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JOHN M. INTERVIEW.

Grace Kelley
Field Worker
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Forwarded by-----
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JOHN M. ROBE

William B. Robe came to the Indian Territory as the Superintendent of the Old Spencer Academy for the Choctaw boys, close to Dokesville. He was under the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions. John Robe was a tiny boy.

W. B. Robe saw the need for a school for girls, so the Board decided to build one. He designed and built the Wheelock Seminary for Girls, and was then the Superintendent of that. John Robe spent his boyhood there.

Jonathan Edwards was the Minister and was prominent in the affairs of the Choctaw Nation.

There is a Cemetery there that is sadly in need of care. Alfred Wright is buried there. Mrs. Robe has the inscription copied, all she could read. The most wonderful memorial I ever read. It is on a flat marble slab, cracked and broken in places but it could be fixed with cement as well as new. It is her idea that these stones were shipped from New York.

The bell has an inscription by Mr. Robe, Sr.---Defend the Poor and fatherless,--and a date that they dont remember.

Later Mr. W. B. Robe was at the Nuyaka school. Then he was transferred to the Henry Kendall College at Muskogee and his son, John W., was Superintendent of Nuyaka. The Henry Kendall was moved to Tulsa and named the Tulsa University.

There is also a cemetery at the Old Spencer Academy at Dokesville, where some Missionaries were buried. It's in a very neglected state. The owner has left some trees there and hasn't bothered the graves but he

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hasn't done anything for them either. The hogs were rooting around, the slabs were so dirty that the inscriptions could hardly be read. One young woman took sick and they started with her to the doctor, she suffered for three hours by the side of the road, and died. She was from New York. Her son was buried there, too. This should be looked into and a fence put around them at least. I told Mrs. Robe that probably there would be.

Ispahecha is buried 4 miles west of Beggs and his grave is in a bad condition.

Across the railroad track, north west of the station about 2 blocks, back of the section house is a cemetery where a lot of old timers and Indians were buried. I haven't been there for, it was Bus time when I left the Robes's house.

Mr. Robe's sister, M. Francis Robe, 711 W. Broadway, Muskogee, is writing a book. As soon as she finishes it he is going to read it and add anything that she might have left out of it and they are going to send to to Grant Foreman. I'm pretty sure that is what he said. Anyway I never saw anyone so interested in this work and they said that if there was anything else we wanted to know to write or come back. He has helped Mr. Foreman before, and has written to him about this before. The most beautiful poem I ever read, that tells the whole story of the Indian trials from the beginning of time to the present time is in the Okmulgee times, May 10, 1935. Mrs. Robe read it to me and when I wanted to know who wrote it, she humbly or should I say modestly showed me her name with the name of the Poem, "The End of the Trail". I want one for my scrap Book.

While Mr. John Robe was Superintendent of the Nuyaka school, she came from Ohio to be a music teacher there. She taught vocal, Operettas,

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and instruments. They were married there by the Rev. M. F. Williams of Muskogee.

This school was more like a home than a Boarding school. They had 15 or 20 helpers, who had to see that the children had clean clothes, took their baths, had to take care of them when they were sick, see that that they ate the proper food, in fact look after them as if they were their own. The children were required to learn and speak the English language while there. When a child took sick it was removed to the "sick room" from the Dormitory. There were only two deaths while he was there.

In 1898 when the Spanish American War soldiers returned from the war and scattered all over. They brought with them the Spanish Small Pox. A horrible disease that was almost sure death if you took it. Some lived over it but few. Some families were wiped out. Mr. Robe went to the Chief to see what to do about the relatives visiting the children while this epidemic was on. He knew that if one person came with it, all the children would take it and they would have a terrible time, too terrible to think about. But as yet none of them had it. (I think Isoahecha was the chief in 1898, either he or Chocata) I'll have to write to Mr. Robe to be sure. The Chief was very abrupt in speech. He said for Mr. Robe to go home and lock the gates, to put a sign up reading "No admittance" and if anyone came inside of those locked gates to shoot to kill. He went back and put the sign up. The Chief must have had some way of letting everyone know that the door was guaranteed for not a person tried to come through the gates. They seemed to know that it was for the best. Not a child had the small-pox.

Mrs. Robe found the Indian children more studious, obedient made better pupils than the white children. Everything was new to them from the language they spoke through everything they did, so they just went to

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work to learn as that was what they were there for. When she put on an Operatta every child had its part perfect. Knew their lines, what to do, and how, and did just that. There were no slouching nor forgotten lines.

The old saying "Thieving Redskins" and "No good Indian but a dead Indian" was absolutely false. For they made good friends and neighbors, were intellegent and honest.

While they were at Nuyaka they had three boys and one girl. Then they got old enough to go to school the Robes decided that, as the principle parts of their pupils were over fifteen, even the ones just starting, their children should go to the public schools with other white children. So they bought a place and built a house, hired a housekeeper during the school year, and sent the children to the Okmulgee schools. When the school was out Mrs. Robe would come to town to stay.

When the Government bought the Presbyterian board out of the school Mr. Robe was let out of a job, as the Government furnished their own teachers. They moved to town and were going to give up teaching as they thought it too inconvenient to live one place and the children live another place.

About that time Mr. Robe got a telegram from the Board that the Superintendent had died and for him to go immediately to the Mission just out of Tucson, Ariz. As he thought it was for the one winter, the family stayed in Okmulgee. In the spring the Board told him they wanted him to stay on, so she and the children moved out to him. The children went to the school in town. They were there two years. From there they went to the Old Dwight Mission-Cherokee Nation, near the Eastern border.

When the officers were first to be elected, the Robes were visiting in Ohio. His name was out on the Republican ticket, for Superintendent of

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Schools in Okmulgee county. They didn't know what politics he had, whether he was Republican or Democrat. He told them that he didn't want it as there was no money in it and he had a job. They said his name would make the party stronger and to please let his name stay so he did, but he didn't ask a soul to vote for him and the other man worked hard to get elected. Mr. Robe was elected by a large majority and he thinks that was a real honor. He didn't serve however.