

INDEX CARDS

Schools--Cherokee Nation
Churches--Cherokee Nation
Springs--Cherokee Nation
Trails
Language--Cherokee
Sanders, E. B.
Choate, Sanders

Chauncey O. Moore, Supervisor
Indian-Pioneer History, S-149

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THE OLD MULBERRY MISSION
OR
THE FAIRFIELD MISSION

The Mulberry Mission was established on Big Mulberry Creek in Pope County, Arkansas soon after the Cherokees came West. It was established by the Presbyterian Board of Missions but when it was found that the Cherokees would move on west to what was later established as the Cherokee Nation, Indian Territory, it was moved to what is now Sec. 35, T. 15 N., R. 24 E. and only about 15 miles north of Dwight Mission. This location is on Sallisaw Creek in the south part of Adair County, Oklahoma. We are able to see that it was a well chosen location as there was an abundance of clear sparkling pure spring water. It was surrounded by very beautiful wooded hills, with an abundance of good timber, a thing very essential in early days. The land for farming was the very best, being smooth and very fertile. There appears one other good reason for the location, it was in easy reach of other established communities. It was easy to follow the Sallisaw Creek to Dwight Mission and on to the old road to Ft. Smith and Ft. Gibson.

The Fairfield Mission was under the direct supervision of a very able man, Doctor Butler, who, we are informed, was an uncle of Miss Alice Robertson, Oklahoma Congress woman. Also the wife of Doctor Butler assisted him in the mission and school work. There was one missionary, Nelson Cumberland, who did an unestimable work in the same field. He translated the Holy Bible into the Cherokee language, thus making it easy to teach them the Bible. He was interpreter for the Cherokee National Council for a number of years, later Post Master at Vinita and later was Superintendent of the National Male Seminary.

Fairfield Mission consisted of one large wooden building, for school⁵⁴³ purposes, made of logs, of course. It was made comfortable and was very much the same kind of buildings found at that time in this country.

The Superintendent's home was a very nice home for that early time, large enough to entertain the people who came there.

There was also a large barn, as it was thought at first that farming and stock raising would be done on a rather large scale but as things turned out this part of the program was never carried out. There were only about fifty acres in the Mission farm and, of course, there was only stock kept to care for the small acreage. This farm grew some of the first bluegrass and white clover that was ever grown here. Some good cows and hogs were kept to encourage the Cherokees to raise better stock, which had a marked effect.

Sanders Choate was one of the most prominent citizens of his day in the vicinity of the Fairfield Mission. He worked at the Mission and in a way had charge of the farming operations.

At the time Fairfield Mission was established (about 1835 or 1836) the country was very sparsely settled. Therefore, there were few boarding students, only a very few were cared for in the home of the Superintendent. About the time of the Civil War this Mission was discontinued and the work was never resumed. However, the good work done by Doctor Butler, his good wife, Sanders Choate, Nelson Cumberland and others left a lasting impression for good on many people for many were taught to be Christians, as well as being given a literary training.

In support of the above paragraph, we have a story of a boy who had his first training at the Fairfield Mission.

E. B. Sanders, a Cherokee boy, became one of the most successful school teachers of his day. He began his career as a teacher in a school on Skin Bayou Creek in Skin Bayou District, later named Sequoyah District in honor of the inventor of the Cherokee alphabet. He taught at several other schools and became

interested in the politics of his Nation and was elected to several offices, ⁵⁴⁴ filling them with credit to himself and the people.

He was a good orator, well educated, a highly esteemed Christian gentleman, loved by all who knew him.