

WHEN THE CHEROKEES MOVED WEST

Being a Short History of the Emigration Westward and their Progress in the New Country.

(By Mrs. W.E. Roberts, Sr., Nowata, Okla.)

LAND MARKS.

(Continued.)

A relic of early days was Hillside Mission, near Skiatook. No doubt a few of the old pioneers who live under the shade of the native trees near Bird Creek, north of Skiatook, saw the Mission in its log huts on the same site, and saw it moved to the side of the big hill could tell a story that reads like a chapter of the history of the pioneers who invaded the old pioneer Northwest--with broad axes and flint rock rifles, they could tell of the coming of John Murdock, traveling missionary, who was sent out of the Friends Society of Philadelphia, in 1881.

The school became a success in every way. A church was also built of hewed logs; for a roof covering they felled a huge oak, rived clapboards three feet long and eight inches wide made a fine roof. In this rough structure without doors or floors they worshipped. After a time they split puncheons and made a door and laid a floor. This done very well in the summer but as winter drew near, these devout worshippers found it necessary to chink the cracks, so a log rolling was held, and on the logs

they placed limestone rock of which lime was made; with this lime they mixed sand and plastered the cracks with the mixture.

No description of the buildings at hillside would be complete without some personal description of John Murdock. John was a typical Arkansawer, with an intonation in his voice, a soft southern drawl. He was eloquent in expounding the virtues and the Indians believed in him. He knew little history, but when it came to scriptures he was as rock of ages. There were none better versed, and he could repeat chapter after chapter verbatim, apparently without limit. On one occasion, a full blood Osage Indian remarked, "John preach like h---. Nobody go to h---if John try to keep him out. Sure go if John no help him." He was not proud. He claimed that all pride comes from Lucifer and awaits a fall.

The purpose of this school was to educate all Indian children free of charge. In fact, the organization of the school was especially to civilize and educate the savage, but they found it necessary to accept white applicants, and then they charged a tuition fee, and this with board,

amounted to about \$8 per month. The students who boarded were under strict discipline, There were few who took the course who did not come out prepared for business or teaching.

There are many prominent business men today in Oklahoma who will tell you that all the education they received they obtained at the old Hillside Mission. Among those are: Charles, Bert and Frank Keeler, and Dr. Mansbridge, all of Bartlesville. The buildings were long since wrecked and the best material worked into residence buildings. The four-acre plat that comprised the site of the old Mission was never allotted to statehood, but was transferred direct by the government to the Friends Society at Philadelphia.

Something over 40 years ago, William C. Rogers, who lived about two miles north of the present site on which Skiatook now stands, started the first store, put in a stock of merchandise, such as the trade at that time demanded. When the store began to do a good business, Rogers had to make frequent trips to the nearest railroad station for supplies, which station at that time was Coffeyville, Kansas. Tulsa was undreamed of. It became the custom for all the neighbors to have him bring their

letters, and occasionally a newspaper to them, and sometimes an important letter to the Mission. It soon became evident that a postoffice was needed. It was then that the place received the name by which we know it, although it was spelled differently (Skia-A-Took.) It is a compound word taken from the Cherokee language, and generally accepted as meaning Big- Injun- Mē. However, Rogers says it may have several meanings, but it has reference to something of a large nature, like a large man, a vast tract of land, or the camp of some other tribe of Indians.

It must be remembered that 49 years ago, Colonel William P. Adair was the only authorized delegate or representative in congress for the then Indian Territory, and it was to his credit Rogers gives the establishment of the postoffice and giving it its present name. Skiatook has an old, old cemetery, Indian graves galore. Among the prominent Indians buried there are Chief Rogers, George Tyner, and many others--Rogers' tomb bears the significant sentence, "Last Chief of the Cherokees". George Tyner was a power among the Indians, and has many relatives around Skiatook today. How many of us know that of our forty-eight states, twenty-five bear names of Indian origin? Twelve are

5

English, six Spanish, three French, and two have names that from a historical standpoint must be considered Amercian. It is possible the meaning may be inaccurate, because many of the state were named before the days of historical societies, and in some cases the only source of information are old letters, crude maps and Indian legends. Oklahoma's name is taken from the Choctaw Indian tongue and has the peculiar significant meaning of "red people".

NOVATA STAR

April 19, 1925