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A TRUE STORY OF INDIAN MISSIONS

It was a cold damp day late in November, the missionary has an engagement fifty miles from his home, the method of conveyance is a small Indian pony and single buggy, to make the trip in one day he must arise very early in the morning and drive over mere trails, no roads no bridges. Late one evening he drove into the yard of an Indian home in McIntosh county Indian Territory, an elderly Indian man tall and straight, who showed his one quarter of white blood, met him in the yard with a very warm and hearty welcome, a Negro servant was called to care for the pony, this my first introduction to the famous John McIntosh, inside the house I found a bright wood fire in a large stone fireplace, in this fire was a large iron kettle from which came a very welcome aroma of food cooking, on some coals in front of the fire was a large dutch oven which was covered with an iron lid with live coals of fire on it. By the side of the lamp was another still larger iron kettle, in which was a good supply of sofkey, (a kind of hominy) prepared and cooked only as Indian women can prepare it.

The fullblood Creek Indian wife of my host took a pair of pothooks and lifted the top from the dutch oven and disclosed

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several large biscuits just browning on the top. Imagine, if you can the appeal of this sight to a hungry missionary who had driven all day without lunch.

Soon a table was pulled into the center of the room and spread with a clean red and white checked tablecloth, then came the bountiful repast and the menu consisted of biscuits, hickory nut sofkey, pork and rice cooked together, (deliciously) baked sweet potatoes, Indian bread and other Indian dishes I did not know. During the meal a lad of a boy moved about the place without anything to say.

During the meal my host made discreet and diplomatic inquiry as to my purpose among his people; who had sent me and if I had come to stay only a few months until I could secure a better position as some had done.

When the dinner was over and we were all seated by the fire it was my time to become inquisitor. Though at first very reticent and as I thought unusually reserved and dignified, I succeeded in getting some of the facts of his history. The white blood in his veins came from a noted Scotch trader whose ancestors came from the nobility of Scotland. The Indian

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blood from his mother who was a member of a noted Creek Indian family of Alabama.

He was born in the new Indian Territory soon after the removal of the Creek Indians from their home in Alabama and grew to manhood in the wildest of the wild country. Horse racing, card gambling, drinking and shooting it out was the law of the land and young John was one of the leaders in this life. He joined with the Creek Council in persecuting and punishing the Indians and slaves who dared to walk "in the Jesus road." Sometimes he would slip into the camp meetings being held by the negro slaves, though he went mainly to spy and to make fun of the ignorance of their preaching. Their singing always attracted him and he soon learned to sing the songs himself, and often found himself singing them when alone; those wonderful melodies about Heaven finding their way into his soul and he found great unrest and self condemnation. Secretly he sought the council of an old negro slave, who led him to Him who "came to seek and to save that which was lost."

After his conversion he resolved to keep the matter to himself and tell no one of his new found hope, but discovered he could not keep his secret and soon he was testifying and

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exhorting. Then everybody knew that young John McIntosh was a gospel preacher.

This was the beginning of a career of one of the most useful characters in all Creek Indian history. A man of limited education, yet a student and well informed, a remarkable personality and Indian dignity.

The Mission Boards soon discovered his ability and he was appointed and served for many years among his own Creek people.

As the night grew on I became more and more interested in this remarkable career. I said, "Tell me, Brother McIntosh, about your work among the wild Indians on the plains."

He said, "In 1874 the Baptist Convention of Texas requested me to go to the Wichita Tribe and undertake a Mission work.

For a long time I had cherished a burning desire to preach the Gospel to these wild tribes, yet when the way was opened I hesitated. I began to count the cost of such an undertaking, the long journey from my country to the Wichita tribe. There were no roads, in fact I did not know how far it was, I only knew they were somewhere on the Western plains. Besides these were days of notorious outlaws and horse thieves.

After much prayer, I was convinced that this was God's call and summoning all the courage and faith I could, I determined

to go and trust to my Savior to give His blessing upon the effort.

I had heard much of the wild Indians animosity toward the white people and feared my little bit of white blood might prejudice them against me. Then too, I wore citizen's clothing and my hair was short. With all these things in mind, preparations were made for the trip. A good horse was selected, food for the trip was prepared by my wife, which consisted mainly of dried beef, sofkey and blue dumplings (a mixture of cornmeal, beans and hickory nuts pounded up together, rolled into a round ball and then boiled), these would keep fresh for days, two canteens of water. Early in July, 1874, I bid my family good by and started on the hazardous journey of more than two hundred miles.

I passed the last settlement the second day, as I left the borders of the Chickasaw Nation, trackless plains lay before me.

The weather was extremely hot and dry, very little water for man or beast, on the third day late in the evening I encountered four outlaws two white men and two Negroes, they were driving a bunch of cattle which I was quite sure they had

rustled, they admired my horse and talked about taking him along but when I told them who I was and what my mission was they let me alone. My horse and I were almost famishing for water and too tired to go much further, coming to a high mountain I decided to camp for the night. On My saddle horn I carried an old cap and ball Colts revolver with which I hoped to be able to kill some game to replenish my food supply, I lariatred my horse on the grass in the valley and taking my saddle and blankets I went on top the mountain for fear the Outlaws would come for my horse and would do me some harm, where I slept under the western skies for the night. The fourth day and no water, it seemed that horse and man would perish in the heat, I happened to run my hand in my pocket and found there one of my bullets of lead, I put this in my parched mouth and soon the saliva cam into moist my tongue and I did not suffer for water any more. Finally when I reached the Ouachita river it was to us a real oasis in the desert. At the Wichitaw Agency at Andakarko the Government officials and Soldiers gave me a cordial welcome and ministred to my needs by sharing their rations with me; There were but few Indians around the Agency, I learned that they were encamped

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some four miles north of the Agency, I soon contracted one of the very few Indians that could speak english and act as Interpreter I engaged him (Black Beaver) to go with me to the camp as Interpreter, fortunately he could speak several of the Dialects that were spoken around the Agency. The camp covered several hundred acres, Teepees, and Grass Wigwams in groups along the creek banks and around "Rockspring." We did not receive a very hearty welcome as they seem to regard me as just another Government official who had come to dictate to them, however every camp we visited we were expected to eat, my Interpreter said that this is the Indian way you must eat, Black Bear seemed to be able to eat every where, but I soon found that I had to only mince, I did not know what kind of food I was eating much of the time, minus peculiar to this tribe.

At each of these visits I would tell them that I was not a Government man but that I was a man sent by the Great Father above to tell the Indians how to worship him. When we visited the Chief we found him very bitter and unrelenting. He said his people would continue their warfare against the white people until they had killed them all, I told him it was useless for the small Indian tribes to fight against the powerful white race, that

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I had traveled many hundreds of miles toward the rising sun and that every where I see great throngs of white people more than all the buffalo on the plains he showed little concern until I picked up a handfull of sand and said this little handfull of sand is like the Indian people and that big mountain of sand is like the white race, if you continue to fight these armies will come and kill all your people even your women and children, I saw his countenance change and that I had scored a hit with that illustration, he seemed willing to listen to me after that and my message seemed to interest him.

Late in August 1874 the Chief sent his camp callers through the camp and called the Indians to come together and hear the man who had come to them from the Great Spirit.

It was Sunday morning, a scene I shall never forget, Indians with human scalps hanging to their belts as trophies, the men with guns and bayonets faces smeared with the war paint, long neatly braided hair hanging across each sholder, Squaws dressed in gaudy blankets and little or nothing except the blankets, crying babies, all seated flat on the ground. They signed for me to proceed, I standing up with Black Bear by my side I opened the Bible and said to them this is the word from the Great

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Spirit, Above to all his children, then waited for Black ^{Beaver} Bear to interpret it into their language, then I read John 3:16 and this was interpreted to them and so on for two full hours I gave to them as best I could the revelation of God to man frequently I was interpreted with the acclamation. Oh-Oh. This approval and response encouraged me. This was the beginning of mission work among the wild Indians of the plains. So far as I know this was the first sermon ever preached to any of the wild tribes, Thus a start was made and the Spirit gave life to the seed that were sown.

On my next visit to them, I was accompanied by Dr. A.J. Holt, and a church was later established, called the Rock Spring Baptist Church.

During all these years the Creek Association has sent a missionary to minister to this church. The older members have passed on to their reward and younger people in larger numbers are carrying on the work. Thirty five years have passed away since I made this first visit to the home of John McIntosh. His body sleeps in the family cemetery near his beloved church.

(Big Arbor)

This year, 1936, Rev. Job McIntosh, the youngest son of the pioneer father (the boy referred to above who played around the place on that first visit) is the missionary to the Wichita and Caddo people. Thus the work goes on from one generation to another.

Cordially, G. Lee Phelps.