

HONNOLD, ARTHUR B.

INTERVIEW

#7984

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An Interview with Mr. Arthur B.  
Honnold, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

In 1901, I became principal of Harley Institute or Chickasaw Male Academy. This was located on Pennington Creek about one and one half miles north of Tishomingo in Indian Territory. I had been superintendent of schools at Lexington the previous year. This was my first experience with Indian youth. Some of the peculiarities of the full bloods and mixed bloods are of interest.

Harley Institute had been founded by a Mr. Harley in the early nineties I believe. It had been rebuilt and relocated from an earlier school. When I went there as principal in 1901, S. M. White was the contractor. This term corresponds somewhat to our use of the word superintendent. The contractor lived at the institute, had his own quarters and managed the school. He received \$16.50 per month for every registered student and the average attendance

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was a hundred pupils. If the student was only present one day, one week or month, the contractor received \$16.50 a month for the term of ten months.

Out of this tuition (which was paid from a fund set aside and held in trust by the Chickasaw Council) the contractor boarded the students; that is, furnished the food and paid for their laundry and paid the teachers. The main building was two stories high, fifty feet wide and a hundred and fifty feet long.

On the first floor were the contractor's quarters and the school rooms. On the second floor were the teachers' quarters and the boys' dormitory. A large dining room and kitchen adjoined, making an L shaped building. The building was a substantial frame one with a massive brick fireplace. I was back there about three years ago. Only a crumbling brick chimney marked the spot of what thirty-six years ago was a flourishing school.

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The course of study was surprising. Imagine Chickasaw full bloods and mixed bloods wading through geometry, astronomy, geology and similar subjects thirty-six years ago. I found as long as they could get a thing by rote it was easy for them. Though they talked Chickasaw at home they studied and recited in English. For instance, in geometry they would make perfect recitations, if allowed to learn several lessons at a time and recite them in consecutive order. They could make no application of anything they learned, it was purely a mechanical rote system. The boys were good scribes and their geometrical diagrams were perfect. The higher the percentage of Indian blood the better artists they were. The musical talent at the school was excellent; the boys had their own schoolband. Baul Burney, who is now assistant district court clerk, Tulsa, had ability as a pianist.

Other characteristics and peculiarities of these Indians I would like to mention are their high

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regard for truth, their code of honor and their natural oratorical ability. The Indian youths were easier to handle than the "Whites" if you followed the beaten path, but any innovation was ruinous to discipline.

I recall some outstanding orators among those boys. There was one -Amiziah Greenwood, a full-blood Chickasaw, who was a real orator. He depended on his fine memory, and his pronunciation, inflection and expression were good enough to win honors for him in oratory.

Another boy, Jesse James, a half-blood, could give unparalleled<sup>ed</sup> delivery of well known orations.

His brother, Frank James, specialized in negro dialect. I was the teacher of what we called "elocution" in those days, so I came to know their ability quite well.

I remember an experience which I had with one of these full bloods. We always had our "Friday

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afternoon" programs. Like any young principal, I felt that if once any rule of discipline was broken my power would be gone, so I wished to strictly adhere to the orders which I had given. I had told this full-blood to have his oration for a certain Friday. The day came but no full blood. On inquiry I found he had gone to his room to sul'k- refusing to recite. I went up to bring him down. JesseJames, half-blood, followed me and said, "Mr. Principal, he is a full-blood, he had made up his mind- you might kill him, but he will not come down? Realizing that I was coping with a fundamental characteristic, I turned and went back down stairs.

The Indian "law of custom" held in many ways as did their code of honor. I remember this came up in our discussion of a killing that had taken place in Tishomingo. A white man had hidden in a dark stairway and as his victim passed, had struck him in the back. I tried to point out a chance of

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fair play or self-defense, but the Indian code differed- if you are going to kill a man, the manner is of no importance, the idea is to get the deed done quickly and with safety to yourself.

My son, Captain Wallace Honnold, stationed now at Schofield Barracks Honolulu, West Point graduate, class of 1925, was born at Harley Institute <sup>in</sup> 1901. Probably he is the only West Pointer born in an Indian Academy.