

METHVIN, J. J. INTERVIEW.

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Interviewer, Lillian Cassaway
August 10, 1937.

Interview with J. J. Methvin
Anadarko, Oklahoma.

I had been sent to Sasakwa in the Seminole Nation in the year 1885, to take charge of a female school. After being there a while I found that the largest part of the school body belonged either to the Baptist Church or the Presbyterian, and that the Methodist Church, South, which had sent me, had no footing whatever. I felt that the proper thing for us to do as a church was to retire from this school, and ask the Baptists to take charge of it and I so advised the authorities of our church.

I further advised that we attempt no missionary efforts among the Seminoles, but leave the whole field to the Baptists and Presbyterians, as both of these churches had a strong hold among the Seminoles and both were doing good work.

Following my advice, the Mission Board gave me plenary authority to negotiate with the Seminole Nation for the continuance or annulment of the contract under which the school was run.

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With this authority, I went before their next council at Wewoka, and asked that the present contract be annulled and that we be allowed as a church to retire from the school; that under the circumstances we felt that the two churches having such a strong standing among them could better serve their interests, and our church could spend its energies in some needy field; for there were many tribes in the farther west whose condition called for help.

The Council followed my suggestion and voted to relieve us of any further contract, and in the course of a few months we turned over everything to the proper authorities, and retired from the school,

While here, my interest in the "Wild Tribes" further west having already been awakened, I determined to make a reconnoitering trip out among them. So one morning early in the spring, I hitched up my ponies, bade my wife and children goodbye and started on an expedition westward. For a traveling companion, I had with me W. S. Beall, my brother-in-law.

After several days travel along the Canadian, through an uninhabited section of country, we found ourselves among

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the Cheyennes and Arapahoes, and we made our way to Darlington, the headquarters for these tribes.

There were three schools, two established and run by the government, one by the Mennonite Church. We spent the Sabbath here and being invited, I spoke at each school. In one of the services, there were two Cheyenne chiefs, Whirlwind and Woman's Heart. When I made the statement that all men were sinners and needed a Savior, Whirlwind created some sensation and slight disturbance when he turned to Woman's Heart and told him that I was after him for some meanness that he had done the day before.

Illustrative of Indian customs and superstitions, I was told of the following incident at one of the schools. The bed bugs were very troublesome so the children could not sleep. They determined to get rid of them, and they went at it in a way peculiar to the Indian. Knowing that it would be forbidden by the authorities of the school, they arranged to get together in the large dining room that night after all were sound asleep and during the night, the superintendent was awakened by some unusual noise in the dining room. He went to investigate and found the whole

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student body engaged in a regular "Medicine Dance" around the room.

They were so intent in their purpose that they did not know of his approach till he was right in their midst. They with some trepidation explained to him that they were making medicine to get rid of the bed bugs. Their "medicine" was not a failure, for while the pupils did not get an answer to their prayers as they expected, this incident caused double diligence by the management to clear the school of those loathsome vermin.

After lingering for a while among the Cheyennes and Arapahoes we went south to visit the tribes having headquarters at Anadarko. Here we found numerous tribes all speaking a different dialect, and each tribe maintaining its own identity. Arriving at Anadarko, we received a cordial welcome from the few whites, consisting of Government employees and Indian traders and their families, and preached for them that night.

We lingered here for some while to get necessary data and a correct idea of the needs of these people for as yet there was no missionary among the Indians south of the Washita River.

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Black Beaver, a Delaware, who had long served the United States Army as a scout, and who had once been a Methodist preacher but who had later joined the Baptist Church, had started a Baptist Church north of the Washita River among the Wichitas, But south of the Washita to Texas there was no mission work, and these tribes were the largest and the most warlike and unruly.

I gathered many things of interest as to the needs of these numerous tribes, and the opportunity before us and the obligation upon our church to meet these needs and supply them with the Gospel. I earnestly represented the matter to the officials of our church, and urged that somebody be sent to these people, as yet as ignorant of the Gospel as if they lived in the heart of Africa.

I was asked by the Secretary of the Mission Board and by Bishop Galloway to name some who were fitted for that work and who would be free to go. But I knew none in our Indian Mission Conference who could be spared from the work they were already in. By reason of a good sized family, I did not think that I could be sent, and while I felt that I would be glad to go, yet on account of this, I did not

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think myself eligible for so glorious a task. But there was a surprise in store for me at the next annual conference, when the Bishop read my name as missionary to the "Wild Tribes."