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BAPTIST ACADEMY

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Baptist Academy
Tahlequah, Indian Territory

In the latter part of September, 1879, Dr. Almon Clamatus Bacone, a noted educator and Baptist Minister of New York State, was engaged as principal teacher at the Cherokee Male Seminary.

Being a man of great vision and faith he soon discovered the need of trained leaders among the Indians and realizing that the youth of the Indian tribes could receive the best training possible in a Christian school.

~~With that in mind, at the end of the school term he re-~~

signed his position in the Seminary and laid his plans before the Home Mission Board of the Northern Baptist Church in New York City. Knowing him to be a man of

rare judgment and true consecration they readily agreed

to his proposition. Mr. Bacone lost no time in starting

upon his new work. In September of '81, the Baptist

Academy was opened at Tahlequah with three pupils. A

two story brick building belonging to the Home Mission

Society located near the Northeastern State Teachers

College, was turned over to be used to house the school.

The three large rooms on the first floor were made into

class rooms; the second floor was converted into living

quarters for the teachers and boarding pupils.

Dr. E. J. Allen and his wife were associated with Dr. Bacone in the work. Dr. Allen teaching the lower grades and Mrs. Allen attending to the boarding department. Their attendance steadily increased and at the close of the first year there was an enrollment of fifty-nine students. The grades ranged from the fifth grade to a high school course.

In 1884, the enrollment showed seventy-five students. The privilege of working to defray part of their expenses was allowed the boarding pupils, many of whom came from the country. Among those enrolled at that time were: Joseph Thompson and Charles Ross of Tahlequah, both of whom became prominent doctors. Henry and Lillie Cobb of Muskogee; Lydia and Julia Sixkiller (Julia afterwards became the wife of Gus Ivey, a prominent newspaper man of the Cherokee Nation); Kitty Ross; Anna Wade; Callie Lozier; Flora Ingram; Grace McGregor and Okla Spradling, now Mrs. J. C. Buchanan of Muskogee.

Being encouraged by the success of the school, Dr. Bacone saw the opportunity of a much larger school in the fast developing country and in a more accessible location.

As Tahlequah had no railroad facilities at that time

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and the Indian Agency being located at Muskogee bringing the different tribes there, it suggested the fact to Dr. Bacone's mind that a location near Muskogee would be an ideal place to build a great institution, and with almost a prophetic eye he could visualize the greatest Indian school throughout the entire country.

Again he appealed to the Baptist Home Mission Board which agreed to his plans. Dr. Bacone appeared before the Creek Council, meeting at Okmulgee the following October, and presented a petition to the Creek Government for a grant of one hundred and sixty acres of land on which to build a college. After a short deliberation the grant was refused and the petition tabled.

Reverend William McCombs, a prominent Creek educator and a Baptist Minister as well, had great influence with the governing body of the Creek Nation and at last prevailed upon them to reconsider and the petition was passed with a unanimous vote. After the grant was made and was accepted by the Baptist Board, a committee composed of Dr. Bacone, Reverend J. S. Morrow, a Missionary to the Choctaws, and Reverend Rogers, a Missionary to the Cherokees, was appointed to select a site for the school. Taking all things into consideration, they decided a location near

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Muskogee would be most desirable. Riding across the prairie on horseback; they stopped and said with one accord, "Here is the place to build our school." With that decision, they dismounted and knelt in prayer, dedicating the ground to a great cause. Having decided upon the location, Dr. Bacone immediately started east to secure funds for the first building. Being a personal friend of John D. Rockefeller he received a gift of \$10,000; \$2,000 from the Euclid Avenue Church in Cleveland, Ohio, of which Mr. Rockefeller was a member; \$1,000 from a friend in Cleveland.

On returning to the Territory, plans were immediately made for the erection of the first building which was called Rockefeller Hall. During that time, the school work at the Baptist Academy at Tahlequah was carried on until the end of the term. In June, 1885, on completion of the new building, the Commencement Exercises for the Academy were transferred to the new building and held in Rockefeller Hall which was also a dedication service.

In September, 1885, school was opened there and the Baptist Academy became the Indian University.

After the death of Dr. Bacone the name was changed to Bacone College in honor of the founder. The land that

had been given by the Cherokee Government to be used for school purposes at Tahlequah, was sold and the proceeds became a trust fund to be used in assisting Cherokee students. The brick building occupied by the school at Tahlequah is still standing.

A beginning with three pupils in the little inland town of Tahlequah to the larger school for Indians in the United States with a student enrollment of three hundred, including thirty-nine different tribes of Indians, has been the development of the Institution. Thus, the dream of a great Christian educator became a reality.