

DEYO, ELTON CYRUS

INTERVIEW

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Ophelia Vestal, Investigator.
November 3, 1937

An Interview with Elton Cyrus Deyo.

Elton Cyrus Deyo was born July 2, 1851, near Wyoming, New York. He was the fourth of a family of seven children and received his early education in the public schools and in Middleburg Academy in New York.

After leaving school he bought a farm not far from Buffalo, New York, where he lived and farmed, having good success until 1887. Although born and reared in a Christian home, he did not accept Christ until about the year of 1887. Immediately he disposed of his property and in 1888 entered the University of Rochester, New York. Three years later he graduated from Colgate Theological Seminary.

In October, 1893, the Reverend Mr. Deyo and his wife Anna, came to Indian Territory and helped to build up a church known as Deyo Mission. It was many miles to any railroad and fifteen miles to the nearest white man's home. Fort Sill was the Sub-Agency.

Preaching to both Indians and white people, Mr. Deyo was very much missed when he passed away in August 1926. His body was returned to Rochester, New York, for burial.

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His funeral was preached by a white minister who had two interpreters of the Comanche tribe.

HISTORY OF DEYO MISSION.

A meeting was called November 17, 1895, at Evangel Mission Chapel, where the following named persons met to perfect the organization of a church for the Indians; the Reverend Mr. J. V. Deyo, Mrs. J. C. Deyo, Miss Ida L. Schofield and Lizzie L. Birkhof.

There sat a Council of Recognition; Dr. J. S. Murrow, Superintendent of Indian Missions, Mrs. J. S. Murrow, General Missionary of the Oklahoma Territory, Miss G. Burdette, Corresponding Secretary U. B. F. S., the Reverend Mr. L. J. Dykes, General Missionary for the Indians and the Reverend Mr. Raider acting as chairman.

At the first meeting there was the reading of the Covenant of the Baptist Church, and prayer by the Reverend Mr. Murrow. Officers elected were as follows, Miss Lydia L. Birkhof, Church Clerk, the Reverend Mr. Deyo, pastor, and the name of the church was decided upon as "The First Comanche Baptist Church of Oklahoma Territory".

The church adopted the Articles of Faith and Covenant by Newton Brown, published by the A. B. F. Society and

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adjourned for action of the said Council of Recognition.

The motion was made and carried that the First Comanche Baptist Church be recognized as a regular Baptist Church.

The next meeting day was December 29, 1895, when they listened to Christian experiences of Timbo and after agreeing that he be baptized and recognized as the first Christian, they adjourned.

On December 29, 1895, after morning services in camp, all drove to Cache Creek, where Indian Timbo, the first convert was baptized; their song was "O-happy Day!".

A meeting was called on June 23, 1896, to elect new members to fill positions left vacant by those who had accepted other positions. Mrs. Deyo was appointed clerk.

In 1901, during the months of March, April, and May, smallpox swept through the tribe and carried away many Indians; none of whom were church members.

June 16, 1901, at Cheyenne Mission, Natonga, Oklahoma Territory in the North Canadian River; Taupa and wife were baptized. (Taupa is spoken of as being a man of many good deeds and a good church worker).

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May 1, 1911. Quite sad were the hearts of many Indians. Mrs. Deyo, (Che-tay-veta, as she was known), had passed away.

The Indians used to take their sick children to Mrs. Deyo; she taught them home making, sewing and was such a good church worker. Once she remarked if, "I pass away before you do, please sing 'shall we Gather at The River'," so at her funeral the Indians sang this favorite hymn in the beautiful Comanche language. The body was returned to Rochester, New York, for burial.

After Mrs. Deyo was buried, the Reverend Mr. Deyo felt that he must come back to his home and carry out his duty as pastor because the Indians needed him so badly. He held services two Sundays out of each month for his white friends and every Sunday was church day for the Indians. Living alone at the church Reverend Deyo would spend many evenings in the homes of his friends. He was a man who everyone liked and never were there any bad words spoken of him.

The Reverend Mr. Deyo mentioned a few times, how difficult it was to get acquainted with the Indians. They seemed to

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fear him and he at first thought they wanted to harm him, then he would think "I am needed here, I know I shall not be harmed so I am going to make friends and stay here". He did make friends with all, was loved by all and greatly missed when he passed away in August 1926.

In 1929, a meeting was held to discuss the building of a new church. Work started soon. Now a nice brick church stands in the same place where the little white lumber church stood.

In October, 1931, a meeting was held to build a house of the old lumber known as 'The Community House'. This is where the Indians met early Sunday morning to cook and serve their noon meal.

November 17th is a day that is always celebrated by the Indians in memory of the beginning of their first church services.