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ABBOTT, S. M. SECOND INTERVIEW.

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Effie S. Jackson  
Interviewer  
June 16, 1937

Interview with S. M. Abbott  
Hillside Mission  
Skiatook, Oklahoma.

#### HILLSIDE MISSION AND ITS HERMIT


I was born in Fulton, Illinois, April 22, 1853.

My father died when I was thirteen. My mother, Sarah Moreland Abbott, and I made our way to Kansas and then planning to raise cattle we came to the land of the Osages in 1879. I have written the story of that trip and our experiences living with the Osages during the year 1879.

It is there in that manuscript, written in detail in my best handwriting, almost hand-printed. There are four hundred and fifty pages of it. I have been years writing it, and it has been my prayer to have it published so I could have a little royalty from it. I wrote it for the State Historical Society. Do you think they would buy it? You may read it, I am sure you will find it interesting.

You see I am an old man now, 84, crippled and almost helpless, but my mind is clear and I am glad to talk about the 58 years I have spent here in this vicinity. The first year, 1879, my mother and I lived with the Osagea, then we built a temporary log hut. In 1882, we built our home, a dream home, for I dreamed the way it should be

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built was in the shape of a cross, five large rooms, one a center room (  ). There we lived until ten years ago when my mother passed away. I was so proud of that house. I wanted to have the largest house in the whole country side. The "Star House" it was called and people came from afar to see it.

If you follow this winding road by the Mission three miles northwest you will see it as it stands in ruins today. It is on the bank of Tyner Creek. The Tyner family, Osages, lived in this vicinity when I came here. The old Tyner cemetery is across the creek from the "Star House", but this cemetery is abandoned. There are some twenty or thirty graves there, overgrown with brush. Do not try to visit it. It is infested with snakes. (I found the old "Star House". It is used as a barn, filled with hay. It stands in the center of a corn field. The outer rooms are in a fair state of preservation but the fireplace has been removed from the center room causing the building to sink in the middle.)

I remember one day in 1883, I had gone to a knoll near my home to look after my cattle, and imagine my surprise to see a hack approaching driven by a white man. He drove up and said, "I am John Murdock, sent by the Philadelphia Quaker Society to teach the Indians". I referred him to Dr. Lloyd

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who lived near. He was a white man who claimed some Cherokee lineage. That's what is left of his home, that old log house there on the ridge south of the Mission.

Mr. Murdock called the Indians to their first meeting in a grove near Scullaw (Squirrel) Creek near here and then proposed building a church. So the Indians gathered and built the first church, 10 x 20, of logs hewn on two sides, made a lime kiln, chinked in the crevices, puncheon floor. They made a poor selection of a location in the lowlands where the mosquitoes were deadly.

The next year (1884) they chose this spot on a hillside. They used what they could from the first church. The Philadelphia Society sent two emissaries to see what progress Murdock had made. When they found that he had obtained 76 members in one year they were so pleased that they sent him a signed check-book. With this financial aid a real Mission was started. I remember they took three wagons and went to Coffeyville; 65 miles away, our base of supplies, to get lumber. A deluge came, the Caney was up so high they had to camp for three weeks on their return trip. They built the south wing of two rooms, two stories high and also built the church. What could be used of this early church was torn down later and put in that White Hillside Baptist Church you see there. on the northeast, adjoining these four acres.

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Admission was free to Indian children. Cherokees, Osages and Shawnees attended. The number in attendance, who lived at the Mission were seventy-five to eighty in its prime. In keeping with this attendance, rooms were added from year to year until the mission eventually had twenty-four rooms, four stories high counting the basement and attic. The basement was arranged for recreation; the second floor had the dining room, kitchen, supply room and teachers' quarters; the third floor and attic had dormitories, the boys on one side, the girls on the other. The class rooms were in an adjoining building. I am living in the only habitable rooms left. These three were formerly teachers' quarters. This room with the bay window was Superintendent Watson's room. John Watson with his wife, Liza, and two daughters were sent by the Philadelphia Society to take charge of the Mission after John Murdock was sent west on duty by the Society. John Watson was superintendent until the Mission was abandoned.

I remember how they used to send a hack around to gather up the Indian children. They brought them whether they wanted to come or not. Always took them to the wash room upstairs and had such a time getting them cleaned up. You see the Pennsylvania Society sent clothes out here by the

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hogshead (used garments), so, getting washed and dressed were first steps in their training. Both boys and girls attended, ages from 6 to 18 or 19, grades from primary through what would be 8th today; in those days it was according to readers. White children were allowed to attend but had to pay a tuition of \$8.00 a month, which included all expenses.

I used to come to the Mission every week. I sold two beeves a week to the Mission. I courted the girls there and when I was 43 I married one of them, Roxie Bennett, 17 years old. I have four children, two sons living in Oklahoma City, William and James, two daughters living with my wife at Ramona, Oklahoma. Four acres were set aside for this Mission. I owned the surrounding 100 acres and these four acres, but the loan company has foreclosed, so I have nothing left.

I remember John Murdock said, "We have a church and a school, so we must have a cemetery", so three acres adjoining the Mission grounds on the northeast were set aside for the Hillside Cemetery (1885). The first grave dug there was for a white boy, 14 years old, Jesse Pebbermet. There are over two thousand graves there now, leading Osages, Shawnees, Cherokees, intermarried citizens and whites. The most imposing monument you will see is that of W. C. Rogers, last

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chief of the Cherokees. He was a fine man, he came to my house-warming in 1882, and made a speech to the Indians.

Be sure to look for the grave of Aunt Susan Fox. Her grave stone is called the "Monument of the Madonna". There are many legends about it. It is called the "Angel of Vision", etc. It is the work of an Italian sculptor and was made in Italy. When Aunt Susan died five years ago, her husband, Ed Fox, a prominent Osage, bought it for her grave, at a price of \$1900. I have been sexton of this cemetery for 40 years, until eight months ago. Checking with E. N. Holmes of the Tulsa Monument Company, he said this statue was of Carrara Marble, made in Carrara, Italy, purchased in Pawhuska from A. P. Boyles.

Yes, I know of three abandoned cemeteries in this locality. I have already told you of the Tyner cemetery across the creek from the "Star House", my old home. There are only a few headstones left to mark the 20 or 30 graves there, an old barb-wire fence partly encloses it. It was used as a burial ground for the Tyner family. An old abandoned Shawnee cemetery is one mile north of Skiatook on U. S. Highway #11. It lies 1/8 of a mile east in the midst of a corn field, is, in fact, a part of the corn field. The land is owned by T. Furse. As I remember there were about 50 graves there.



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On the slope of a hill at the mouth of Panther Hollow is an abandoned Osage cemetery. Follow Highway #11 north from Skiatook for about 9 miles to Bird Creek, from there one-half mile southwest (as the crow flies) is Panther Cave. About 1885 or '86 Antoine Rogers, a prominent Osage Indian, wishing to cultivate the rich bottom land of Bird Creek, had 20 or 30 bodies moved from a lowland graveyard across to the bench of the hill at the mouth of Panther Hollow, near Panther Cave. I used to hunt deer there. Rogers paid an old farmer named Mack Carr \$2000 a piece to move each body, Carr had to make a coffin for each body. The cemetery has been abandoned for the last 20 years. There are more than one hundred graves there. It has been fenced three times but prairie fire always destroys the fence. There are many prominent Osages buried there, among whom are Judge Perrier of the Rock House, John Collins and Scott Antire, prominent cattlemen, inter-married Osages citizens.

Well, come again soon and read this manuscript, I am sure you will find it interesting. It is true to fact. I cannot write any more, I am too nervous. I spend all my time reading the Bible. You see when I was a boy my father made me study the Bible. He wanted me to be a preacher and it gave me a dislike for the Holy Book, and I never read it again until

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the last few months. Now I spend all my time studying it. It is the most valuable book I have ever read. I am afraid I will not live long enough to complete my study of it. I only went to a country school for a few years. I got my education from my prized set of ten volumes of Ridpath and my study of Shakespeare. This Holy Book would have been my best teacher. Now I must study hard to make up for the lost years.

Comments:

Surrounded by tall grass and weeds, enclosed by an old barb-wire fence, Hillside Mission is still imposing. Its weather beaten four stories facing the east are in a fair state of preservation, but the old wing on the west is fast falling into decay. The rooms, all empty, except the three in which Mr. Abbott lives, are almost ghostly. Creaking floors, torn wall coverings, windowless openings, the home of bats and owls. From Mr. Abbott's description it is easy to imagine just what each room formerly was used for. The ingenious bath room looks almost as if it could be used, so well was it constructed.

Mr. Abbott, a cripple, is barely able to hobble about in the only three habitable rooms. He lives alone, a little kindly man, with a face as fresh as a girl's, manner gracious, a pleasant smile, a ready flow of conversation.