed to care for and educate his large family, all nine of
whom graduated from the two Cherokee Seminaries. Everything
that it was possible to raise in the way of food was produced
on the farm. Father raised sheep in sufficient number to
supply all the wool needed, which my mother spun into yarn

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for our winter hose. I still have the old spinning wheel which belonged to my mother and which I greatly prize.

They raised cotton on the farm; and Mother carded all the bats that were used for quilts and comforts. Miss Florence Wilson, a noted educator, was principal of the Cherokee Female Seminary when I entered but retired during my stay

there. She was succeeded by Miss Etta J. Rider, an Eastern woman. Among the teachers during the six years I was there

were: Miss Flora Lindsey now Mrs. Charles Watts of Wagoner, Miss Carlotta Archer, Miss Nell Taylor who is now Mrs. H. M.

Gulager of Muskogee, Mrs. Eurenia Thompson, Miss El Dee Starr and Mrs. Eloise Butler Bushyhead. Mr. Joe French was Super-

intendent and Mrs. French filled the place of Matron or House-

mother. Mr. and Mrs. French were succeeded by Mr. and Mrs.

Buffington. Mrs. Buffington in recent years has been in charge

of the dining room at the Muskogee Country Club; Mr. Buffinton

died several years ago. Mrs. Rosa Blackston of Webbers Falls

was the school nurse for many years. Mr. and Mrs. Jim Vann were

the cooks. The curriculum ^{of} the institution included a full

academic and college course. There was also what was termed the

Indigent Department where all primary grades were taught which

was maintained wholly by the Cherokee Nation. The children came

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from the poorer families of the Cherokee Nation and those who lived in isolated districts out of reach of country schools. The children were clothed, fed and educated with no cost whatever to their parents. They had the privilege of going from the low standard of living of their parents' homes with the same honors as other students if their honors were merited.

The boarding students paid \$6.00 per month with all books and stationery furnished, later the board was raised to \$7.50 a month. The school building was a large, comfortable, red-brick structure with wide porches on the sides and large white columns supporting the second story. There were two additional porches. There were large fireplaces in most of the rooms which were heated entirely by wood fires. On the first floor were large double parlors, dining room and an office with the kitchen at the back. In addition to this was a dormitory a little distance away which accommodated the students of the indigent department. All the girls including the pay students were required to perform some household duties, such as sweeping the halls. Two girls would be detailed to hall for a week at a time. The average attendance at this school was two hundred and fifty.

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Seminary building burned the school was moved in to Tahlequah and a more modern building was erected. When the Territory became a State the building was sold to the State and is now the Northeastern State Teacher College and still retains the reputation of being the best school of its kind in the Territory.

The Cherokee Female Seminary was, as all other schools in the Cherokee Nation were, maintained by funds belonging to the tribe accrued from invested monies and rentals and every child in the tribe had an opportunity with every other child for an education.