

INDEX CARDS

Transportation--journey to Oklahoma
Brewer, T. R.
Schools--Creek Nation
Churches--Creek Nation
Muslogee

(Given by Mrs. Locke's son and daughter, to Miss Ella Robinson, February 2, 1937.)

9

EXPERIENCES OF A PIONEER TEACHER-

Mrs. Mary E. Locke.

Mrs. Locke, daughter of Dr. James R. and Elizabeth Brewer, was born in Park Place, Gibson County, Tennessee, February 13, 1847. She spent her girl-hood days in the home of her father, who had moved to Trenton Tennessee. She attended the local schools there and took her college education at Jackson Female College of which she was a graduate. It was nearing the beginning of the Civil War and the young man to whom she was engaged to be married, Mr. George W. Locke, enlisted in the Confederate Army and served during the entire war. They were married October 9, 1865 and went to Yorkville Tennessee and lived on a farm until 1877. Being attracted to the west by the glowing reports and from relatives living in Arkansas, Mr. Locke started on a westward journey. As travel was slow and uncertain, he was two months on the way. He selected a place to live in North-western Arkansas and sent for his wife and three children. As there were no railroads in that part of the state at that time, he met his family at Van Buren, Arkansas, with a wagon and team of mules. The trip through the Ozarks took two days. As they drove through the beautiful hilly country, they came in sight of a little cemetery. Stopping his team, he gazed for some time at the quiet little cemetery and said to his wife - "that is where I want to be burried." Before the leaves had fallen again, he was laid to rest there. He had located

on Lee's Street buying out a stock of groceries. After his death, Mrs. Locke took her family of four little children, as another baby had come to their home and moved to Cane Hill, Arkansas, where her brother, Rev. T.F. Brewer, a Methodist Minister, had a circuit. Later he was appointed to Asbury Mission in the Creek Nation, as Superintendent of the School. Then Mrs. Locke moved to Dutch Hill, Arkansas, where her brother Dr. James R. Brewer was a practicing physician. In 1878 Rev. Brewer was assigned to a Muskogee pastorate. In the spring of 1879 in compliance with the orders of the church, he opened a school, which afterwards became Harrell International Institute and later Spaulding College. Mrs. Locke came to Muskogee in 1880 and became the first Primary teacher in a Muskogee school that admitted white children. Classes were held in the church and the students sat on improvised seats, a few benches with no blanks, the planks resting on boxes and nail kegs and some borrowed chairs from the neighbors. There was also a boarding department in this school and the students were taken into the homes where there was a spare room. - Several of them boarding in the house with Mr. and Mrs. Brewer. - They also boarded the teachers. In addition to teaching five days a week and caring for her little family the duty of keeping the church clean fell to her. Every Saturday afternoon she took the older children and they put the church in order for Sunday service. Her son James, rang the bell and attended to the fires. Her daughter Fannie, played the organ and it was not equipped with electrical power either. Mrs. Locke taught for eight year.

In the mean-time, her oldest son had died of a lingering illness. Not-with-standing her business life, she did not neglect her church duty. She served as Treasurer at the first Missionary Society in the Methodist Church and also filled the place as Secretary. Her Sunday School class of boys, was her chief delight. Living in the little village of Muskogee, of some five hundred people at that time, was no easy thing for house-keepers. Modern conveniences were un-heard of. The streets were mere roads, deep in mud and ice in winter and just as deep in dust in the summer. The two streets that comprised the residential section of the town, was Cherokee Street on the East and Main Street on the West. As Mrs. Locke always lived near the church and the school, her cheerful little home became a general stopping place, for all who had occasion to go near. A trip to town was not complete unless she stopped by to see Mrs. Locke. People often wondered how she carried on her house work with the numerous interruptions caused by company. Many Muskogee citizens now, recall with ~~pleasure the teachings they received from her in both school~~ and Sunday School. In a material way, her life was not a long and easy path, but no one had a richer or more beautiful one. Owing to ill health, she was compelled to give up active service in church and social life, several years before her death, which occurred July 14, 1924.