

HAILEY, W. E.

FIFTH INTERVIEW.

5932-a

Grant Foreman,
Indian Pioneer History.
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An Interview with W. E. Hailey,
Municipal Judge, McAlester, Oklahoma.

McAlester's beginning in 1871 was modest, but a railroad station had drawing powers and in a year or so there was a considerable village.

However, there were no schools and no churches. About 1876 a subscription school was started, housed in a small one room frame building. The first teacher was Mr. Trenchard, assisted at times by his daughter, Rosy. The attendance was not large the first couple of years and was made up mostly of full blood Indians. It was surprising how they embraced the opportunity for an education for their children, and they came from miles around. Many were boarded in town, being too far away to make the daily trips.

Later on, about 1881, the Presbyterians established a Mission and with funds from New York built a very substantial building, imported teachers, and started a school that would have been a credit to any community of even greater size.

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There were no churches. A few itinerant preachers were in the country and came at uncertain intervals. They boarded around with the brethren and held services in the school house. However they did not call them services but "Meeting" and "Preaching".

They labored under difficulties. Of course there were no such luxuries as pianos or organs, and the hymn book the preacher brought with him would be the only one in the congregation. The method of singing the hymns would be a novelty to the present generation. In the first place it was always a problem to "pitch the tune". Presently they would get it, or at least close enough to satisfy, after making several starts and finding it too high or too low.

Then on account of the paucity of hymn books, the preacher would read a line and then the congregation would sing it, and so on to the end of the song. This was called "Lining it".

Gradually the population increased and along with it came better conditions. In the latter eighties came more schools and real church edifices. It was a long time, however, before the congregations became large enough for a resident pastor. But it did come. Such is the power of the march of civilization.