

“WHY HAVE WE NEGLECTED THE GIRLS”:  
WOMEN’S ROLES IN INDIAN TERRITORY  
CHOCTAW EDUCATION, 1831-1861

By

EMILY DUNCAN

Bachelor of Arts in History

Oklahoma State University

Stillwater, Oklahoma

2018

Submitted to the Faculty of the  
Graduate College of the  
Oklahoma State University  
in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for  
the Degree of  
MASTER OF ARTS  
May, 2021

“WHY HAVE WE NEGLECTED THE GIRLS”:  
WOMEN’S ROLES IN INDIAN TERRITORY  
CHOCTAW EDUCATION, 1831-1861

Thesis Approved:

Dr. Laura Arata

---

Thesis Adviser

Dr. Richard Boles

---

Dr. Jennifer Murray

---

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish I could list and thank every member of the Oklahoma State University Department of History that has guided me through my undergraduate and graduate degree. From friendly chats at lunches to giving me advice on how to proceed in my career, they have provided valuable guidance throughout the years. To name the few faculty members who directly shepherded my growth: Dr. Richard Rohrs, Dr. Emily Graham, Dr. Anna Zeide, Dr. William Bryans, Dr. Douglas Miller, and Dr. Matthew Schauer. Additionally, I appreciate the support and feedback of my fellow graduate students—Kristina Rogers and Kaitlyn Weldon who were particularly helpful while drafting early versions of the chapters. I am forever grateful to Dr. Richard Boles and Dr. Jennifer Murray for their willingness to serve on my committee, patience, advice, and thoughtful suggestions. Finally, thank you Dr. Laura Arata, for your kindness and encouragement that got me through the toughest parts of writing a thesis. I appreciate the opportunities you shared with me and for pushing me to tackle hard subjects!

I am here because of the support of family and friends. Specifically thank you to my mother who, with tenderness and love educated me, always encouraging me to strive for my goals. You were instrumental to me making it through my program. Thank you to my Grandmother Barbara Moore and her mother, Mary Ratzlaff, for pursuing degrees and paving a path for women to achieve higher education. It is an honor and privilege to graduate from Grandmother Mary's alma mater 99 years after her. I appreciate the various forms of help from my sisters—Jenny, Stacey, and Michelle. Know you have each provided just what I needed to get through to where I am today. Hannah Hensley and Savvy Jo, also must be mentioned. Thank you both for listening to my papers and enduring me rattling-off what is on my mind. To the Duncans, thank you for your patience, understanding, and love as Nathan and I have gone through the graduate school process. Dad, I cannot thank you enough for always encouraging my love of history. From planning family trips around historic sites to showing me our family allotment, graves, and homes—you have always fostered my curiosity. Finally, thank you to Nathan Duncan, my sweet and forever patient husband. Thank you for supporting and encouraging me through my highs and lows, re-orienting me when I lost hope and focus, and celebrating my successes. I could not do this without you.

Name: EMILY DUNCAN

Date of Degree: MAY, 2021

TITLE OF STUDY: “WHY HAVE WE NEGLECTED THE GIRLS”: WOMEN’S  
ROLES IN INDIAN TERRITORY CHOCTAW EDUCATION, 1831-  
1861

Major Field: HISTORY

Abstract: After the forceful removal of the Choctaw to Indian Territory in 1831, they quickly established schools for their children. They believed emphasizing female education simultaneously preserved Choctaw culture and encouraged the United States’ continued recognition of their sovereignty. Thus, the school system became a meeting point for Choctaw, white, and Black women who supported female education efforts.

These schools were not the first attempt at western-style education for the Choctaw. After attempting to utilize mission schools in their Southeastern homelands as well as the boy’s Choctaw Academy in Kentucky, the Nation built a school system they controlled. Utilizing Choctaw women as teachers and administrators at many of their public schools, the high demand resulted in external support. Accommodating the influx of students, Choctaws contracted white American teachers and utilized Black enslaved labor to assist in running the schools. A system emerged where the Choctaw tended to run their Sabbath and Neighborhood Schools while whites dominated the academy boarding school system with the assistance of slave labor. Of course, the Choctaw girls who attended these schools also played important roles learning and melding Euro-American education and customs with their own in order to prepare themselves for future contact with colonial powers around them.

This work balances the field in numerous ways. Indian Boarding Schools post-Civil War receive wide attention, yet there is little literature on them between the 1830s and 1860s. In addition to studying this earlier period, the work highlights the roles of Black women within schools alongside white and Choctaw women’s teaching. Focusing on Choctaw agency in the future of their daughters and Nation, this work explores women’s crucial roles in laying the foundations of Choctaw public education.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
II. HISTORIOGRAPHY.....	8
Choctaw History .....	9
Religious History .....	25
III. INFRASTRUCTURE .....	39
Initial Western-Style Education.....	40
Spatial Influence & Control.....	45
Tense Partnerships .....	51
IV. MOTIVATIONS.....	56
Community Need .....	58
Societal Roles.....	62
Personal Benefits .....	67
V. SABBATH & NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOLS .....	74
Early Schools .....	75
Neighborhood Schools.....	80
Sabbath Schools .....	88
Other Education .....	99
VI. THE ACADEMIES .....	102
Application Process .....	105
English Immersion.....	113
Challenges.....	129

Chapter	Page
VII. ACADEMY CURRICULUMS .....	137
Academics .....	140
Religious .....	144
Domestic & Textiles .....	147
Housewifery .....	153
Fancy Work .....	157
VIII. INVISIBLE WORK .....	161
“Indispensable” Slave Labor .....	163
Treatment of Black Women .....	170
Labor .....	178
IX. CONCLUSION .....	198
REFERENCES .....	207

## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Comparison of Pay at Chuahla Female Seminary .....	70
2. Compared Earnings of Women at New Hope Female Academy .....	71
3. United States Sabbath Schools 1832 & 1875 .....	90
4. 1857 BIA Report Church Racial Composition .....	98
5. Subjects Taught at Academies .....	143
6. Textiles Produced at Schools .....	150
7. Domestic Art & Work.....	158

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Christeen Baker Sampler .....	2
2. Map of Districts .....	7
3. Wapanucka Academy .....	49
4. Wheelock Church.....	79
5. Map of Academies .....	104



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

When shall we all meet again  
When shall we all meet again  
Oft shall wried [sic] love retire  
Oft shall death and sorrow reign  
Ere we all shall meet again.  
When the dreames [sic] of life are fled  
When its wasted lamp is dead  
When in cold oblivions shade  
Beauty power and fame are laid  
Where immortal spirite [sic] reign  
There may we all meet again.

Christeen pulled the thread taut on the final stitch of her sampler's "n." The muggy June air hardly shifted in the stagnant school yard. But she breathed it in, trying to imprint its smell on her mind. It smelt of home, for now. The treaty was signed, they had to leave. She found the William Cullen Bryant verse around the time she heard the news of the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek. The following months, thread by thread her sorrowful spirit stitched it into existence. She felt a gentle touch on her shoulder and looked up to see Mrs. Electa Kingsbury at her side. It was time to return to lessons.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Christeen Baker's sampler with the William Cullen Bryant verse survives today in the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation collection. Dated June 9<sup>th</sup>, 1830 at Mayhew Choctaw Mission School, it is a remnant of the missionary run school system in the Southeastern Choctaw Nation, today Mississippi, before removal. She was twelve years old when she started school at the mission, where she attended at least the 1829-30 school year. There she learned reading, writing, and geography. Her sampler, in addition to the Bryant verse, contained the alphabet, numbers, and Ecclesiastes 9:10 "Wha[t] so ever thy hand



*Figure 1 Sampler Choctaw student Christeen Baker sewed while attending school in Mississippi. Given in memory of Sarah B. McGehee by her daughter, Milly McGehee. Christeen Baker, Sampler by Christeen Baker at Choctaw Mission School, June 9, 1830, silk embroidery on linen, object no. 2009-137, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.*

---

In 1830, the Choctaw faced the decision between retaining their homelands or their identity as an independent Nation. With the passage of the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek, people within the Choctaw Nation could either stay and own individual allotments of land as citizens of Mississippi or remove to Indian Territory with hopes of maintaining their sovereignty as a Nation.<sup>2</sup> Originally located in the Southeastern portion of North America, in much of what is today Mississippi, the Choctaw were one of the Indian Nations forcibly removed by the policies of President Andrew Jackson. The United States failure to uphold the terms agreed for the relocation led to the harsh winter conditions decimating the over six thousand migrating Choctaw, making their journey the first on the “Trail of Tears.”<sup>3</sup>

The U.S. government’s initial removal plan was for the 20,000 Choctaw from Mississippi to transition over three years. Between 1831 and 1833, roughly 9,000 Choctaw travelled westward.<sup>4</sup> In addition to the Choctaw, over five hundred enslaved people traveled to Indian Territory, their condition completely reliant on the resources available to their owners.<sup>5</sup> The reality of removal was much different than planned. In the first autumn, 4,000 Choctaws prepared to leave while many others hid in the forests and

---

findeth to do it with/ Thy might for there is no work nor device nor/ Knowledge nor wisdom in the grave whither thou/ goest.” Christeen Baker, *Sampler by Christeen Baker at Choctaw Mission School*, June 9, 1830. silk embroidery on linen. Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. Given in memory of Sarah B. McGehee by her daughter, Milly McGehee.

<sup>2</sup> Clara Sue Kidwell, *The Choctaws in Oklahoma: from Tribe to Nation, 1855-1970* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), 3.

<sup>3</sup> Clara Sue Kidwell, "Choctaw Women and Cultural Persistence in Mississippi," in *Negotiators of Change: Historical Perspectives on Native American Women*, ed. Nancy Shoemaker (New York: Routledge, 1995), 126.

<sup>4</sup> Christina Snyder, *Great Crossings : Indians, Settlers, and Slaves in the Age of Jackson* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 149.

<sup>5</sup> Snyder, *Great Crossings*, 151.

bayous to avoid federal enrollment officers.<sup>6</sup> With only about five wagons allotted for every 1,000 emigrants, the majority of Choctaws and enslaved Blacks walked the roughly 550 miles to Indian Territory along dirt roads.<sup>7</sup> Unsupplied with the promised wagons and provisions, the Choctaw suffered extreme hardships on the three-month trip. Only able to bring what they could carry on their backs, families abandoned agricultural equipment, family heirlooms, beloved pets, and more. They faced completely rebuilding their lives on undeveloped lands in Indian Territory.<sup>8</sup> Coming from the Deep South, most Choctaw did not have the winter clothing needed to keep them warm in the new climate.<sup>9</sup> Each family was issued only one blanket, leaving them to freeze on their winter journeys.<sup>10</sup> The physical and emotional toll on those who arrived in Indian Territory is unimaginable.

After the horrors of initial travel, the Choctaw faced more hardship in settling unknown lands. A flood in 1833 destroyed crops, cattle, and new construction. It was followed by waves of cholera and malaria that left roughly 600 Choctaws dead.<sup>11</sup> Between 1836 and 1840, 500 to 600 Choctaw perished during smallpox epidemics. On top of illness and disastrous weather, the Choctaw faced hostility from the Kiowa, whose land they now occupied, as well as bordering Osage, Comanche, and Apache Nations.<sup>12</sup> To the south, white unruly Texans became problematic as they opened rowdy bars and

---

<sup>6</sup> Snyder, *Great Crossings*, 149.

<sup>7</sup> Snyder, *Great Crossings*, 151.

<sup>8</sup> Snyder, *Great Crossings*, 150.

<sup>9</sup> Snyder, *Great Crossings*, 150.

<sup>10</sup> Snyder, *Great Crossings*, 151.

<sup>11</sup> Snyder, *Great Crossings*, 155.

<sup>12</sup> Snyder, *Great Crossings*, 157.

moved illegal liquor across borders.<sup>13</sup> Despite these hardships, the Choctaw fought to establish themselves in their new land.

Arriving in Indian Territory, the surviving members of the Nation slowly began rebuilding their new homes. Settling within their three clans, the Choctaw established the Moshulatubbee (northeast), Pushmataha (southwest), and Apukshunnubbee (southeast) districts. Within these, the towns of Doaksville, Skullyville, and Boggy Depot became major commercial centers. In 1838, a new constitution reestablished the Choctaw government, leasing the western portions of their lands to the Chickasaw Nation. They would lease this land until 1855 when a treaty granted the Chickasaw political independence.<sup>14</sup> The Choctaw gradually asserted sovereignty in their new lands. The pain of losing their homes in Mississippi pressed Oklahoma Choctaw to protect their remaining sovereignty from further encroachment. An early and key part of their plan was to educate their children, specifically their daughters.

The Choctaw plan to invest in female education required the labor of women from Choctaw, white, and Black backgrounds to function. Just after removal, the Choctaw immediately began to rebuild their school infrastructure, triggering tensions missionaries and Choctaw leaders as well as a preference for female Choctaw teachers. To serve the growing female population white and Choctaw women taught with motivations stemming from concepts of Republican Motherhood and community need. Delving into the three-tiered public school structure, Sabbath and Neighborhood schools provided basic education in both Choctaw and English also becoming a place to cultivate Choctaw

---

<sup>13</sup> Snyder, *Great Crossings*, 159.

<sup>14</sup> Clara Sue Kidwell, "Choctaw (tribe)," in *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture* (Oklahoma Historical Society). <https://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry.php?entry=CH047>.

culture. In contrast, Academies were English immersion experiences with an advanced curriculum, which brought challenges of acculturation but also opportunities for students to remain connected to their communities. But all of this occurred, in part, because of the labor of Black women, which has largely gone unexplored up to this point. All of these facets made up an advanced female education system meant to prepare the Choctaw for their future in their new lands.

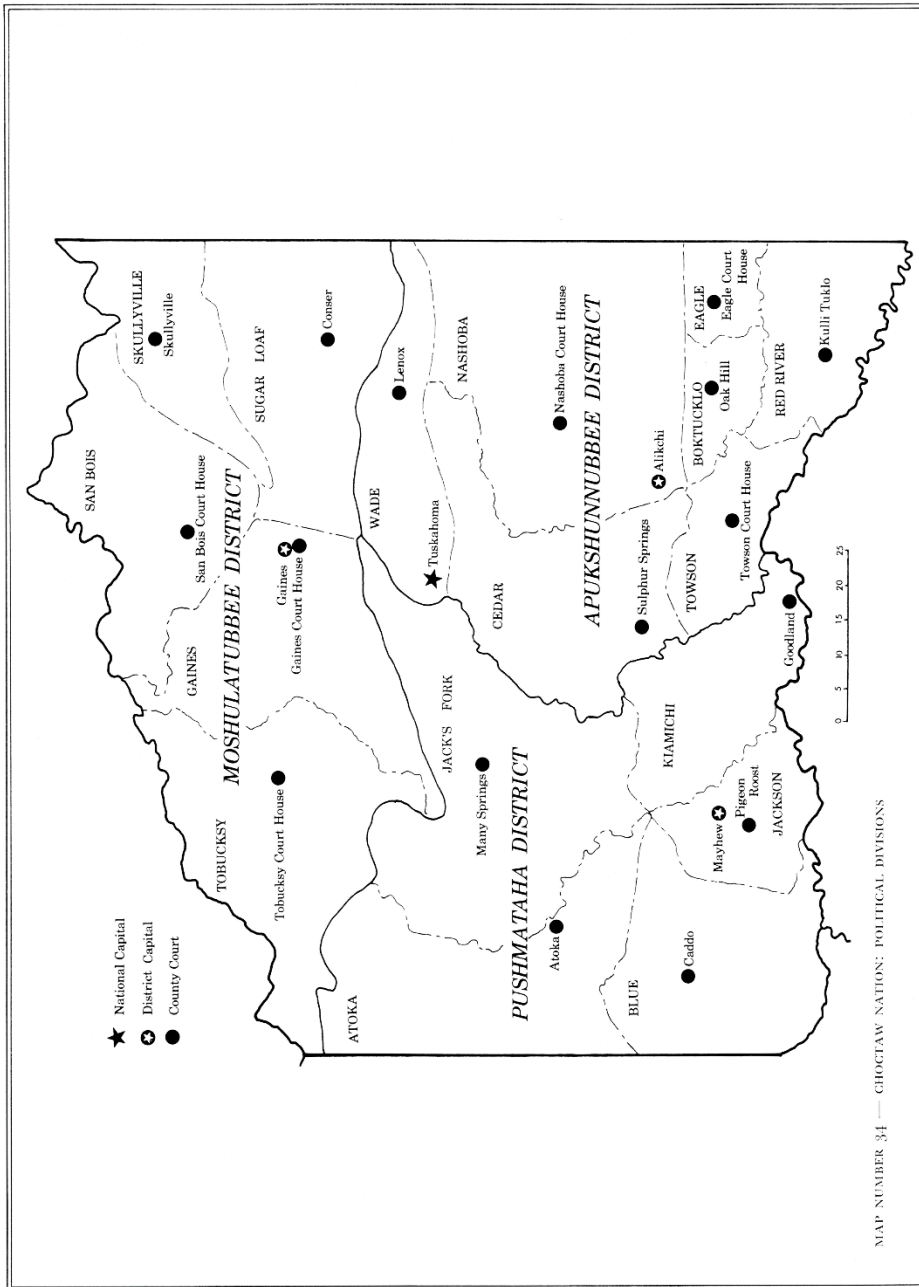


Figure 2 Map of the three districts dividing the Choctaw Nation in Oklahoma. Choctaw Nation: Political Divisions. Map no. 34 in John W. Morris, Charles R. Goins, and Edwin C. McReynolds, *Historical Atlas of Oklahoma*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1965).

## CHAPTER II

### HISTORIOGRAPHY

The early post-removal Choctaw education system, while started as a sort of experiment, laid a foundation for the future schools of Oklahoma. In order to run these schools, people from various races, classes, and regions of the world came together in the name of education. Unfortunately, the politics of slavery and resulting Civil War led to the closure of these schools after only thirty years. A largely overlooked and fascinating aspect of these schools was the focus on female education and the labor of women involved within them. Coming from their various backgrounds, women's gender shaped how they fit into school systems typically dominated by males. While Indigenous and white people labored most visibly at these schools, enslaved men and women additionally played an important though understudied role.<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> A brief comment on terms used to define racial categories. The term "white" is used often to define people of Euro-American backgrounds. This is not meant to diminish the diversity within this population, but for the purpose of this study references the general trends of European descended people in the United States of America at this time. Tribal names, such as Choctaw, are used whenever possible though terms such as "Native" and "Indigenous" are used to diversify language at times for ease of reading. The use of terms such as "Native American" and "Indian" are not meant to diminish the diversity of the Indigenous Nations in North America and is used only when necessary. Terms such as "mixed-blood" are replaced with "mixed-heritage" or similar phrases whenever possible in order to focus more on cultural practices than the physical percent of a person's Indigenous heritage. It is understood this is a challenging and controversial subject facing Native Nations today and this study tries to acknowledge its complexities emerging during the early post-removal period rather than label some individuals as more Native American than others. Finally, terms such as "Black" and "Afro-Indian" are used to describe people of African descent within this history. Black is used over African American as the birthplace and place enslaved populations knew as home varied across the globe and not just North America.



This women-focused study finds itself situated between two larger fields: Native American and religious History. First, it argues women were a key part of Choctaw efforts to re-establish their Nation on new lands west of the Mississippi. Equally, it highlights how the contracted and controlled labor of white women and enslaved Black women was important to the daily function of Choctaw mission-based boarding schools. Looking at the importance of female roles in the education system of post-removal Choctaw Nation builds on an understudied part of Native American history, but also upon a new “countercanon” of larger American religious history.<sup>16</sup>

### **Choctaw History**

Native American history grew as a field starting in the 1970s. An expanding body of scholarly work on Choctaw history emphasized the vibrancy of Choctaw people. While early non-Indigenous scholars Grant Foreman and Angie Debo wrote foundational histories of the Choctaw, they presented the Nation in decline.<sup>17</sup> These Progressive Era historians were not the only people who wrote histories of Native people viewed through the lens of a fading race. Richard White’s 1983 *The Roots of Dependency* also ends with the Choctaw in despair during the 1810s and 1820s pre-removal period.<sup>18</sup> Choctaw authors Donna Akers, Clara Sue Kidwell, and Michelene E. Pesantubbee are part of the

---

<sup>16</sup> “Countercannon” is a term explored by Cather Brekus in her piece, “Contested Words.” Catherine A. Brekus, “Contested Words: History, America, Religion,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 75, no. 1 (2018).

<sup>17</sup> Grant Foreman, *The Five Civilized Tribes* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1934); Angie Debo, *The Rise and Fall of the Choctaw Republic* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1934).

<sup>18</sup> Donna Akers, *Living in the Land of Death: the Choctaw Nation, 1830-1860* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2004); Richard White, *The Roots of Dependency: Subsistence, Environment, and Social Change Among the Choctaws, Pawnees, and Navajos* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983).

wave of historians who have turned that narrative in recent years.<sup>19</sup> Rather than fading, these women present a very much alive, self-determining people experiencing agency in the face of colonial encroachment. They are a part of an ever growing force of Indigenous scholars. Yet, while there are improvements in Choctaw history, subgroups such as women and Afro-Indians remain largely understudied.

While a number of Choctaw histories exist, by Indigenous and non-Indigenous authors, there is a lack in focus on women's history specifically during post-removal years leading up to the Civil War. Clara Sue Kidwell and Michelene E. Pesantubbee both wrote about the women's role in cultural persistence within the Choctaw Nation. Both women expand the field with their studies that highlight women's historical contributions in Choctaw society; however, typically due to a lack of sources, Choctaw women's experiences in the mid-nineteenth century are largely unexamined.<sup>20</sup>

What few studies there are on Choctaw women focus on their methods of coping with the influx of Euro-American practices. Michelene E. Pesantubbee's "Beyond Domesticity: Choctaw Women Negotiating the Tension between Choctaw Culture and Protestantism," focuses on the colonial period and modern-day. Pesantubbee discusses the role of the church in women's protection of Choctaw tradition amid missionary

---

<sup>19</sup> Akers, *Living in the Land of Death*; Donna Akers, *Culture and Customs of the Choctaw Indians* (Santa Barbara: Greenwood, 2013); Clara Sue Kidwell, "What Would Pocahontas Think Now?: Women and Cultural Persistence," *Callaloo* 17, no. 1 (1994); Kidwell, "Choctaw Women and Cultural Persistence."; Kidwell, *The Choctaws in Oklahoma*; Michelene E. Pesantubbee, "Beyond Domesticity: Choctaw Women Negotiating the Tension between Choctaw Culture and Protestantism," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 67, no. 2 (1999); Michelene E. Pesantubbee, *Choctaw Women in a Chaotic World: The Clash of Cultures in the Colonial Southeast* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005).

<sup>20</sup> Kidwell, "What Would Pocahontas."; Kidwell, "Choctaw Women and Cultural Persistence."

attempts to erase it.<sup>21</sup> Pesantubbee aptly explains where there is a gap in the field, “The lack of interest in the unexpected characteristics of Choctaw society and inattention to women’s roles in the Lower Mississippi Valley have resulted in superficial or uninformed statements about Choctaw women up to the present time.”<sup>22</sup> While this invisibility led to less sources to directly study, women became crucial to the perpetuation of their culture. Because white invaders did not value women’s contributions as much as men’s, their actions were often ignored. This allowed for women to continue various practices simply because invaders did not see them as a threat. Clara Sue Kidwell elaborates:

They were the major mediators of cultural meaning between two worlds. As the roles of Indian men changed in response to changing subsistence patterns, the roles of women persisted....Their functions as child bearers and contributors to subsistence were not threatening to white society.... In situations of contact, women often became the custodians of traditional cultural values.

Kidwell further argues that historians must stop looking at Indigenous women’s actions through gendered expectations set for white women and stereotypes.<sup>23</sup> Still, these earlier studies leave space for exploration in the early years of life in Indian Territory.

It is important then that Choctaw women’s work in education be set in context of their traditions, culture, and in light of the political strife they faced with an encroaching colonial power. Not only did women preserve and adapt their culture during this period, but their traditional roles became central to the post-removal plan to equip their children

---

<sup>21</sup> Pesantubbee, "Beyond Domesticity." For more on women's resistance to Euro-American influence see Carol Devons, "'If We Get the Girls, We Get the Race': Missionary Education of Native American Girls," *Journal of World History* 3, no. 2 (1992). There have been many other studies on Euro-American missionaries working with native children, but this study is unique by focusing on the domestic education of Indigenous girls as well as highlighting parental concern.

<sup>22</sup> Pesantubbee, *Choctaw Women in a Chaotic World*, 11.

<sup>23</sup> Kidwell, "What Would Pocahontas," 150.

for ongoing contact with the United States. As educators, Choctaw women stood responsible for the care of their Nation. This role could be contradictory as women had to shape what practices were preserved and in which manner they should acculturate to sit as equals with the United States.

Traditional caretaking roles were important characteristics of Choctaw women. Michelene Pesantubbee explains in her article on Choctaw women's negotiation of cultures that women have protected their leadership and caretaking role within the church.<sup>24</sup> Pesantubbee points to women's high church attendance and teaching of Sunday School and Bible School as a way they maintained their influence as caretakers in their community. Modern Choctaw women still utilize these longstanding values and culture in their teaching as well.<sup>25</sup> Building upon the previous concept, this paper argues that similar to the concept of Republican Motherhood, female education and leadership of Choctaw women used their cultural roles to strengthen the Nation against future encounters with colonial powers such as the United States.

Another important author to note is LeAnne Howe, who coined the term "Tribalography" to explain how stories and histories of Indigenous people, specifically Choctaw, pass through generations.<sup>26</sup> Howe explains it as the rhetorical space where Indigenous people create narratives for their histories that tell about their experiences but

---

<sup>24</sup> Pesantubbee, "Beyond Domesticity," 400.

<sup>25</sup> Pesantubbee, "Beyond Domesticity," 401.

<sup>26</sup> Howe's historical fiction illustrates the role oral traditions can play in generations. Her work *Miko Kings* also briefly shows the experiences of Choctaw and Black children in post-Civil War boarding schools. LeAnne Howe, *Shell Shaker* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 2001); LeAnne Howe, *Miko Kings: an Indian Baseball Story* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 2007).

also impact future generations.<sup>27</sup> Channette Romero helps explain the concept further, “Tribalography asserts that in order to develop, Native identities must create and encounter stories combining oral storytelling and written history, personal experiences and tribal narratives.”<sup>28</sup> For historians, it is important to consider this concept as it validates specifically stories as a way to understand Indigenous experiences. As Howe notes in an article on the subject of Tribalography, “I am consciously using the terms story, fiction, history, and play, interchangeably because I am from a culture that views these things as an integrated whole rather than individual parts.”<sup>29</sup> Native stories have a power as a part of family and cultural collective memory. Howe’s Tribalography is part of a shift in history to value not just colonial archives. Instead, oral traditions and alternative sources are more frequently considered valid sources.

Euro-American education among the Choctaw post-Removal was not a totally new venture as Indigenous groups sought education previously. In 1803, three mission schools in Tennessee served Cherokee students and by 1819 Dwight Mission hosted school for Cherokee children west of the Mississippi.<sup>30</sup> While many Indigenous boys accessed western-style education at places such as the Cornwall Foreign Mission School in Cornwall, Connecticut around 1817, Choctaw girls began to more readily access education when missionaries opened schools in their homelands in the 1818.<sup>31</sup> By 1821,

---

<sup>27</sup> LeAnne Howe, "Tribalography: The Power of Native Stories," *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism* 14, no. 1 (1999): 118.

<sup>28</sup> Channette Romero, "Expanding Tribal Identities and Sovereignty through LeAnne Howe's 'Tribalography'," *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 26, no. 2 (2014): 2.

<sup>29</sup> Howe, "Tribalography," 118.

<sup>30</sup> Devon A. Mihesuah, *Cultivating the Rosebuds: The Education of Women at the Cherokee Female Seminary, 1851-1909* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 16.

<sup>31</sup> John Demos, *The Heathen School: a Story of Hope and Betrayal in the Age of the Early Republic* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014); Mihesuah, *Cultivating the Rosebuds*, 11; Valerie Lambert, *Choctaw Nation: A Story of American Indian Resurgence* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), 36.

two coeducational missionary schools in the Choctaw Nation served 150 students each year.<sup>32</sup> It was not until post-removal that the Choctaw focused on creating higher level female-only educational facilities.

At the same time, white women were also starting to gain greater access to education. Women's education in the United States South is largely understudied, but Choctaw families may have been influenced by the culture surrounding education in that region. Christie Anne Farnham wrote one of the few histories focusing on women's higher education in the Antebellum South.<sup>33</sup> Girls' basic education was encouraged and almost universal among New England women after 1765. The South struggled because of its rural nature so parents had to send children abroad for education or hire tutors.<sup>34</sup> Women at age 25, in northern states, were nearly universally literate after 1790 and began attending college in greater frequency. In contrast, by the 1850s Southern women's literacy ranged from 64 to 86 percent depending on region, though some historians feel more may have been functionally illiterate.<sup>35</sup> Even if literate, Historian Beth Schweiger points out that though she believes there were high literacy levels in the United States South, that did not mean there were necessarily high levels of education. She explains learning to read in school was rare and that "until the mid nineteenth century, reading and writing were taught independently; many reader particularly women, never learned to write. Others could read print but never learned to read handwriting."<sup>36</sup> While basic

---

<sup>32</sup> Lambert, *Choctaw Nation: A Story of American Indian Resurgence*, 36.

<sup>33</sup> Christie Anne Farnham, *The Education of the Southern Belle: Higher Education and Student Socialization in the Antebellum South* (New York: New York University Press, 1994).

<sup>34</sup> Farnham, *The Education of the Southern Belle*, 36.

<sup>35</sup> Farnham, *The Education of the Southern Belle*, 37, 200.

<sup>36</sup> Beth Barton Schweiger, "The Literate South: Reading before Emancipation," *Journal of the Civil War Era* 13, no. 3 (2013): 341.

education was not as wide-spread in the South, around the 1850s, women's academies for higher education began to appear and offer, those capable of paying the cost, collegiate-level coursework though no degree would be rewarded.<sup>37</sup> The nineteenth century became a fruitful time for women's education across North America.

Most studies about education in Indian Territory focus on the post-Civil War government boarding schools and their atrocities.<sup>38</sup> David Wallace Adams noted the boarding schools of the "Five Civilized Tribes" were uniquely different from federal off-reservation boarding schools typically studied.<sup>39</sup> A non-Choctaw study focusing specifically on women's education is Devon Mihesuah's *Cultivating the Rosebuds: The Education of Women at the Cherokee Female Seminary, 1851-1909*. Mihesuah notes the lack of Cherokee female teachers in their schools before the 1850s was due to women's roles defined by southern womanhood.<sup>40</sup> In contrast to Mihesuah's findings, the Choctaw had female teachers working much earlier in their school system.

The other work on women's boarding schools of a Southeastern Nation is Amanda J. Cobb's *Listening to Our Grandmothers' Stories: the Bloomfield Academy for Chickasaw Females, 1852-1949*.<sup>41</sup> Cobb compares shifts in literacy at the school to trace the agenda of controlling power—missionaries, Chickasaws, and the federal government.<sup>42</sup> Bloomfield taught four types of literacy to evaluate students: academic,

---

<sup>37</sup> Farnham, *The Education of the Southern Belle*, 67.

<sup>38</sup> David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995); Brenda J. Child, *Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families, 1900-1940* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998).

<sup>39</sup> Adams, *Education for Extinction*, x.

<sup>40</sup> Mihesuah, *Cultivating the Rosebuds*, 26.

<sup>41</sup> Amanda J. Cobb, *Listening to Our Grandmothers' Stories: the Bloomfield Academy for Chickasaw Females, 1852-1949* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000).

<sup>42</sup> Cobb, *Listening to Our Grandmothers' Stories*, 12.

social, religious, and domestic.<sup>43</sup> These literacies are similar to those taught at Choctaw female academies, which are expanded in greater detail within this research. Bloomfield, like the Cherokee Female Seminary, persevered through the decades and therefore much of the book's focus is on the later, better documented post-Civil War years of the school.

While Cobb looks at the resiliency of the Chickasaw, she also emphasizes that mission-associated boarding schools, such as Bloomfield, were designed white missionaries “to strip the students of the Native culture.” Students were forbidden to speak Chickasaw at school as another way to strip them of Native identity.<sup>44</sup> Similar to Cobb's study, the missionaries to the Choctaw certainly focused on spiritual and domestic acculturation more than academics. With the Choctaw, however, there is evidence that the Tribal leadership was more intentional in seeking school placement for their own benefit. The Chickasaws' and other “Civilized” Nations were able to create schools as “a way to control their own transformation; it was not a practice of freedom but a practice of control—a way to create an acceptable place for themselves in a different world.”<sup>45</sup> This perspective on education systems as a means of control for Indigenous people is an important thread to continue. It demonstrates both their agency and adaption to the changing world around them in order to provide themselves with the best future possible rather than simply being passive bystanders.

Both Mihesuah's and Cobb's histories show how different Southeastern Nation boarding schools were from the federal schools implemented for other Nations. Mihesuah and Cobb, who both excellently documented the shifts of specific schools at a

---

<sup>43</sup> Cobb, *Listening to Our Grandmothers' Stories*, 14-5.

<sup>44</sup> Cobb, *Listening to Our Grandmothers' Stories*, 50.

<sup>45</sup> Cobb, *Listening to Our Grandmothers' Stories*, 20, 37.



micro-level, miss the trends seen when studying National school systems. Looking at the Choctaw Nation's larger plan for female education reveals a three-tiered system of Sunday, Neighborhood, and Seminary schools that show a Nation determined to educate their people on their terms. Additionally, the emphasis on Indigenous experiences leave space to explore how white and black women experienced these education systems. Finally, the larger view reveals that Choctaw schools were instrumental immediately after removal in 1831 to the Nation re-establishing themselves as a Sovereign Nation.

There are only a few scholarly works about Choctaw schools implemented between removal and the Civil War.<sup>46</sup> The *Chronicles of Oklahoma* feature many articles on the subject of Choctaw schools, often biographies or brief histories.<sup>47</sup> Largely published from the 1920s to the 1950s, these articles present short vignettes about the history of certain subjects. While they provide valuable background information, they more importantly preserved a number of primary sources. Oral histories with interviewees Elizabeth Jacobs Quinton and Peter J. Hudson give valuable memories of

---

<sup>46</sup> There are many works discussing American Indian boarding school experiences and their often horrific experiences. An examples of these are Adams, *Education for Extinction*; Devons, "If We Get the Girls'." These schools were typically run by the United States government rather than the Nations themselves and focused on westernizing Indigenous children. Some other works that touch on Choctaw education, though not extensively include Michael Cassity and Danney Goble, *Divided Hearts: The Presbyterian Journey through Oklahoma History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2009); Alexandra Harmon, *Rich Indians: Native People and the Problem of Wealth in American History* (Chapell Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Jr. Jeffrey Lee Fortney, "Robert M. Jones and The Choctaw Nation: Indigenous Nationalism in the American South, 1820-1877" (Doctorate University of Oklahoma, 2014).

<sup>47</sup> J.J. Methvin, "About Some of Our First Schools in Choctaw Nation," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 6, no. 3 (1928); Ora Eddleman Reed, "The Robe Family—Missionaries " *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 26, no. 3 (1932); Carolyn Thomas Foreman, "New Hope Seminary," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 22, no. 3 (1944); Lona Eaton Miller, "Wheelock Mission," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 29, no. 3 (1951); Anna Lewis, "Jane McCurtain," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 11, no. 4 (1933); Ethel McMillan, "Women Teachers in Oklahoma 1820-1860," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 27, no. 1 (1949); Mrs. C.M. Whaley, "Elizabeth Jacobs Quinton, Centarian," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 29, no. 2 (1951); Peter Hudson, "Recollections of Peter Hudson," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 10, no. 4 (1932); R.L. Williams, "Peter James Hudson," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 17, no. 1 (1939).

the schools while the papers and diaries republished allow access to other often lost documents.<sup>48</sup> This series of articles became a source base for the few studies that exist on Choctaw Schools.

Steven Crum's "The Choctaw Nation: Changing the Appearance of American Higher Education, 1830-1907" is one of these studies; however, it looks at Choctaw students attending institutions of higher education in the United States after removal. Crum compared how Choctaw students returned home due to greater kinship ties, whereas Euro-American students used college to graduate out and onward from their family backgrounds.<sup>49</sup> While the early years focus on men, Crum does discuss young women's attendance in the mid to late 1850s.<sup>50</sup> While aware of the results from the Choctaw's intra-Nation schools, Crum does not explore them intensively.

Two histories on Oklahoma Choctaw Schools during the post-removal period exist. Dr. James D. Morrison's *Schools for the Choctaws* published in 1978 is an in-depth study of the Choctaw education system. Reading almost like an annal, it breaks down the history of each of the major schools in the nineteenth century.<sup>51</sup> Giving many biographies and general information about the school, the difficulty of this work is that Dr. Morrison's death brought a forty-year delay in the book's publication. Thus, it is missing citations to what would otherwise be a thorough account of the history of the schools. Recently published by the Choctaw Nation, the work now stands as a good source for the

---

<sup>48</sup> Williams, "Peter James Hudson."; Hudson, "Recollections of Peter Hudson."; Whaley, "Elizabeth Jacobs Quinton."

<sup>49</sup> Steven Crum, "The Choctaw Nation: Changing the Appearance of American Higher Education, 1830, 1907," *History of Education Quarterly* 47, no. 1 (2007): 55-6.

<sup>50</sup> Crum, "The Choctaw Nation: Changing the Appearance," 55-7.

<sup>51</sup> James D. Morrison, *Schools for the Choctaws*, 2 ed., ed. Joy Culbreath and Kathy Carpenter (Durant: Ameba Publishing, 2016, 1978).

general history of these early school systems. Another small work of informational nature that gives context is *The Wheelock Story*, which gives a brief account of the early years of the Choctaw girls boarding school and Wheelock mission before focusing on its better documented post-Civil War years.<sup>52</sup> Thus, the subject of women's experiences in the Choctaw female education centers are largely untouched.

There are two works that provide an important framework for this study, but for the most part mention female schools only on a surface level. First, *Great Crossings: Indians, Settlers, and Slaves in the Age of Jackson* by Christina Snyder shows a more cross-sectional experience of whites, Blacks, and Native persons.<sup>53</sup> This work centers on the Choctaw Academy, a school started by the Choctaw Nation in Kentucky before removal to educate largely elite Native boys. Snyder wonderfully examines how the future male leaders of the Choctaw Nation viewed slavery, western education, and missionaries. While the final chapter does mention a number of native women involved in the school system, it is written more as a summary of educational efforts to come rather than as a critical analysis. Otherwise, Snyder gives a vivid background of Choctaw culture and educational efforts leading up to removal and the start of their own impressive educational system. Snyder is a prime example of a non-Indigenous scholar properly working with Indigenous history. Pointing to the agency of the Choctaw as they formed the school, Snyder also places it in the context of the challenges of race and imperial policies in Jacksonian America. This study differs mostly in its focus on female education and intra-Nation location.

---

<sup>52</sup> Louis and Barbara Asbill Grant Coleman, *The Wheelock Story* (Durant: Texoma Print Service, 2011).

<sup>53</sup> Snyder, *Great Crossings*.

Donna Akers's *Living in the Land of Death*, which details life in the Choctaw Nation of Indian Territory between 1830 and 1860, briefly discusses the schools.<sup>54</sup> Aside from important contextual information, she describes women's experiences in a more general sense but also highlights the new school systems the Choctaw commenced immediately post-removal. Akers points out that during the changes of the 1820s and 1830s the Choctaw took control of their schooling systems. Their new lands became a prime opportunity to create their own internally run system where they could shape future generations.<sup>55</sup> Akers notes that girls were included in the new schooling system as different but equally important students in the system.<sup>56</sup> Otherwise, this larger National history does not dig deeper into how important women were in the education plans of the Choctaw.

Clara Sue Kidwell also touches briefly on the founding of the schools pre-Civil War, emphasizing their importance as Choctaw created and controlled, unlike other schools systems previously experienced and unbeknownst to them, post-war realities of United States control. Kidwell explains that around the 1840s and 1850s, Choctaw language and kinship systems were still largely intact.<sup>57</sup> As Kidwell puts it, "Choctaw culture was changing, but not disappearing" as missionaries preached and the legislature published laws in their language and stick-ball remained prevalent.<sup>58</sup> This is important as it supports that women continued to play important roles in managing their culture. They did so by selecting what practices were passed down to future generations and what

---

<sup>54</sup> Akers, *Living in the Land of Death*.

<sup>55</sup> Akers, *Living in the Land of Death*, 106.

<sup>56</sup> Akers, *Living in the Land of Death*, 107.

<sup>57</sup> Kidwell, *The Choctaws in Oklahoma*, 10.

<sup>58</sup> Clara Sue Kidwell, *Choctaws and Missionaries in Mississippi, 1818-1918* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), 162.

western customs they incorporated into their lifestyles. Thus, the emphasis on female education functioned as an important way to maintain Choctaw beliefs and practices.

A final, and highly contested, facet of study is understanding race within these schools. Even when completely qualified to teach, Choctaw women faced racist views of blood-quantum when finding positions. Choctaw women navigated racial evaluation not only by tribal outsiders, but each other. Circe Sturm explains the difficulty in navigating blood-quantum: “In general, the tendency has been to reduce tribal populations to only two categories—the culturally authentic ‘full-bloods’ or the assimilated ‘mixed-bloods.’ Mixed-bloods are often portrayed as ‘race-traitors,’ so that lower blood degree becomes directly associated with cultural loss that allegedly results from ‘white Indian’ political domination.”<sup>59</sup> Historian Theda Perdue also addressed this conundrum specifically amongst Choctaw education. Many leaders that advocated for schools in Mississippi were “mixed-blood,” but she points out how “full-blood” leaders equally supported the schools, they were simply fewer in number overall.<sup>60</sup> During the period of this study, the only full-time Choctaw woman listed on seminary teaching staff, Emily Dwight, was according to a report “a full Choctaw.”<sup>61</sup> Of all the teachers, she became the only documented Indigenous woman responsible for teaching the whitest of curriculums at boarding schools—domestic skills.

---

<sup>59</sup> Circe Sturm, *Blood Politics: Race, Culture, and Identity in the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 18.

<sup>60</sup> Theda Perdue, *"Mixed Blood" Indians: Racial Construction in the Early South* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2003), 55-6.

<sup>61</sup> Cyrus Kingsbury to General Douglas A. Cooper, September 13, 1858, in *Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs Accompanying the Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior for the Year 1858*, (Washington, D.C.: William A. Harris, Printer, 1858), 164.

While it may not have mattered to contemporary Choctaws, white missionaries were incredibly concerned with race. “Mixed-blood” people were disproportionately represented at both government and mission schools as well as accounting for most Southeast economic elite members.<sup>62</sup> Thus, the sources they have left are littered with teachers’ judgements on race and often. As a result, Perdue says, “Missionaries, however, may have inadvertently bolstered the power of the ‘mixed bloods’ by favoring them....The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions explicitly targeted ‘mixed bloods’ in its work among the Cherokee.” Also in the Choctaw Nation, favoritism increased the number of children from mixed-heritages receiving education in the skills valued by United States government and missionary representatives.<sup>63</sup> White fathers not only often passed down extensive property and wealth that provided a material advantage, but United States government officials preferred to work with English speakers who typically came from a white parent.<sup>64</sup> Perdue also highlights multiple examples of full-Choctaw men reaching political, economic, and social success in the Nation, suggesting race mattered less to the citizens of the Nation than it did to the white officials and missionaries. As Historian Alexandra Harmon writes, “the southern tribes were effectively becoming multicultural, stratified societies...but agreed on the importance of preserving their nations.”<sup>65</sup> As Perdue concluded, for the Nation at this time, blood quantum was a non-issue.<sup>66</sup>

---

<sup>62</sup> Perdue, *"Mixed Blood" Indians*, 57.

<sup>63</sup> Perdue, *"Mixed Blood" Indians*, 56.

<sup>64</sup> Perdue, *"Mixed Blood" Indians*, 52, 7-8.

<sup>65</sup> Harmon, *Rich Indians*, 110.

<sup>66</sup> Perdue, *"Mixed Blood" Indians*, 55-6.

Just as in Mississippi, the majority of the school proponents in this study were of a mixed heritage, but as Donna Akers pointed out in *Living in the Land of Death*, ethnicity rather than race, defined the Nation during this early post-removal period. She wrote, “If one lived like a Choctaw, acted like a Choctaw, and spoke Choctaw, then one was included in the community....”<sup>67</sup> All the same, Clara Sue Kidwell explains the long term effects when more acculturated mixed-families took political dominance over full-blood families who continued more traditional practices, leading to post-Civil War political ramifications.<sup>68</sup> Many prominent families—Pitchlynns, Folsoms, LeFlores, etc.—are of mixed heritage, but often the blood quantum of women is unknown. While these burgeoning divisions certainly played a part in later Choctaw politics, this study focuses more on the female Choctaw experience as a whole, except where white missionaries made it an issue. All the same, it is equally important to acknowledge that colonial archives have primarily saved accounts of those who accessed western-style education and could write in English. Despite this, every endeavor was made to present a multitude of perspectives.

A final, but important aspect of Indigenous history that is growing especially among Southern Nations is the relationship with people of African descent. Having lived in the southeast for centuries, the Choctaw were well acquainted with Euro-American practices, which they selectively incorporated into their own lifestyles. One of these adopted practices was enslaving people of African descent. There have been some studies covering slave ownership and the lives of Indians. Tiya Miles, *Ties That Bind: The Story*

---

<sup>67</sup> Akers, *Living in the Land of Death*, XIX.

<sup>68</sup> Kidwell, *The Choctaws in Oklahoma*, 8.

of an Afro-Cherokee Family in Slavery and Freedom as well as Claudio Saunt's *Black, White, and Indian: Race and the Unmaking of an American Family* are doing valuable, but controversial research on the experience of mixed persons.<sup>69</sup> While these studies are important to the growth of the field, this study focuses on enslaved peoples' experiences more broadly in the Choctaw Nation during the pre-Civil War period.

A more broad study of the experiences of people enslaved to the Choctaw and Chickasaw is Barbara Krauthamer's *Black Slaves, Indian Masters: Slavery, Emancipation, and Citizenship in the Native American South*.<sup>70</sup> This study discusses the pivotal role of slavery in these Nations. Interestingly, both missionaries and Native persons participated in slavery in the Nation. This became problematic as the 1860s drew near because the Choctaw Nation would side with the Confederacy, losing mission funding and a major part of their economy.

While this study does not examine specifically the relationship of Afro-Indians or relationships between enslaved Black people and their captors, it does seek to acknowledge the often invisible labor they provided at the schools. Decades ago, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese pointed out the lack of racial inclusion in women's studies which paid, "attention to the experience of women of different classes and is, increasingly if still inadequately, paying attention to the experience of women of different

---

<sup>69</sup> Wyatt F. Jeltz in his article "The Relations of Negroes and Choctaw and Chickasaw Indians" This article discusses slaveholding by the Choctaw and Chickasaw but simply looks at larger trends and practices. It does not look at the closer details of what they did in their day to day life, specifically women. Wyatt F. Jeltz, "The Relations of Negroes and Choctaw and Chickasaw Indians," *The Journal of Negro History* 33, no. 1 (1948); Tiya Miles, *Ties that Bind: The Story of an Afro-Cherokee Family in Slavery and Freedom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Claudio Saunt, *Black, White, and Indian: Race and the Unmaking of an American Family* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

<sup>70</sup> Barbara Krauthamer, *Black Slaves, Indian Masters: Slavery, Emancipation, and Citizenship in the Native American South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013).



racess. The problem is not that we have no history of working-class or black women. It is that...the histories we do have are being written as if class and race did not shape women's experience and even their identities."<sup>71</sup> Even though Fox-Genovese produced her book over thirty years ago, this diversity issue still plagues women's history. This study's inclusion of all women at the schools attempts to acknowledge it. There is little evidence of Black students or teachers attending schools, but enslaved women provided labor fundamental to the daily function of Choctaw boarding schools. While not an in-depth study of their experiences, this study seeks to ensure an acknowledgement of all people in every field continues to become a standard.

## **RELIGIOUS HISTORY**

A crucial part of the emerging Choctaw education system was their contracting Protestant mission groups to assist with their new schools. With the emphasis of this study on women's contribution and the inclusion of both Indigenous and Black people, it falls quite squarely into the new "countercanon," as dubbed by Catherine Brekus, of American religious history.<sup>72</sup> The most pertinent parts of this countercanon are the expansion of what "American" and "religion" mean and this study seeks to aid in that much needed growth.

Catherine Brekus's article "Contested Words: History, America, Religion" discusses how far American religious studies have come and where they need to continue

---

<sup>71</sup> Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 42.

<sup>72</sup> Brekus, "Contested Words."

growing.<sup>73</sup> What initially started as field focused on a national Anglo-Saxon evangelical Christian narrative has transitioned into a geographically expanded America and a diversity of religions. One of the oldest, and quite problematic, histories is Robert Baird's 1844 in *Religion in America*, which focused on an American Protestant Empire led by white males.<sup>74</sup> His model led to more than a century of literature characterized by "The emphasis on New England Puritans, the privileging of Protestant consensus, the valorization of Protestants as essentially democratic and tolerant, the single-minded focus on the relationship between religion and the nation-state, the invisibility of women."<sup>75</sup> The rise of social history brought an emphasis on women and the average people as a collective making changes.<sup>76</sup> Thus the 1960s and 70s saw a "countercanon" arise, challenging in particular Baird's definitions of history, America, and religion.<sup>77</sup> Historians are now interested in personal religious experiences, gender, and race.<sup>78</sup> Modern historians seek to challenge whose history is told, the boundaries of the United States, and expand religion to encompass more than just Protestantism or institutional Christianity.<sup>79</sup>

---

<sup>73</sup> Brekus, "Contested Words."

<sup>74</sup> Robert Baird, *Religion in America, or, An Account of the Origin, Progress, Relation to the State and Present Condition of the Evangelical Churches in the United States: with Notices of the Unevangelical Denominations* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1844). Another problematic history presented by Brekus: Daniel Dorchester, *Christianity in the United States from the First Settlement down to the Present Time* (New York: Hunt & Eaton, 1895). Brekus also notes a more modern example of old canon history in Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972).

<sup>75</sup> Brekus, "Contested Words," 10.

<sup>76</sup> Brekus, "Contested Words," 10. Examples of these "bottom-up" telling of history are Michael J. Crawford, "The Spiritual Travels of Nathan Cole," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 33, no. 1 (1976); Jon F. Sensbach, *Rebecca's Revival: Creating Black Christianity in the Atlantic World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005); Edward Andrews, *Native Apostles: Black and Indian Missionaries in the British Atlantic World* (Cumberland: Harvard University Press, 2013); Catherine A. Brekus, *Sarah Osborne's World: The Rise of Evangelical Christianity in Early America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).

<sup>77</sup> Brekus, "Contested Words," 4.

<sup>78</sup> Brekus, "Contested Words," 12.

<sup>79</sup> Brekus, "Contested Words," 4.

What is “America” is a major question in the countercanon. Geographically, many scholars are expanding religion in America to be outside of the traditional boundaries of New England. Historians such as Richard J. Cowardine and Rebecca Anne Goetz highlight the South’s religious contributions to the shaping of American society, especially politics and race.<sup>80</sup> Others have extended from the South into the trans-Atlantic world, often focused on missionary efforts.<sup>81</sup>

Mission work is a subject that is gradually joining the countercanon. An important recognition is that Christianity was used as a means of physical and cultural imperialism for the United States. Emily Conroy-Krutz’s *Christian Imperialism: Converting the World in the Early American Republic* looks at the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission’s (ABCFM’s) role in imperialism.<sup>82</sup> Conroy-Krutz explores their motives to make a Christian empire. The ABCFM worked not only with Indigenous Nations within the United States, but also with people groups around the world. Considering a global context, Conroy-Krutz examines settler colonies in the Sandwich Islands (modern Hawaii), the Cherokee Nation, and other regions to show a desire to take over the land rather than empower the people within it as they claimed. This imperialistic mindset of Christianizing is also central in Jennifer Graber’s *The Gods of Indian Country: Religion and the Struggle for the American West*.<sup>83</sup> Graber presents a dual

---

<sup>80</sup> Rebecca Anne Goetz, *The Baptism of Early Virginia: How Christianity Created Race* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2012); Richard J. Carwardine, *Evangelicals and Politics in Antebellum America* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1997).

<sup>81</sup> Brekus, "Contested Words," 9; Travis Glasson, *Mastering Christianity: Missionary Anglicanism and Slavery in the Atlantic World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Sensbach, *Rebecca’s Revival*.

<sup>82</sup> Emily Conroy-Krutz, *Christian Imperialism: Converting the World in the Early American Republic* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015).

<sup>83</sup> Jennifer Graber, *The Gods of Indian Country: Religion and the Struggle for the American West* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).

perspective to the mission work among the Kiowa in the nineteenth century. She highlights the political and settler colonial attempts of Protestants to “save” the Kiowa from extinction through assimilation. Equally, Graber shows how Kiowa resisted in various ways to maintain their cultural identity. Rather than glorifying western expansion as a means of saving the world, Conroy-Krutz and Graber represent how mission work should be examined not only through the lens of empire, but also at how the Indigenous people reacted and adapted.

John Demos illustrates how Indigenous boarding schools fit within this imperial and global setting. In *The Heathen School* Demos uncovers one of the earliest Protestant boarding schools for Indigenous males.<sup>84</sup> He sheds light on Henry ‘Ōpūkaha‘ia’s experiences through an Indigenous perspective, as well as several Cherokee men. At this school, concepts of American Exceptionalism emerged as the ABCFM attempted to bring in students to convert into missionaries for their own means. Placing New England into a global market, Demos points out that early students, such as Henry ‘Ōpūkaha‘ia, were already in New England and required no recruiting. While the ABCFM and Protestant religion promised acceptance, students quickly learned the limits of racial acceptance through student relationships with white locals. A primary issue was the expectation to religiously and culturally convert to Anglo-American Christian lifestyles, yet never being allowed racial equality. Demos’s work in particular influences this study in its comparison of all people involved in the school system. Additionally, his value of studying failure in American experiments gives credit to the reason Choctaw schools that

---

<sup>84</sup> Demos, *The Heathen School*.

did not meet their initial expectations equally need to be discussed for their impact on Choctaw culture and future educational practices.

Another important aspect of the countercanon is who is being studied. Brekus writes about a major struggle of the field, “a troubling feature of the older scholarship still remains: a tendency to focus on men.”<sup>85</sup> The most significant improvement is the inclusion of the average white woman’s religious participation.<sup>86</sup> Historians such as Nancy F. Cott, Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, and Susan Juster show how central women were to the makeup of New England churches and shaping how their communities functioned.<sup>87</sup> This challenge extends to studies of female missionaries.

The discussion of women’s roles in missions has changed drastically over time. Earlier works tend to focus on women’s relationship with the domestic sphere, as presented in Nancy F. Cott’s *The Bonds of Womanhood*.<sup>88</sup> The domestic sphere trapped women’s religious motives in this period of scholarship. Studies during or just after the 1990s contrast with these earlier works as they discuss how women personally defined their own views on authority, religion, and designated roles. Historians in recent decades have studied religious women outside of their prescribed gender roles. Daily, women navigated a global religious economy in which they were active, taking on leadership

---

<sup>85</sup> Brekus, "Contested Words," 19.

<sup>86</sup> Catherine Brekus cites a study by Sharon Block and David Newman that shows between 1985 and 2005, only six percent of articles religion in American focused on women or gender. This article also pointed out that only 3.4 percent of articles on women’s history discussed religion. Brekus, "Contested Words," 19-20; Sharon and David Newman Block, "What, Where, When, and Sometimes Why: Data Mining Two Decades of Women's History Abstracts," *Journal of Women's History* 23, no. 1 (2011).

<sup>87</sup> Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780–1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977); Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650–1750* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982); Susan Juster, *Disorderly Women: Sexual Politics and Evangelicalism in Revolutionary New England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994).

<sup>88</sup> Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood*.

empowered by their beliefs. A particular niche of religious studies looks at women's experiences in the early nineteenth century missionary fervor started by the Second Great Awakening. The evolution of how historians study women's roles in Hawaiian missions are an excellent example of the shifts occurring in studies of women's nineteenth century American missions.

Published in 1989 and 1991, respectively, Grimshaw's *Paths of Duty: American Missionary Wives in Nineteenth-Century Hawaii* and Zweip's *Pilgrim Path: The First Company of Women Missionaries to Hawaii* both explore the lives of missionary wives in Hawaii and their sense of purpose.<sup>89</sup> In *Pilgrim Path*, Zweip follows seven women to Hawaii as they travel to the mission field to support their husband's religious efforts. Zweip details the reality of the missionaries' lives as they struggled to model the Christian family, maintain a household, survive in a new climate, and pursue their desired missionary labors. Similarly, Grimshaw's study follows female missionaries on the islands over the eighteenth and through the mid-nineteenth century. She comes to similar conclusions on the struggles confronting female missionaries as they sought religious occupations but became pre-occupied with domestic duties.

Many female missionaries struggled with balancing their missionary occupation with the rigors of child rearing and general domesticity. Even when in contact with Hawaiians, female missionaries are shown as ethnocentric in their attempts to anglicize Indigenous people and protect their children from non-Euro American influences. These works do well highlighting female mission contributions, but box women into domestic

---

<sup>89</sup> Mary Zweip, *Pilgrim Path: The First Company of Women Missionaries to Hawaii* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991); Patricia Grimshaw, *Paths of Duty: American Missionary Wives in Nineteenth-Century Hawaii* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989).

duties. Additionally, Zweip and Grimshaw seek to understand women's experiences at the missions but ignore Hawaiian women and the relationships built with them.<sup>90</sup>

Thanks to women's inclusion into larger narratives of history, there is now a push to look at women in more complex ways. Though non-religious historians, Peggy Pascoe and Margaret Jacobs both explore women's roles in Indigenous schools and other reform programs in the 1990s and mid 2000s. As Margaret Jacobs comments, "failure to examine white women as more than hearty pioneers, innocent bystanders to colonial conquest, has left the field of western women's history in a Turnerian rut."<sup>91</sup> While intentions may have been the best, female missionaries to Indigenous groups of the Americas must be considered as active participants in colonization. This leads to a second trend of western women's history blending into religious history is the need to look at the relationships between groups of women. As Pascoe importantly highlighted the need "to pay less attention to the values at the center of women's culture and more attention to the relationships at its boundaries."<sup>92</sup> Rather than looking at groups of women as insulated, the field is trending towards examining cross-cultural exchange. This issue in particular was the focus of Jennifer Thigpen's more recent study of missionary and Hawaiian relationships.

---

<sup>90</sup> Similar studies of other mission women show opportunity for middle-class women to escape through mission work, yet they are presented as trapped in ethnocentric bubbles without relationships or exchange with the people they live among. Julie Roy Jeffrey, "Narcissa Whitman the Significance of a Missionary's Life," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 41, no. 2 (1991).

<sup>91</sup> Margaret D. Jacobs, "Maternal Colonialism: White Women and Indigenous Child Removal in the American West and Australia, 1880–1940," *Western Historical Quarterly* 36 (2005): 455. For more on women's roles as colonial powers in the American West: Peggy Pascoe, *Relations of Rescue: The Search for Female Moral Authority in the American West, 1874-1939* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Linda Gordon, *The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

<sup>92</sup> Pascoe, *Relations of Rescue*, 212.

An important shift in mission narratives is represented in Jennifer Thigpen's 2014 study of women in the Hawaiian missions.<sup>93</sup> A very important difference to Thigpen's work is that she re-centers the study from a Hawaiian perspective, putting it into their timeline of contact rather than the ABCFMs. Rather than tied to domestic work, Thigpen places white and Hawaiian women as central parts of the relationships that made the mission and its political ties possible. Finally, the focus on Hawaiian women's use of gift giving shows a sense of agency of Native women in shaping relationships with colonial powers, rather than hapless victims. Gift giving also shows how important white women were to the mission outside of their previously explored domestic duties. The important part of this work is that women at missions were not simply defined by their domestic labor, but by their larger contributions to the mission. Additionally, an inclusion and centrality of Indigenous women's perspectives provides a more holistic perspective. Rather than division, Thigpen shows what types of exchange women actively participated in.

Mission women's activities need to be seen in their interactions outside their homes. Though domestic practices were a primary occupation, Thigpen shows how practices such as commodity exchange played important roles in the success or demise of relationships. Equally, if women's history is to grow, all women active mission work must be represented. Too often Indigenous women and other women of color have been ignored as they were not the primary missionary at work.

---

<sup>93</sup> Jennifer Thigpen, *Island Queens and Mission Wives: How Gender and Empire Remade Hawai'i's Pacific World* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014).



The nuances of women's religious work is more appreciated in comparative works. While some historians do this by directly comparing religious groups, others look at women as participants in a larger Atlantic world.<sup>94</sup> Daniella Kostroun and Lisa Vollendorf edited *Women, Religion, and the Atlantic World (1600-1800)*, contains essays that locate women, religion, and gender within the Atlantic basin in order to focus less on nation-boundaries and more on shared religious experiences.<sup>95</sup> Though the larger work primarily focuses on Catholic women's experiences around the Atlantic Ocean, Amy Froide compares Quaker and Catholic female communities in New England and England.<sup>96</sup> Interestingly, Froide explains how religion was empowering, "In an era when not many women, especially non-elite ones, expected to travel internationally, religion allowed Quaker women to do so. This observation...highlight[s] the connection between faith and freedom..."<sup>97</sup> Froide places this New England Quaker itinerant female preacherhood in contrast with the Wandesforde house of England that was "perhaps the only Protestant communal experiment in early modern England" and Catholic nun communities in York and Hammersmith England, which existed despite anti-Catholic sentiments around the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>98</sup> In all three communities, the religious

---

<sup>94</sup> Dana L. Robert's case-studies provides a comparative method to compare many female missionary efforts from America. Interestingly, she includes both Catholic and Protestant perspectives, an enriching comparison rarely used in studies. Roberts subcategorized chapters by different religious mission movements to show how women of different denominations worked together to advance their religious goals and support their authority in the mission. This work is part of a growing comparative style of research that better highlights the similarities and nuances of women's religious work. Dana L. Robert, *American Women in Mission: A Social History of Their Thought and Practice* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1996).

<sup>95</sup> Daniella Kostroun and Lisa Vollendorf, *Women, Religion, and the Atlantic World (1600-1800)* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 6.

<sup>96</sup> Amy M. Froide, "The Religious Lives of Singlewomen in the Anglo-Atlantic World: Quaker Missionaries, Protestant Nuns, and Covert Catholics," in *Daniella and Lisa Vollendorf Kostroun, Women, Religion, and the Atlantic World (1600-1800)*, ed. Daniella Kostroun and Lisa Vollendorf (Toronto: University of California, 2009).

<sup>97</sup> Froide, "The Religious Lives of Singlewomen," 67.

<sup>98</sup> Froide, "The Religious Lives of Singlewomen," 51, 75.

order provided women with their own space, a vocation of some form, and a sense of coverage by religious authority. Women found religious autonomy and control of their personal spirituality.<sup>99</sup> This work not only furthers the ways in which women found freedom and authority through religion, but is incredibly important as it shows more than just the Protestant woman and juxtaposes her experiences with other women seeking religious work.

A final important shift in white women's religious history is the look at their role specifically as parts of imperialism. Editors Barbara Reeves-Ellington, Kathryn Kish Sklar, and Connie Anne Shemo created *Competing Kingdoms: Women, Mission, Nation, and the American Protestant Empire, 1812-1960*.<sup>100</sup> This essay collection joins Daniella Kostroun and Lisa Vollendorf in placing American Protestant missionary work in a transnational perspective. Starting by grounding women's work within the global nature of missions, the editors have neatly categorized the essays to discuss women's personal convictions and experiences, effects of the mission on cultures and life, and the empiricism on American values through the missions. Conclusion author Mary A. Renda emphasizes women's mission work is a fundamental part of creating a new public sphere as they participated in empire making.<sup>101</sup> Thus, women in missions deserve recognition as active partners with men in the changes their missions wrought—both good and bad.

---

<sup>99</sup> Froide, "The Religious Lives of Singlewomen," 75.

<sup>100</sup> Kathryn Kish Sklar Barbara Reeves-Ellington, and Connie Anne Shemo, *Competing Kingdoms: Women, Mission, Nation, and the American Protestant Empire, 1812-1960* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

<sup>101</sup> Mary A. Renda, "Doing Everything: Religion, Race, and Empire in the U.S. Protestant Women's Missionary Enterprise, 1812–1960," in *Competing Kingdoms: Women, Mission, Nation, and the American Protestant Empire, 1812-1960*, ed. Kathryn Kish Sklar Barbara Reeves-Ellington, and Connie Anne Shemo (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 386.

While historians are making gradual but steady progress in the regular inclusion of white women in the countercanon of religious history, there is still an underrepresentation of minority perspectives. Race is more common in general studies of religion. Large works such as Rebecca Anne Goetz's *The Baptism of Early Virginia*, shows the role of Christianity in defining race, using the concept of "hereditary heathenism" to undergird white Southern slave-owner's power over people of color.<sup>102</sup> Edward Andrews *Native Apostles* shows how Black and Native American missionaries contributed to New England's colonial religious environment.<sup>103</sup> Finally, Richard Boles *Dividing the Faith* examines the gradual segregation of churches throughout the colonial and Early American North by using a broad range of Black and Native American perspectives, including many women's.<sup>104</sup> While finding non-white female experiences is rare, studies including minority experiences are occurring at a greater frequency.

Missionary women each made their own decisions to conform or fight societally accepted female behavior, showing how each personally navigated the religious and political worlds they lived in. While it is trickier to study minority female populations, it is possible and current scholars have begun to do so. Recent literature has been able to turn to a more inclusive tone. The shift towards the focus on culture and race within social histories has supported the rise of research on Black and Native American missionaries, including female missionaries. While scarce in number, they are part of a new focus on these underrepresented mission participants.

---

<sup>102</sup> Goetz, *The Baptism of Early Virginia*.

<sup>103</sup> Andrews, *Native Apostles*.

<sup>104</sup> Richard J. Boles, *Dividing the Faith: The Rise of Segregated Church in the Early American North* (New York: New York University Press, 2020).

The recreation of minority women's experiences is often reliant on scant resources, but Jon F. Sensbach proved it is possible. With *Rebecca's Revival: Creating Black Christianity in the Atlantic World*, he shows how Black women made an impact on mission work.<sup>105</sup> Using Dutch and German legal records and Moravian accounts mentioning Rebecca, Sensbach recreates her life within the context of the Atlantic world. Interestingly, much of Rebecca's history is from records other than her own. Aside from a few of her letters, Christian Georg Andreas Oldendorp's history of the Caribbean missions and a few assorted documents are all that is left of Rebecca's world. This shows how important outside sources are to recreating minority women's experiences even if they never directly described their lives.

Indigenous women's religious histories are also growing.<sup>106</sup> Theresa Strouth Gaul in her book *Cherokee Sister: The Collected Writings of Catharine Brown* utilizes the letters of and writings revolving around Catharine Brown to create an empowering image of a Native missionary woman that contrasts with previous studies.<sup>107</sup> Highlighting a Cherokee female missionary and writer contrasts with the male-dominated studies in the ever growing Native American institutional religious history. Gaul argues that Brown

---

<sup>105</sup> Sensbach, *Rebecca's Revival*. Sensbach's study follows an African woman's life as a Moravian missionary. Moravian beliefs of spiritual equality allowed Rebecca Protter, as a former black slave, to become a member of the Moravian Church. Born in Antigua, by around age seven she was sold into slavery in St. Thomas. There, she became a Moravian and manumitted before facing struggles in the legality of her marriage, moving to Germany, and then Christiansburg in modern day Ghana. Sensbach's careful use of international sources frames her life from relatively few documents. Another work exploring Black women's contributions to American religion is: Joycelyn Moody, *Sentimental Confessions: Spiritual Narratives of Nineteenth-century African American Women* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001).

<sup>106</sup> Though not overly religious in nature, Camilla Townsend's *Malintzin's Choices* is another example of how indigenous women's experiences can be rebuilt with minimal sources. Camilla Townsend, *Malintzin's Choices: an Indian Woman in the Conquest of Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006).

<sup>107</sup> Catharine Brown, "Editor's Introduction," in *Cherokee Sister: The Collected Writings of Catharine Brown, 1818-1823*, ed. Theresa Strouth Gaul (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014).

entered the mission school that launched her brief career as a way to cope with the social changes around her. While adopting Christianity at school, Gaul illustrates that Brown was able to blend both her and Euro-American beliefs and Cherokee culture.<sup>108</sup> Just as Sensbach, Gaul supports the concept of minority Christian women working as cultural and religious intermediaries.

Another source recovering Indigenous perspectives is Jan Hare's and Jean Barman's *Good Intentions Gone Awry: Emma Crosby and the Methodist Mission on the Northwest Coast*.<sup>109</sup> This work specifically integrates Native perspectives on their ancestor's contributions. The research of Hare and Barman focuses on Emma Crosby, a Euro-American woman who served as a missionary to the Tsimshian people at Port Simpson in British Columbia during the late nineteenth century. This study is different, however, than most works on female missionaries because Emma's letters reveal contributions of native female converts, such as Kate Dudoward, who worked with the missionaries and supported Emma's efforts.<sup>110</sup> The presence of converted Native American women to a missionary history is empowering as it shows how native people were active in supporting and transmitting Euro-American Christianity into their own cultures. Additionally, Hare and Barman worked with Dudoward's great-great-granddaughter, Caroline Dudoward, in collecting images and perspectives from her grandparents. The inclusion of an afterward by Caroline gives further native ownership to

---

<sup>108</sup> Brown, "Editor's Introduction," 16. Other studies that look at how Indigenous women navigated mission work and their identity: Rachel Wheeler, *To Live Upon Hope: Mohicans and Missionaries in the Eighteenth-Century Northeast* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008).

<sup>109</sup> Jan Hare and Jean Barman, *Good Intentions Gone Awry: Emma Crosby and the Methodist Mission on the Northwest Coast* (Vancouver: The University of British Columbia Press, 2006).

<sup>110</sup> Hare and Barman, *Good Intentions Gone Awry*, XXI.

her ancestor's roles in founding missions and spreading Christianity.<sup>111</sup> The result is a history giving the Tsimshian people a sense of power and agency in their choice to have the missionaries work among them.

Women's perspectives are increasingly valued in both Native American and Religious Studies. Situating this work in a framework of Choctaw perspective allows for focus on their plans to re-establish their Nation by investing in women, who continued to pass-on skills to keep their children ready for ongoing Euro-American contact. By examining female experiences in the Choctaw education system of the mid-nineteenth century, a more holistic idea emerges of why and how they worked towards education. Taking on the burden of maternal guidance of future generations, women show the complexity of relationships within the Choctaw Nation, United States, and larger world as women navigated their own ideas of what they felt best for their people.

---

<sup>111</sup> Hare and Barman, *Good Intentions Gone Awry*, 264-8.

## CHAPTER III

### INFRASTRUCTURE

The question remained, where should they build the new schools? Israel Folsom found himself the primary advocate that every school be placed nearer to somewhere a Choctaw woman might be able to assist. After the success of his nieces, Lavinia and Tryphena, he felt confident better results came from Choctaw teachers rather than relying on missionary men. Before the General Council met to officially launch the new school system, he needed to ensure other members favored his plans. He started his letter to Peter Pitchlynn, certainly he could rely on his sway.<sup>112</sup>

---

Female education became the foundation of the Choctaw plan for survivance. The Choctaw education system that emerged from 1831-61 was not born in a time of prosperity. The Choctaw persevered despite forced removal to Indian Territory, using schools as a tool to prepare their Nation for an uncertain future. The creation of a national

---

<sup>112</sup> Israel Folsom to Peter Perkins Pitchlynn, January 16, 1842, Peter Perkins Pitchlynn Collection, box 1, folder 76, Western History Digital Collections, from the University of Oklahoma Libraries, <https://digital.libraries.ou.edu/whc/>. Here forward the following abbreviations will be used: Peter Perkins Pitchlynn=PPP, Peter Perkins Pitchlynn Collection=PPPC, and Western History Collection=WHC.

school system, the placement of schools, and the demographics of their teachers illustrate Choctaw self-determination as they established themselves on their new lands.

### **Initial Western-style Education**

The Choctaw readily embraced western-style education as an opportunity to reinforce their status as a sovereign Nation of equal footing with the United States. This style of education was first introduced before removal. The Choctaws first incorporated western education methods in 1818 by allowing missionaries to establish schools in Mississippi.<sup>113</sup> Looking to improve upon ideas from early mission schools, the Choctaw pioneered a male academy that they controlled. In her extensive examination of this school, Christina Snyder found that the Choctaw Academy was different than mission schools because it focused on providing advanced education to promising male Choctaw elite rather than just a basic education for local children. Located outside the Nation in Kentucky, the school functioned as a study abroad opportunity to introduce boys to Euro-American life before returning to the Choctaw Nation. While started before removal, it remained open until the academy system was launched in 1842 within the post-removal lands. Ideally, school would protect Choctaw culture from changes, such as those due to religion and social mores, that missionaries might attempt within the Nation.<sup>114</sup> While

---

<sup>113</sup> Dennis B. Miles, "Choctaw Schools," in *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture* (Oklahoma Historical Society). <https://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry.php?entry=CH049>.

<sup>114</sup> Snyder, *Great Crossings*, 39-40. While started for the Choctaw, it was open to children from many Indigenous nations. Starting with twenty-one students, after ten years they nearly had two hundred pupils from seventeen different nations. (70-1). Interestingly, Choctaw Academy was the only other school than West Point that the United States War Department controlled (81). Snyder writes, "During the 1830s, they spent a combined total of \$40,000 annually (over \$1,100,000 today) at Choctaw Academy. The single largest contributor was the Choctaw Nation, which paid between \$10,000 and \$12,000 each year." And Johnson was pocketing roughly \$10,000 annually by the 1840s (210).



initially good in concept, it was doomed to fail and close in 1848 under non-native control. Peter P. Pitchlynn, Choctaw Academy Superintendent and later Principle Chief, found major financial mismanagement by Vice President Richard Mentor Johnson who oversaw the school and owned the plantation connected to it.<sup>115</sup> Learning from each experience, the new schools in Indian Territory featured greater control directly from the Choctaw government with the aim of employing Choctaw women and men as teachers.

The Choctaw received assistance in establishing their new schools. Some of the missionaries who ran the earlier Mississippi schools assisted in the launch of these facilities in the new Nation. ABCFM funded missionaries Cyrus Kingsbury and Cyrus Byington were among those who immediately followed the Choctaw from Mississippi,

---

<sup>115</sup> Peter Perkins Pitchlynn (1806-1881) was the son of White trader John Pitchlynn and Choctaw Sophia Folsom. Born Hatchoctucknee ("Snapping Turtle") on January 30, 1806, to prominent Choctaw and European family he was the nephew of Mushulatubbee, one of the powerful *mikos* or chiefs of the Choctaw nation (Snyder, *Great Crossings*, 19-20). Peter Pitchlynn received a western style education and attended the Choctaw Academy (Snyder, *Great Crossings*, 105, 107). After graduating from the University of Nashville in 1828, he returned to the Choctaw Nation in what is now Mississippi. As a landed elite, he farmed and owned many enslaved people in addition to being heavily involved in Choctaw politics. He and his wife Rhoda Folsom Pitchlynn would own forty-five slaves when they moved to Indian Territory (Snyder, *Great Crossings*, 210). After the Treat of Dancing Rabbit Creek, he relocated in 1831 to Indian Territory and settled with his family near Eagletown (in present day McCurtain County, Oklahoma) in 1834 (Pate, "Pitchlynn"). In 1840, Pitchlynn became the superintendent of Choctaw schools and worked towards the closure of the Choctaw Academy he deemed corrupt (Snyder, *Great Crossings*, 238). Pitchlynn and his daughters played roles in the early Choctaw education system. Helping to establish a national school system, Pitchlynn regularly went on missions to Washington, D.C. to advocate on behalf of Choctaws defrauded of land. He served as Principle Chief of the Choctaw Nation from 1864-66. Pitchlynn spent his later life in Washington, D.C. representing the Choctaw Nation, dying there in 1881 and buried in the Congressional Cemetery. James P. Pate, "Pitchlynn, Peter Perkins," in *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture* (Oklahoma Historical Society). <https://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry.php?entry=PI013>. Peter Pitchlynn is an important statesman and advocate of education within Choctaw history.

Richard Mentor Johnson (1780-1850) built his political career off his reputation for supposedly killing Tecumseh (Shawnee Chief) at the Battle of the Thames during the War of 1812. In addition to serving as a U.S. Congressman, Johnson was Martin Van Buren's Vice President, 1837-1841. The Choctaw Academy operated on his plantation from 1825-48, funds from which he used to try and alleviate his personal, perpetual debt. A slave-owner, Johnson additionally had two daughters with his enslaved common-law Black wife, Julia Chinn, whom he never freed. Johnson publicly claimed and gave his surname to his two daughter by Chinn, additionally providing them and their spouses with an education, freedom, and property. Snyder, *Great Crossings*, 42-69, 201-18.

reestablishing mission churches and schools in Indian Territory. Kingsbury relocated to Pine Ridge Mission in 1832 and Byington, to Stockbridge Mission, in 1835.<sup>116</sup> The American Board founded more missions across the region at Yazoo Creek, Wheelock, Goodwater, Goodland, Bennington, Mount Pleasant, and Lenox.<sup>117</sup> These men did not act alone. Though female contributions and experiences are largely ignored in studies of the schools, numerous Choctaw, white, and Black women played key roles in running the schools connected the missions and those commissioned by the Choctaw Nation.

For the Choctaw, schools were a highly desired institution. The schools established between 1831 and 1861 were a crucial investment by the Choctaw in reestablishing themselves as an independent Nation on their new lands in Indian Territory. An important change to their schools from those in Mississippi was the focus on female education. Male education had been favored in the past, but sentiments reminiscent of Republican Motherhood soon suggested that women might make a larger and long-lasting impact on Choctaw society when educated. The council had recently concluded that educating their daughters was their best chance to contest the imperialism of the United States Government. Israel Folsom wrote to his brother-in-law Peter Pitchlynn on the subject:<sup>118</sup>

---

<sup>116</sup> Pine Ridge Mission later hosted Chuwala Female Seminary and Stockbridge connected to Ayanubbee Female Seminary.

<sup>117</sup> Kidwell, *The Choctaws in Oklahoma*, 6.

<sup>118</sup> Reverend Israel Folsom was large influence over the connection of the Choctaw Nation and Presbyterian Church. Son of Choctaw Aiahnichih Ohoyoh and white Nathaniel Folsom, he was part of the prominent mixed families within the nineteenth century Nation. Sometime between 1818 and 1822, Israel attended the Foreign Mission School in Cornwall, CT with his brother McKee. Israel worked with Reverend Cyrus Byington to make a Choctaw alphabet and in collaboration with Mr. Wright wrote a school book, translated the Bible, and other Choctaw language work. He married Lovica Nail and had thirteen children with her. He preached for thirty years in the Choctaw Nation. He died April 24, 1870 and was buried at Old Boggy Depot, Choctaw Nation, Indian Territory. Horatio Bardwell Cushman, *History of the Choctaw, Chickasaw and Natchez Indians*, 3 ed., ed. Angie Debo and Clara Sue Kidwell (Norman:

If we have our girls educated, civilized, Christianized, enlightened, when they are grown up to become wives and and [sic] mothers, they will put a stamp in society and character and weight to the nation and their offsprings will be considered civilized as soon as they are born. O, what advantage—and why have we neglected the Girls so much and spent all our money only on boys. What great error we have committed.<sup>119</sup>

By recognizing that educated women were the key to their success, Israel Folsom suggested the continued influence Choctaw women had over childrearing. This was certainly a step in the direction of acculturation, but also in the interest of the survival of their Nation.<sup>120</sup> Another fundamental difference in this decision was Choctaw control.

Control over their school systems differentiated these schools from post-war boarding schools that used western education models to “save” Native people from “extinction.” Unlike the post-war boarding schools described by historian David Wallace Adams, the Choctaw embraced education to empower themselves.<sup>121</sup> Within this council sanctioned system, women continued to perpetuate various aspects of Choctaw culture by taking the role of teacher. Leading up to the formation of the Academy System, Israel Folsom recorded, “The Choctaws have already committed a very great fault in not doing

---

University of Oklahoma Press, 1999, 1899), 294-6, 328; Carolyn Thomas Foreman, "The Foreign Mission School at Cornwall, Connecticut," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 7, no. 3 (1929): 248.

<sup>119</sup> Israel Folsom to Peter P. Pitchlynn, January 16, 1842, PPC, box 1, folder 76, WHC.

<sup>120</sup> Historian Sylvia Van Kirk found Indigenous women played an important role in cultural mediation in via marriage in colonial French Canada. During this period into the 1830s, Euro-Canadian traders often married into and adapted to tribes. Around the middle of the nineteenth century there was a shift to women primarily marrying out of the tribe as Canada defined a woman’s native status by that of her husband, a similar trend in the United States. Sylvia Van Kirk, "From "Marrying-In" to "Marrying-Out"" Changing Patterns of Aboriginal/Non-Aboriginal Marriage in Colonial Canada," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 22, no. 3 (2002).

<sup>121</sup> Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 25.

so much for its girls as they have for the boys. It is now high time they should correct themselves.”<sup>122</sup> And the Council overwhelmingly agreed.

The entirety of the General Council, except one member, were in favor of launching schools for their girls specifically.<sup>123</sup> In 1841, the Choctaw Council made a decisive move to close the Choctaw Academy in Kentucky to launch their new in-Nation academy system. An important feature to this new school system was in the investment in female schools alongside those for boys. Many were disappointed with boys’ performances. As Israel Folsom mourned, “You may educate and refine them, but after all most of them will run wild and make shipwreck of themselves....”<sup>124</sup> In “RESOLUTION respecting the Choctaw Academy in Kentucky,” the council outlined their frustration and disappointments, including mismanaged finances and boys used as labor more than being educated.<sup>125</sup> Their new school systems were designs to educate their children specifically within the Nation.<sup>126</sup> Located nearby, the Choctaw could maintain stronger control over the affairs of their children’s education. They agreed to select sites to co-operate the schools, but otherwise the General Council managed all of the finances.<sup>127</sup>

In 1841, Pitchlynn left for Washington, D.C. to advocate for the closure of the Choctaw Academy in favor of new schools. As Snyder explains, “The plan that Pitchlynn

---

<sup>122</sup> Israel Folsom to PPP, September 13, 1841, PPPC, box 1, folder 66, WHC.

<sup>123</sup> Israel Folsom to PPP, September 13, 1841, PPPC, box 1, folder 66, WHC.

<sup>124</sup> Israel Folsom to PPP, September 13, 1841, PPPC, box 1, folder 66, WHC.

<sup>125</sup> Choctaw General Council, “RESOLUTION respecting the Choctaw Academy in Kentucky,” in *The Constitution and Laws of the Choctaw Nation* (Park Hill: Mission Press, Edwin Archer, 1847): 70-2. Here forward, CGC=Choctaw General Council.

<sup>126</sup> CGC “RESOLUTION respecting the Choctaw Academy in Kentucky,” in *The Constitution and Laws of the Choctaw Nation*, 70-1.

<sup>127</sup> CGC, “RESOLUTION respecting the Choctaw Academy in Kentucky,” in *The Constitution and Laws of the Choctaw Nation*, 70-2.

unveiled was revolutionary: a system of schools in Indian Territory, controlled by Indians. After reclaiming the Choctaw Academy funds, the Choctaw General Council planned to build and oversee several academies within the Choctaw Nation.”<sup>128</sup> Reclaiming the funds from the closing Choctaw Academy, on November 29, 1842, the Choctaw General Council passed the School Act of 1842, which created an extensive schooling system that would serve over 12,000 students within the Choctaw Nation.<sup>129</sup> This free public school system was revolutionary. For context, only Massachusetts, Delaware, and Pennsylvania established such schools before the Choctaws.<sup>130</sup> The United States would not found its Department of Education until 1867.<sup>131</sup> Snyder notes, “The rise of Indian school systems inaugurated an era of prosperity—the so-called Golden Age of Indian Territory—that lasted until the Civil War.”<sup>132</sup>

### **Spatial Influence and Control**

While the Choctaw maintained control of the schools, they did enter into contracts with a variety of American mission groups to teach. Control of education was important to both Choctaw and white men. Contracting missionary work became an important part of managing what influence outsiders could have on Choctaw children. The contract between Armstrong Academy, a male academy, and the Domestic Board of the Southern Baptist Convention listed seven conditions that explained how decisions would be made

---

<sup>128</sup> Snyder, *Great Crossings*, 242.

<sup>129</sup> Snyder, *Great Crossings*, 277.

<sup>130</sup> Snyder, *Great Crossings*, 282.

<sup>131</sup> An Act to establish a Department of Education, 14 Stat. 434 (1867).

<sup>132</sup> Snyder, *Great Crossings*, 288.

and how the school would run. This particular contract emphasized the ownership of property by the Choctaw Nation and their Board of Trustees controlling of decisions.<sup>133</sup> Having a school near to one's home was a regular argument amongst Choctaw male leaders. Historian Theda Perdue notices this trend across southern tribes, as "Cherokees, Chickasaws, and Choctaws proved enthusiastic about the educational opportunities missionaries provided. Headmen saw schools as a boon to their power and competed for them."<sup>134</sup> Location and control of teachers was then an opportunity to hold regional power. Lavinia Pitchlynn and Tryphena Folsom, daughters of the prominent and racially intermarried Pitchlynn and Folsom families, were potentially a part of exerting power in the local community. As Choctaw women, they exerted their family's influence in local areas. But the Choctaw were not the only people vying for regional influence.

Missionaries wanted schools placed under their care as well. White missionary Loring J. Williams wrote to Peter P. Pitchlynn concerned about the placement of their local school. Referencing a longstanding debate he wrote, "When I made the first proposal about the school house being near to Mr. John Folsom's, I had no idea that it would make any difficulty."<sup>135</sup> The project had subsequently stalled out while the council

---

<sup>133</sup> The conditions on which the Board of School Trustees Choctaw Nation will work with Armstrong Academy with the Domestic Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. The seven conditions are: 1) the absorption of any debts, to furnish a Superintendent, two male and one female teacher, \$1,000 annually to the school, and support forty five students. 2) The Choctaw will give \$2,900 annually. 3) "No manual labor to be performed by the scholars except by the special written consent of the party of the first part, and in case such consent is given the Superintendent and the Board of Trustees to determine the nature and extent of such labor." 4) No stock animals except for the school property. 5) No school property could be sold or disposed of without Trustee permission. 6) Contract termination required six months advance notice. 7) The agreement is effective immediately upon signing. PPP, Noel Gardner, Robert W. Nail, and Dickson W. Lewis, "Articles of agreement between the Board of School Trustees for the Choctaw Nation of the first part and the Domestic Board of the Southern Baptist Convention at Marion Alabama," November 15, 1855, PPPC, Box 7, folder 4, WHC.

<sup>134</sup> Perdue, *"Mixed Blood" Indians*, 54-5.

<sup>135</sup> Loring J. Williams to PPP August 18, 1835, WHC, box 1, folder 50, PPPC.

reconsidered the location. There was clear tension about who would control it. In this situation, there was a contest between placing the school nearer to Choctaw Mr. John Folsom's home or that of missionary Loring J. Williams. While the location of the school would ideally be under Choctaw watch, Williams argued it needed to be close to him so his white daughter could run the school without great inconvenience.<sup>136</sup> The inability to settle a location shows a clear concern for whose physical proximity influenced the school in addition to who ran the actual classroom. Space and land were incredibly important decisions in the contest for control. Women were in danger of becoming pawns within the struggle.

Contestation over physical space and land has been at the center of white and Native American disputes since their first encounter. Even after promises of sovereignty in their new lands, the Choctaw combatted white efforts to take control of their space. While welcomed by many of the Choctaw, the missions and their schools stood as physical reminders of white influence. Typically, missionaries established their schools outside of major towns, meaning Choctaw participants had to leave their people to enter a white space. In contrast, the Choctaw built local secular schools within the various neighborhoods of their developing towns. The physical location of the schools greatly influenced the level of control Choctaw held over the daily running of the facilities.

Within the mission schools more broadly, Western-style buildings also stood as an image of white control. There are not many remaining images and descriptions of Choctaw schools, though there are some of other similar sites among nearby Native

---

<sup>136</sup> Loring J. Williams to PPP August 18, 1835, WHC, box 1, folder 50, PPPC.

Nations. While by no means as elaborate as the Neo-Classical pillars of the Cherokee Female Seminary, Wapanucka Chickasaw Academy resembled a southern plantation home with its sweeping double-story porches.<sup>137</sup> Neighborhood schools and Sunday schools, by contrast, met in churches or humble one room school houses. White teacher Mary Coombs Greenleaf recalled a Sabbath School she visited as “a rude log-cabin, about twenty feet square, without a single window; sufficient light however came in through the open door, and large openings between some of the logs. Directly in front, was a rude arbor, made of branches of trees, with split logs laid across other whole logs for seats.”<sup>138</sup> These locations were, to say the least, much humbler than the grand academies the Nation eventually built. Location then served as an important signifier of who had the most control.

---

<sup>137</sup> Mihesuah, *Cultivating the Rosebuds*, 26.

<sup>138</sup> Mary Coombs Greenleaf to Miss A.P., August 31, 1856, Mary C. Greenleaf, *Life and Letters of Miss Mary C. Greenleaf, Missionary to the Chickasaw Indians* (Boston: Massachusetts Sabbath School Society, 1858), 294-5. Here forward Mary Coombs Greenleaf will be cited as MCG





*Figure 3 Wapanucka Academy, also known as rock academy, was a Chickasaw school built on the border of the Chickasaw and Choctaw Nation. Many of the teachers at Wapanucka worked closely with the Choctaw missions. "Wapanucka Institute - Chickasaw Rock Academy," photograph, 1852 The Gateway to Oklahoma History, Oklahoma Historical Society, <https://gateway.okhistory.org/ark:/67531/metadc228604/>.*

While the location of a school could denote a local person's power in the community, it was also dependent on the availability of teachers. The entire existence of a public school might rely on where a teacher lived in the early years of the Nation. When Lavinia Pitchlynn's family moved across the river, subsequently closing her school, she noted her disappointment to her father, writing "I am sorry to leave my school here for the children had begun to learn and seem to be interest[ed] in their studies. I had 23 scholars and expected more." Her absence meant no one else in the region was educated enough to take on the school, thus it closed after her departure. At other times, women had to travel to their classrooms. When Lavinia arrived in Eagletown, she had a "good house" suggested for her to teach in by a local "Captain."<sup>139</sup> The next year, her mother

---

<sup>139</sup> Lavinia Pitchlynn to PPP, December 14, 1841, PPPC, box 1, folder 72, WHC.

reported her traveling to Eagletown again to teach Sunday School, clearly a special trip.<sup>140</sup> Thus, school locations may suggest convenience over power placement.

When creating the schools, the Choctaw General Council were very specific in who had what powers. The general arrangement was for the missions to provide staff and general oversight of the schools while the Choctaw funded and utilized school trustees to ensure their investments were properly allocated to their children. Each school had to run all of its rules and regulations by the General Council for approval.<sup>141</sup> In order to be accepted into the esteemed academies, students had to apply to the Board of Trustees. In 1844 the trustees included prominent slaveholding Choctaw men, such as Peter P. Pitchlynn, George W. Harkins, and Thompson McKinney, but they were subject to election every four years.<sup>142</sup> As members of the Board of Trustees, these men were charged with quarterly inspections of the schools to ensure their proper running and trying anyone employed in the schools charged with wrongdoing.<sup>143</sup> For the Neighborhood and Sabbath Schools connected to most churches and small communities, each school could appoint their own trustees, typically Choctaws who were in charge of

---

<sup>140</sup> Rhoda Pitchlynn to Peter P. Pitchlynn January 5, 1842, PPPC, box 1, folder 74, WHC.

<sup>141</sup> CGC, "AN ACT requiring the regulations of the public schools to be laid before the General Council," in *The Constitution and Laws of the Choctaw Nation*, 41.

<sup>142</sup> CGC, "AN ACT appointing Board of Trustees for the Public Schools in the Nation," in *The Constitution and Laws of the Choctaw Nation*, 55, 60. George W. Harkins was a Choctaw leader who published an 1832 letter "To the American People" highlighting the plight of the Choctaw and denouncing removal policies. In 1834, he became the judge of the Red River District. In 1856, he became the chief of the Apuchshunubbee District of the Choctaw Nation and held many other political positions for the Nation. He was additionally the brother-in-law of Lavinia Pitchlynn. "George W. Harkins," *The Trail of Tears through Arkansas*, University of Arkansas at Little Rock.

<sup>143</sup> CGC, "AN ACT requiring Board of Trustees to examine the accounts of the Public Schools," in *The Constitution and Laws of the Choctaw Nation*, 55, 60, 63.

providing teachers, rules, and reporting annually to the General Council.<sup>144</sup> These trustees thus kept a Choctaw eye on education.

But these boards for each school needed a leader. Israel Folsom saw it as crucial “to have entire control and superintendency of the school. I view this like you [Peter Pitchlynn], as all important.”<sup>145</sup> David Folsom echoed the need for girls’ schools, distrust of white teachers, and the need to control finances.<sup>146</sup> To manage the national system they needed a Superintendent, and who better to lead this effort than Peter P. Pitchlynn. Having attended mission schools and the Choctaw Academy, before superintending it himself, he was a natural fit to manage the schools.<sup>147</sup> On a personal level, his eldest daughter Lavinia was one of the few Choctaw women qualified to teach just after removal and his two other daughters, Malvina and Mary Rhoda, were in need of quality educations. Pitchlynn was the man for the job.

### **Tense Partnerships**

The Choctaw ultimately decided the best teachers for their daughters were Choctaw women. On January 16, 1842, Israel Folsom described his anxiety about the importance of finding the best teachers for Choctaw girls. Right at the launch of the academy system in 1842, he wrote to his brother-in-law Peter Pitchlynn of his disappointment with the bulk of the white male missionary teachers. He wrote,

---

<sup>144</sup> CGC, “AN ACT for establishing Neighborhood and Sabbath Schools in Apakshanubbi District,” in *The Constitution and Laws of the Choctaw Nation*, 52.

<sup>145</sup> Israel Folsom to PPP, September 13, 1841, PPPC, box 1, folder 66, WHC.

<sup>146</sup> David Folsom to PPP, January 26, 1842, PPPC, box 1, folder 78, WHC.

<sup>147</sup> Pate, “Pitchlynn, Peter Perkins.”

“thousand[s] of dollars have been spent upon those schools and what was the consequence—A mere mockery. Our young Girls have had better schools and with better prospects of doing good.” And he continues, “We tried white men long enough and we find the greatest member of them but a monkey in the business.”<sup>148</sup> From their Mississippi experiences, the Choctaw had positive relationships with men such as Reverends Kingsbury and Byington. But Folsom expressed a fading trust in the younger missionary teachers that came to replace those who migrated with the Choctaw to their new territory. He viewed them instead as money seekers. In an alternative, he pointed towards the few positive schools in the Nation. His nieces, Lavinia Pitchlynn and Tryphena Folsom, ran two of these. Bias aside, these clearly conformed to the ideal school he dreamed of.<sup>149</sup> At least for Israel Folsom, Choctaw women were emerging as the preferred teachers.

While Choctaw teachers were preferred, the lack of western-style educated women meant help was needed while preparing the first generation to take on these positions. When the 1842 academies finally commenced, contracts with a variety of American mission groups provided this much needed assistance. In the initial opening of the 1842 mandated schools, the Choctaw extended contracts to the Methodist Episcopal Church and the ABCFM. The Fort Coffee Academy, for boys, was given to the Methodist church to manage and contribute one thousand dollars to the school.<sup>150</sup> The ABCFM was awarded management of the new female schools opening. They were to

---

<sup>148</sup> Israel Folsom to PPP, January 16, 1842, PPPC, box 1, folder 76, WHC.

<sup>149</sup> Israel Folsom to PPP, January 16, 1842, PPPC, box 1, folder 76, WHC.

<sup>150</sup> CGC, “AN ACT providing for a system of public instruction in the Choctaw Nation,” in *The Constitution and Laws in the Choctaw Nation*, 40.

manage Koonsha, Chuwala, Ayanubbee, and Wheelock Female Seminaries. Here, the Choctaw annually allotted \$1,600 (\$51,800) to each school (except Koonsha which was given \$3,000 (\$97,100) while the ABCFM contributed \$1,000 (\$32,400) annually.<sup>151</sup> In 1845, Spencer Academy also went to the ABCFM, with Reverend Cyrus Kingsbury leading the missionary work.<sup>152</sup> These mission connections started positively enough, but gradually faced challenges.

While there were initially positive relationships with the missionaries, other looming social and political issues caused rifts. The Choctaws and Chickasaws did not clash with missionaries over religion, but rather the issue of African slavery engrained during their contact with Euro-Americans in the Southeast.<sup>153</sup> Abolition was a major point of contention, especially since many of the men on the General Council and the Boards of Trustees were slave-owners. By 1848, Israel Folsom was extremely disappointed in Wright, Byington, and Hotchkin, believing they turned against him as the ABCFM started taking stronger abolitionist stances. Folsom, and he suggests Peter P. Pitchlynn too, wished all abolitionists to leave the Nation. Folsom believed financial greed turned the missionaries he used to trust against him. He wrote to Pitchlynn, “You are right in your views you said we are not dependent on the missionaries (the northern folks) for teachers and preachers. It is but right the nation should know this.”<sup>154</sup> George

---

<sup>151</sup> CGC, “AN ACT providing for a system of public instruction in the Choctaw Nation,” in *The Constitution and Laws of the Choctaw Nation*, 40. There are dozens of different spellings of these names documented. For the purpose of cohesions, this paper uses the spellings provided by Kidwell, *The Choctaws in Oklahoma*, 10. Calculations are from an online calculator, *MeasuringWorth.com*, “Seven Ways to Compute the Relative Value of a U.S. Dollar Amount, 1790 to present,” MeasuringWorth, 2020.

<sup>152</sup> CGC, “AN ACT for placing Spencer Academy under the direction of the Assembly’s Board, and for establishing the school at Norwalk,” in *The Constitution and Laws of the Choctaw Nation*, 56-7.

<sup>153</sup> Krauthamer, *Black Slaves, Indian Masters*, 52.

<sup>154</sup> Israel Folsom to PPP, February 23, 1848, PPPC, box 2, folder 2, WHC.

W. Hawkins vented his frustrations in 1855 as the issue of slavery threatened to ruin the schools. He felt a breach of trust as the American Board of Foreign Missions threatened to withdraw their support of the schools over the issue of slavery. Hawkins wrote, “I never was so surprised in my life, to see that Mr. Byington had condemned our school art and had sustained the grounds that the board had taken.” The politics of Antebellum United States leached into even the Choctaw Nation’s projects.

Outside of abolition, Choctaw leaders also later expressed breaches in trust with the missionaries. George Hawkins stated his concern of missionary involvement in their schools, as “they are a treacherous hypocritical set of Yankees.” He wanted to break their contract early if possible, but felt it would not be honorable to do so. He perceived the teachers degraded in quality over time:

The public schools in the nation [are] doing but little good the present set of teachers at our schools are the most of them too young and unexperienced, and without the qualifications. The pay that is given by the board for Teachers is not enough to justify good teachers to come to this country and consequently they pick up any that will come. I am done with the Missionary Schools, the Nation had better send her children out into the states, where they will see and learn something. I want to see Choctaw have independence about them. Show some resentment [sic] when their rights are trampled on.<sup>155</sup>

George Hawkins lost hope in their schools. Rumors additionally spread that Peter P. Pitchlynn and Israel Folsom were trying to remove the control of the schools from missionaries. H.T. McKenney became verbal about removing missionary control, concerned that they “preach alcoholism. Do as they please with our females at their schools and for us to have no say so, about their conduct or control over our school

---

<sup>155</sup> George W. Hawkins to PPP, October 19, 1855 PPPC, box 2, folder 65, WHC.

funds.” McKenney claimed that only three or four scholars graduated with common business skills after the expenditure of \$60,000.<sup>156</sup> McKenney may also be referencing the investigation into Reverend Ebenezer Hotchkin in 1853 as to whether he fathered a child by a girl in his school. Though the girl’s father later testified that Hotchkins did not and he was exonerated, tension remained.<sup>157</sup> McKenney and other men were frustrated with the behavior of male missionaries in the Nation. A partnership many hoped would work was clearly failing by the mid-1850s. Choctaw leaders fought to reclaim their schools until their gradual closure leading up to the Civil War.

Settling in a completely new land, let alone launching an un-paralleled national school system, were tremendous challenges faced by the Choctaw post a traumatic removal from their homelands. Yet, the new schools of the Choctaw Nation were to be a part of their revival. Not knowing that politics of the Civil War might cause large enough rifts in their own Nation to close the schools, the Choctaw hoped their education system would strengthen their people. With this new system, the hope was to prepare future generations to protect their country and maintain commerce with neighboring countries. By re-investing in their children through education, they pushed to make their new lands a home that they could protect for future generations.

---

<sup>156</sup> Robert M. Jones to PPP, July 21, 1854, PPPC, box 2, folder 45, WHC.

<sup>157</sup> Kidwell, *The Choctaws in Oklahoma*, 36.

## CHAPTER IV

### MOTIVATIONS

Electa Kingsbury opened her letter from Harriet B. Wright. It was 1857 and both women recently surpassed thirty years of service among the Choctaw. Now well past seventy years old, both had served as missionaries to these people since their marriages to missionaries in 1824 and 1825, respectively. Electa's frustration from the inadequacy she felt when teaching household management led her to write Harriet for advice on how she achieved breakthroughs with students at Wheelock. The click of the latch announced Elizabeth Dwight's entrance, knitting basket in the crook of her arm and one of the little girls trailing on her apron strings. It was a delight to see Elizabeth grow from a student in the academies to serving her own people as a domestic arts teacher. The young woman let Electa know the girls needed her help in the kitchen. Electa peered out the window at the setting sun. She had lost track of time. How, she wondered, did she ever manage without Elizabeth?<sup>158</sup>

---

<sup>158</sup> Cyrus Kingsbury to Douglas H. Cooper, August 1, 1857, in *Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Accompanying the Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior for the Year 1857*, (Washington, D.C.: William A. Harris, 1858), 243; Elizabeth H. Hunt, "Two Letters from Pine Ridge Mission," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 50, no. 2 (1972).



---

To educate their children, specifically girls, female teachers became heavily involved in the school system. While they had many differences, the Choctaw and white women working at the schools also had striking similarities. Both groups of women took on various responsibilities in schools, but they often centered around a community's need, societal roles, and personal benefits. Teachers attracted to the Choctaw education system worked for a multitude of reasons and played important parts as it transitioned education from an elitist opportunity to focus on reaching the general public. Ultimately, their work was crucial to founding the early schools that led into the later formation of the academies. All the while, Choctaw women helped to both perpetuate Choctaw culture and redefine what it meant to be Choctaw in their new homeland.

Choctaw women took imperative roles as educators to help their Nation establish sovereignty in the West. As teachers, women mediated Euro-American ways of life such as education while also maintaining important aspects of their culture. An unknown number of women worked in the public and mission schools of the Oklahoma Choctaw. For years, records listed many men and women as simply Native teachers or assistants; however, names survived in the records, identifying women working as Choctaw educators.<sup>159</sup> This omission of names shows a clear devaluation of Native teachers' work

---

<sup>159</sup> These women include Lavinia Pitchlynn, Tryphena Wall, Elizabeth Dwight, Ann Folsom, Nancy C. Dukes, Electa McClure, Sophina Folsom, Mrs. Edmonds, and Sarah Ann Harlan. Ann Folsom, Nancy C. Dukes, and Electa McClure are the hardest to identify on separate records of their race. Compiled from *Annual Reports of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1841-60); Sarah Ann Harlan in 1913 at age 84, dictated her life story to her granddaughter Julia Vermelle Underwood. Underwood gave a copy to Indian Pioneer Papers Field Worker Amelia F. Harris in 1937 to record for the project. Interview with Sarah Ann Harlan, August 24, 1937, Indian Pioneer Papers, WHC, University of Oklahoma. Here forward, IPP=Indian Pioneer Papers.

on the part of white missionaries and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) officials. But it also suggests that those who are included in the records made a strong impression on white record keepers. While their exact intentions for teaching cannot be known from the scant records remaining, there are some plausible motivations for these women's involvement, including money, community investment, power, and convenience.

### **Community Need**

Many early Choctaw teachers came from elite families, giving them the advantage of education pre-removal and less financial stress. Therefore, these elite Choctaw women potentially had the extra time to invest in the education of their community. In 1841, two such women taught their own public schools. Lavinia Pitchlynn, at Eagletown, and Tryphena Wall, at Mayhew, were teachers of BIA schools managed by the Presbyterian Mission Board's Reverend Cyrus Byington.<sup>160</sup> Of all the women, Lavinia is one of the best-documented early teachers as the daughter of the prominent Peter P. Pitchlynn. Tryphena, too, was a cousin of the family by their shared Folsom relations and both girls lived in wealthy slave-owning households.<sup>161</sup> With such wealthy backgrounds, it is likely neither entered the teaching profession purely for family income. As some of the few women educated by Western methods in their community, they were the perfect candidates to run schools in areas that had limited access to teachers.

---

<sup>160</sup> Cyrus Byington to William Armstrong, August 4, 1841, in *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, for the Years 1840-1845*, Government Printing Office (Washington, D.C.), 305.

<sup>161</sup> Prominent families in the nation included the LeFlores, the Folsoms, the Pitchlynns, and the Nails. They were all primary traders, political leaders, and slaveholders. Kidwell, *The Choctaws in Oklahoma*, 8.

In addition to their prominence, Lavinia and Tryphena made up the first generation of teachers educated in the Choctaw mission schools. As some of the earliest graduates of education efforts for girls, these women were some of the few readily available Choctaw women who could work with the Nation's future generations. Many of these first graduates were either born in Mississippi or just after removal. They grew up surrounded by people who remembered their homeland and struggled alongside them to establish their new lands. This connection to their ancestral lands and original culture is something post-Civil War teachers could not know on the same level. Echoing the desire of the council to invest in girls as their chance to deflect United States control, these Choctaw women could have seen teaching as their cultural duty to protect their people.

Amongst all these motivations, records indicate a degree of passion and commitment to their community in some women's work. The earliest report of their success is in a BIA report of 1841. It describes Lavinia and Tryphena as two young ladies, eighteen years old, Choctaws who knew both Choctaw and English, as well as having "the entire confidence of the nation." Though specifics are unknown, Indian Agent William Armstrong highlighted that amongst many faltering and underfunded schools, the two women "deserve credit for their ability and exertions in [sic] behalf of their people." As women with the training for western-style education and the ability to speak Choctaw, the young women were able to create ideal school scenarios for the General Council.<sup>162</sup> In the same 1841 report, Cyrus Byington described four teachers under his supervision to be Native women. He wrote, "I trust it will not be deemed improper for me to remark that I think the teachers were devoted to their work, and

---

<sup>162</sup> William Armstrong to T. Hartley Crawford, October 6, 1841, in *BIA Reports 1840-5*, 297.

exerted themselves according to the best of their skill. And I might say the same of all the teachers, most of whom are females.”<sup>163</sup> White observers were not the only people who recognized Choctaw women’s work.

As mentioned, despite his bias, Israel Folsom praised Lavinia’s and Tryphena’s successes in comparison to the disappointing white male teachers. Comparing the multiple schools run by white missionaries, “thousand[s] of dollars have been spent upon those schools and what was the consequence—A mere mockery. Our young Girls have had better schools and with better prospects of doing good. The Schools taught by my esteemed niece Lavinia...and...my beloved niece Tryphina Wall on Boggy. I am happy to say, both of those schools look more like school.”<sup>164</sup> Not describing the white run schools in detail, they suggest some of the issues at hand. Financial mismanagement was a primary issue, suggesting inadequate academic materials and facilities at white schools. Additionally, male missionary teachers often traveled while preaching to local churches, so inconsistent teaching was another potential issue. In the wake of funding and curricular mismanagement by specifically male missionaries, the work of Choctaw women was particularly important to providing children with the education their General Council deemed necessary. Others valued Choctaw women’s teaching as they sought out their services in other regards. In 1842 while moving, a local immediately suggested Lavinia as a teacher in Eagletown upon her arrival, a position she accepted in addition to continuing work in Sabbath Schools.<sup>165</sup> These women were a part of the only qualified

---

<sup>163</sup> Cyrus Byington to William Armstrong, August 4, 1841, in *BIA Reports 1840-5*, 306.

<sup>164</sup> Israel Folsom to PPP, January 16, 1842, PPPC, box 1, folder 76, WHC.

<sup>165</sup> Lavinia Pitchlynn to Peter P. Pitchlynn, December 14, 1841. PPP, box 1, folder 72, WHC.

teachers to work in western settings and were crucial to the advancement of the Nation's education goals.

While many white women assisted in these schools, they largely fell under the tutelage of the Choctaw.<sup>166</sup> Sarah Ann Harlan, a Choctaw woman, reminisced on her tenure teaching such a school as an act of commitment to her community. When asked to teach the forty children near James Fork "that don't know their A B C's" she initially refused. When she was told no one else could teach in the area that is "pretty well settled, but the people were as ignorant as rats," she agreed to help the community.<sup>167</sup> While possibly colored with the desire to present herself in a caring light, Harlan's remembrance affirms the concept that women worked at the schools, at least in part, as an act of care for their community's well-being. Additionally, she highlighted the important role educated Choctaw women held teaching in regions where no other educator was available.

Many of the early Choctaw female teachers came from mixed backgrounds, further complicating their motivations to teach. While the heritage of many is unknown, some came from prominent families of blended Choctaw and white heritage, such as Lavinia Pitchlynn and Tryphena Wall. While these women often dressed and incorporated other Euro-American aspects of life such as slaveholding into their lives, they also show a continuation of traditional Choctaw lifestyles. In particular, Lavinia and her father Peter Pitchlynn continued practices connected to matrilineal kinship. Both

---

<sup>166</sup> Cyrus Byington to D. H. Cooper, August 14, 1855, in *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Transmitted with the Message of the President at the Opening of the First Session of the Thirty-Fourth Congress, 1855*, (Washington, D.C.: A.O.P. Nicholson, 1856), 155.

<sup>167</sup> Interview with Sarah Ann Harlan, August 24, 1937, IPP, WHC.

viewed the oldest maternal uncle as instrumental in nieces and nephews lives.<sup>168</sup> When Lavinia considered marrying Richard Harkins, they notified Lavinia's father of the match, informing him that they consulted Lavinia's maternal uncle, Colonel Folsom, who approved of the marriage to occur in less than ten days. Though it is unclear which uncle they consulted, it was likely her mother's oldest brother, Colonel David Folsom. They noted that Lavinia agreed to leave Richard should her father, who was in Washington, D.C., write back disapproving of the marriage, a decision following traditional divorces.<sup>169</sup> The Pitchlynn family's practice of traditional Choctaw matrilineal kinship suggests they were blending Euro- and Native American ways of life.<sup>170</sup> As teachers then, women from similar backgrounds implemented western education and continued to teach Choctaw children some traditions of their people.

## Societal Roles

As Choctaw women in the nineteenth century, they sat between their cultural traditions and useful Euro-American practices. One of these was Republican

---

<sup>168</sup> Akers, *Culture and Customs of the Choctaw Indians*, 74-7.

<sup>169</sup> T.J.P. to PPP December 1846, Peter Perkins Pitchlynn Papers, folder 561, Gilcrease Museum Archives, Tulsa, Oklahoma. Here forward noted as PPPP=Peter Perkins Pitchlynn Papers and GMA=Gilcrease Museum Archives. Before 1850, marriage partners were chose depending on their degree of kinship, making sure to marry outside their clan known as an *iska*, who were considered close relatives. Once a woman accepted a man's approaches, he might give gifts to the woman's uncle and mother to progress the relationship to the marriage ceremony. Should a marriage end in a divorce, a woman merely needed to place the man's belonging outside the door of their home and he would leave. Any children would stay with the mother as they were members of her clan. Divorced men could then go live with their sister or another female relative. Akers, *Culture and Customs of the Choctaw Indians*, 82-3.

<sup>170</sup> Donna Akers points to Lavinia's younger sister, Malvina, as a sign of the family still following matrilineal practices. In 1877, Malvina claimed her recently deceased sister Rhoda's children and property. Lavinia also practiced a traditional prerogative of revenge by choosing for her slave Lucy to burn to death as punishment for co-conspiring to kill Lavinia's husband, Richard Harkins in 1856. Akers, *Living in the Land of Death*, 98-9, 136-42.

Motherhood, perhaps best understood as the influence wives and mothers held over the political values of the Early American Republic.<sup>171</sup> But studies have shown this was not a uniquely American phenomenon. Historian Rosemarie Zagarri argues that the Scottish Enlightenment shows this was “broad, long-term, transatlantic reformulation of the role and status of women,” at least in the western world.<sup>172</sup> Zagarri re-terms it “Anglo-American Womanhood,” where “womanhood straddled a boundary between tradition and innovation.” Choctaw women certainly found themselves in a similar position. Choctaw women were socially equal to men, acknowledged as needing education for their influence on society, and were an integral part of the family—all tenets of Zagarri’s Anglo-American Womanhood.<sup>173</sup> While some women, especially those from mixed heritages, may have acted under the influence of Anglo-American Womanhood, Choctaw culture encouraged these aspects of womanhood traditionally. The Choctaw then utilized their own form of Republican Motherhood to secure their future, harnessing their women’s traditional influence to educate their future generations for survivance.

Additionally, Choctaw women navigated the influences of white Southern Womanhood. Historian Devon Mihesuah notes that the Cherokee also combatted this in their schools.<sup>174</sup> Especially as women living within slaveholding families on plantations, Lavinia and Tryphena were well acquainted with the cult of domesticity, Republican

---

<sup>171</sup> Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect & Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980); Jan Lewis, "The Republican Wife: Virtue and Seduction in the Early Republic," *The William & Mary Quarterly* 44 (1987); Linda K. Kerber, "The Republican Mother: Women and the Enlightenment—An Historical Perspective," *American Quarterly* 28 (1976); Jeanne Boydston, *Home and Work: Housework, Wages, and the Ideology of Labor in the Early Republic* (New York City: Oxford University Press, 1990); Rosemary Zagarri, "Morals, Manners, and the Republican Mother," *American Quarterly* 44, no. 2 (1992): 192.

<sup>172</sup> Zagarri, "Morals, Manners, and the Republican Mother," 193.

<sup>173</sup> Zagarri, "Morals, Manners, and the Republican Mother," 210.

<sup>174</sup> Mihesuah, *Cultivating the Rosebuds*, 26.

Motherhood, and concepts of Southern Womanhood. As Southern women, they held roles as social saviors in their communities, were expected to be pious homemakers, and companions to their husbands.<sup>175</sup> While historians argue Republican Motherhood faded by the 1830s, Historian Elizabeth Fox-Genovese suggests ideas persisted in the southern United States longer than in the North.<sup>176</sup> But Southern Womanhood placed limits that Choctaw women seemed to evade. Fox-Genovese elaborates, “Teaching a Sunday-school class might be viewed as a social responsibility; teaching a favorite slave to read might even be tolerated; but earning a salary for regular teaching was viewed as an unfortunate necessity for widows or, even worse, wives who had fallen victim to their husbands’ inadequacies. It was not a fit occupation for a lady.”<sup>177</sup> But elite Choctaw women did not incur such societal scorn, all types of women gladly earned money for teaching. Not only did women personally benefit and their doing so was socially acceptable, the hopes of the Nation rested on their further involvement.

Records are sparse and make it difficult to draw conclusions, but it appears that both married and unmarried Choctaw women taught. A Mrs. Nancy Dukes and a Mrs. Edmonds are two women listed as teaching schools in the 1859-60 school year. Nancy Dukes had a daughter, Mary, who attended women’s seminaries in the United States between 1855-7 and her son, Gilbert Wesley Dukes was ten during her teaching period. While the duration of their marriage is unknown, it appears Nancy was married to Joseph Dukes as late as 1856, who was the father of their daughter Mary.<sup>178</sup> Otherwise, little is

---

<sup>175</sup> Mihesuah, *Cultivating the Rosebuds*, 21.

<sup>176</sup> Lewis, "The Republican Wife: Virtue and Seduction in the Early Republic," 721; Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household*, 287.

<sup>177</sup> Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household*, 46.

<sup>178</sup> Mrs. Walker, Nancy Dukes and Joseph Dukes to PPP, April 22, 1856, PPPP, folder 1135, GMA.



known of her circumstances and no records have been uncovered of Mrs. Edmonds, who could have been married or widowed.<sup>179</sup> Sarah Anne Harlan taught while widowed, still having two young children, and she ended her work as soon as she remarried a widower with six of his own children.<sup>180</sup> Lavinia, for example, went unmentioned as a teacher after her marriage to Richard Harkins. There is no simple nor complete answer to why some married Choctaw women taught and others did not. It seems that teaching was not a profession only for unmarried or women in unfortunate circumstances. In the Nation, a variety of women participated in the effort to educate their girls.

While not a heavy topic of research, it appears in the United States during the period women largely taught only when unmarried. As industrialization took hold of the United States, the 1840s and 50s featured a growth in schools. This growth created a job opportunity for those born in the United States to work. While women earned significantly less than their male counterparts, making them an economic option for schools, women also grasped teaching as an opportunity to make better wages than those offered in their limited labor market in addition to the ability to be financially independent. Teaching in both the Northeast and Southern United States was an opportunity for single women to gain financial independence until they wed.<sup>181</sup> Because society viewed teaching as a continuation of the family, unmarried young women

---

<sup>179</sup> John Edwards to D.H. Cooper, August 22, 1860, in *Report of the commissioner of Indian affairs, accompanying the annual report of the secretary of the Interior, for the year 1860*, (Washington, D.C.: George W. Bowman, 1860), 140. "Gilbert Wesley Dukes," The Choctaw Nation: Chiefs, Choctaw Nation, <https://www.choctawnation.com/chief/1900-gilbert-wesley-dukes>. H.R. Wilson to PPP May 26, 1857, folder 1334, GMA; Nancy Dukes to PPPP, January 18, 1856, PPPP, folder 1077, GMA; Mrs. Walker, Nancy Dukes and Joseph Dukes to PPP April 22, 1856, PPPP, folder 1135, GMA.

<sup>180</sup> Interview with Sarah Ann Harlan, August 24, 1937, IPP, WHC.

<sup>181</sup> Kim Tolley and Nancy Beadie, "Socioeconomic Incentives to Teach in New York and North Carolina: Toward a More Complex Model of Teacher Labor Markets, 1800-1850," *History of Education Quarterly* 46, no. 1 (2006): 69; Kathleen Weiler, "Women's History and the History of Women Teachers," *The Journal of Education* 171, no. 3 (1989): 16.

supposedly then temporarily provided for themselves until they would marry and focus on raising their own children.<sup>182</sup> Choctaw and white women alike found great opportunity in teaching during this time period, but the limited sources available suggest working within the Choctaw Nation gave opportunity for married women to also teach in manners acceptable to their societies.

Opposite these Choctaw women, white missionary women assisted in filling the gaps left by a lack of western-educated women in the Nation. These missionaries also faced pressures on their sex to teach out of maternal duty, but did so as a means of colonialism. While full maternal colonialism occurred in the post-1880 Indigenous boarding schools, women working among the Choctaw during this period were empowered to work by “invoking their traditional roles or potential capabilities as mothers.”<sup>183</sup> Their impacts were limited as the Choctaw Nation maintained control of the schools, but nonetheless their efforts were a part of the larger colonial project to convert Choctaw and fully acculturate them through education.

While acting out of Euro-American society’s projection of maternal natures, some white women lamented the pressure they felt to act under this calling. Mary Coombs Greenleaf, a single woman who applied to become a missionary at the age of fifty-six,

---

<sup>182</sup> Weiler, "Women's History and the History of Women Teachers," 17.

<sup>183</sup> Historian Amanda J. Cobb’s study of Chickasaw Bloomfield Academy between 1852-1949 points out that the entire missionary recruited teaching staff were white, primarily New England, women. These women “were the perfect choice for Indian school service” as they had few employment options and cheap. “Furthermore, the conceptualization of women as ‘Republican Mothers’ and symbols of Christian charity was deepening. The proper role of Republican Mothers was to nurture their sons, who were future citizens of the republic, and raise them to be moral and upright republican leaders; the idea of women teachers seemed a natural extension of this role.” They could additionally complete all housekeeping and domestic labor, simultaneously Christian role models. While the white women working in these schools felt a sense of Republican Motherhood, Maternal Colonialism makes more sense as they are focusing on altering and absorbing another society. Cobb, *Listening to Our Grandmothers' Stories*, 43; Jacobs, "Maternal Colonialism," 461.

felt quite overcome by the responsibility she owed her future students.<sup>184</sup> She wrote to a friend of her role to “try to be what a mother ought to be to them.”<sup>185</sup> Many of the women did not grow up with their idealized view of family. Two of the Spencer teachers explained that one of them was an orphan and the other fatherless.<sup>186</sup> One of Sarah Ann Harlan’s many governesses, Miss Clark, grew up poor in Vermont, and consequently sent half of her monthly wages back to the school for the poor she attended until she paid off her education.<sup>187</sup> Even the revered Electa May Kingsbury wrote to co-missionary Harriet B. Wright in August of 1844, regretting, “The care of children & youth is a great charge I feel very inadequate for the duties devolving on me—can you tell me how to learn children to govern themselves and what is the best mode of discipline....”<sup>188</sup> Both married, they felt the pressure of not feeling naturally inclined to their situation and struggled to find the best way to become maternal influences. Whether or not they experienced the stereotypical expectation of what a mother “should be,” mission women frequently expressed a self-expectation to fulfill that role for their pupils.

### **Personal Benefits**

As with any position, pay was important to many holding positions in the school. Mostly white women’s payment history exists, but the pay of Choctaw Emily Dwight

---

<sup>184</sup> Greenleaf, *Life and Letters of Mary C. Greenleaf*, 206.

<sup>185</sup> MCG to Miss A.P., September 28, 1856, in Greenleaf, *Life and Letters of Mary C. Greenleaf*, 306.

<sup>186</sup> MCG to Mrs. E.A.G., August 21, 1856, in Greenleaf, *Life and Letters of Mary C. Greenleaf*, 290.

<sup>187</sup> Interview with Sarah Ann Harlan, August 24, 1937, IPP, WHC.

<sup>188</sup> Hunt, "Two Letters from Pine Ridge Mission."

suggests the academies were willing to pay trained Choctaw women the same amount. In 1857, the finances for Chuwahla Female Academy show that white and Choctaw women were paid the same amount (see table 1). Only having one Choctaw woman's pay makes it impossible to draw broad conclusions about the value of their labor, but it seems they were potentially paid equal to white women. Black women's pay, if they received any considering the high levels of enslavement, was far lower and their condition in the Nation will be discussed in a later chapter.

At other schools run completely by women, the breakdown shows that their position and skill influenced their pay (see table 2). Particularly for single women, it was their means of survival. As Miss Clark worked, she had to pay off the school that supported her through poverty in her youth. In an attempt to lure her into service, Sarah Ann Harlan offer her a \$15 (\$449) bonus on top of the pay promised she would receive at her school in Bonham, Texas. Miss Clark was tempted, but refused claiming she already had a written contract.<sup>189</sup> While sticking to her contract may have been a means of honor or even a requirement of her creditors, it also meant the guaranteed money she needed. When Clark later returned to work for the Harlan's later, she earn earned \$75 (\$2,380) a month, half in gold and half in Confederate money.<sup>190</sup> Women made less than their male counterparts, but the opportunity to make their own wages was certainly an important draw for some.

---

<sup>189</sup> Interview with Sarah Ann Harlan, August 24, 1937, IPP, WHC. Calculations are from an online calculator, *MeasuringWorth.com*, Williamson, "Seven Ways to Compute the Relative Value of a U.S. Dollar Amount, 1790 to present."

<sup>190</sup> Interview with Sarah Ann Harlan, August 24, 1937, IPP, WHC.

While not a huge quantity, teaching was a possibility for financial independence for some women during this period. Newer scholarship shows that financial independence was a huge draw for many women who took up teaching in the Northeast and Southern as well as urban and rural regions of the United States.<sup>191</sup> In a society where teaching was the best paying job available for females, white women might readily take the opportunity even it meant travelling far from home.<sup>192</sup> By the 1830s and 40s, female teacher pay rates were roughly \$250 in New York schools and as high as \$500 in North Carolina. These reportedly follow hiring trends suggesting the pool of available teachers was largely found among women from the Northeastern region.<sup>193</sup> Conclusions cannot be drawn from the information in this study on the full financial draw of women to teach in the Choctaw Nation, but it is clear that it was a comparable opportunity for monetary freedom. The challenge of current studies is that they focus on Euro-American women's teaching and the information for Choctaw women's contributions is extremely limited. While Choctaw society certainly valued women's labor differently than Euro-American society, teaching also provided income for Indigenous women's various efforts. Their listed income, while typically lower, suggests they could also find a level of independence through their work. For both groups, whether for the money or a sense of independence it was an opportunity many women took in the Nation.

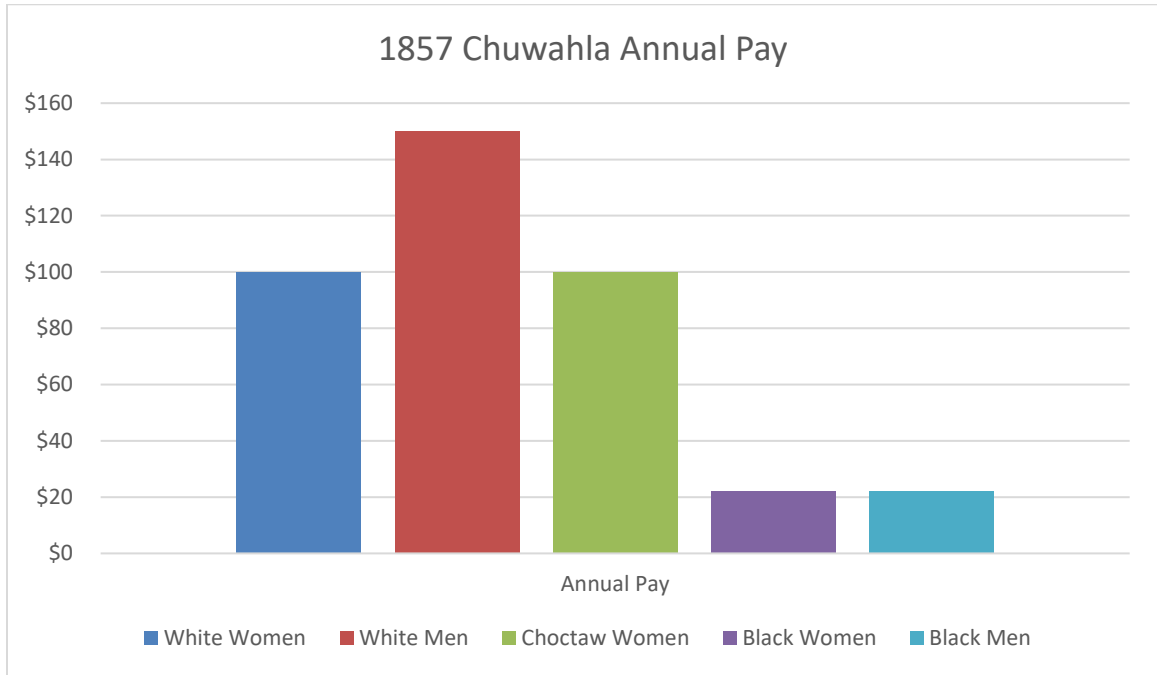
---

<sup>191</sup> Beadie, "Socioeconomic Incentives to Teach," 64.

<sup>192</sup> Beadie, "Socioeconomic Incentives to Teach," 53.

<sup>193</sup> Beadie, "Socioeconomic Incentives to Teach," 64-5.

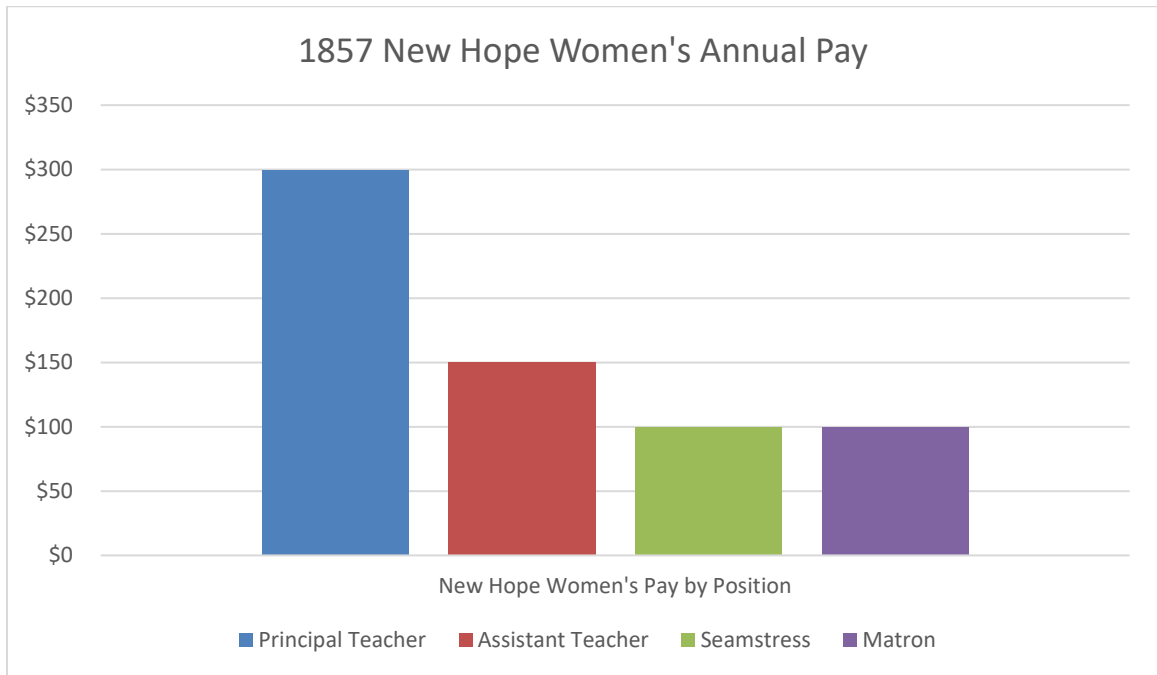
Table 1. Comparison of pay amongst workers at Chuwahla Female Seminary



194

<sup>194</sup> The money comparison of 1857 to 2020 is as follows: \$100=\$3,020, \$150=4,530, and \$22=\$665. Two Choctaw men were additionally employed, but paid only for work by the day or month rather than year. Since it is unknown how often they worked at the mission, their pay scale is omitted from the chart. Choctaw mechanic James Dyer made 75 cents (\$22.50) per day and Choctaw common laborer Joilliston \$12 (\$363) per month. Cyrus Kingsbury to Douglas H. Cooper, August 1, 1857, in *BIA Report 1857*, 243.

Table 2. Compared earnings of women at New Hope Female Academy



195

Because gender roles largely kept women at the mission-based academy school sites while males traveled and preached, white women were able to take on leadership opportunities. One of the most prominent women working in the Nation was Harriet B. Wright, who initially lived among the Choctaw in Mississippi. As missionaries, she and her husband Alfred Wright relocated with the Choctaw during removal. While her husband conducted religious work, she started and ran the schools in her area. William Armstrong reported that while Reverend Wright did not manage to send in his 1842 report, Mrs. Wright had been hard at work teaching at a school that was among the best in the Nation.<sup>196</sup> Her work extended beyond teaching and managing the home-base too.

<sup>195</sup> The money comparison of 1857 to 2020 is as follows: \$100=\$3,020, \$150=4,530, and \$300=\$9,070. J.C. Robinson to Douglas H. Cooper, August 5, 1857, in *BIA Report 1857*, 254.

<sup>196</sup> William Armstrong to T. Hartley Crawford, September 10, 1842, in *BIA Reports 1840-5*, 492.

While men could travel for preaching work, women left for special missions or occasions. She also served as a representative for the mission during some of her travels back East. After a request for \$773 (\$23,600) in February of 1855, she was granted the funds in order to arrange the visit of ABCFM Reverend George W. Wood. At another time, she carried a number of documents east for publication in the Choctaw language by the Board.<sup>197</sup> She additionally assisted in her husband and Cyrus Byington in translating the Bible into Choctaw by copying the New Testament by hand at least three times before it was published.<sup>198</sup> Her efforts were important to the growth of the schools and missions among the Choctaw.

Not only did the white workers in the area praise Wright, but prominent men such as Israel Folsom thought highly of her. Describing her as keen-eyed and accomplished, he concluded, "She is the smartest woman—I highly esteem her."<sup>199</sup> Working in tandem with builders and other workers, Mrs. Wright was partly responsible for the early opening of Wheelock Seminary.<sup>200</sup> Another prominent missionary, Reverend Cyrus Kingsbury was often occupied with preaching, so multiple women played important roles in running the educational facilities under his control. In 1842, his wife Electa May Kingsbury also served as a representative on the East Coast for the schools. Electa Kingsbury returned from summer vacation in New England with several single ladies to teach.<sup>201</sup> That same

---

<sup>197</sup> Choctaw Mission Records, Pine Ridge, 11 November 1853, box 1, folder 9, Sue L. McBeth Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Here forward SLMC=Sue L. McBeth Collection OHS=Oklahoma Historical Society.

<sup>198</sup> Miller, "Wheelock Mission," 319; Coleman, *The Wheelock Story*, 25.

<sup>199</sup> Israel Folsom to PPP, February 23, 1848 PPPC, WHC.

<sup>200</sup> William Armstrong to T. Hartley Crawford, November 3, 1843, in *BIA Reports 1840-5*, 333.

<sup>201</sup> Bound Biographies of Cyrus Kingsbury & C.C. Copeland, 4 May 1869, box 1, folder 10, SLMC, OHS. These include Misses Susan Tracy, Mary J. Dickinson, Cornelia, and Harriet Crosby. Unfortunately, Harriet Crosby became ill on the journey and died a day after arriving at Mr. Byington's mission.



year, it was noted that the school at the Kingsbury's mission was mainly run by a "young lady from the North..."<sup>202</sup> These women's work was important as it shows that some women were able to participate in opportunities of leadership outside of their typical education and home-based work. In the absence of men, they took pivotal roles in building schools and positive relationships with the Choctaw.

Acting on their separate cultural roles as maternal and benevolent influences, Choctaw and white women were instrumental to the burgeoning female education system in the Nation. There were many challenge and incentives, but they both participated for what they viewed the greater good. Their work helped lay the foundation for years of education to follow. Major participants throughout the 1831-61 school period, their efforts to educate all people were particularly important in the lower tiers of education.

---

<sup>202</sup> William Armstrong to T. Hartley Crawford, September 10, 1842, in *BIA Reports 1840-5*, 492.

## CHAPTER V

### SABBATH & NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOLS

Lavinia could not find the words. It was so disappointing to close the school, but with the family moving closer to Eagletown she would have to let it go. At eighteen, she had spent the year teaching local children. Their Uncle Israel was so proud of her work in the community, which needed a passionate teacher so badly, but it had to end. Lavinia noted the school closure in the letter to her father, working far away as a statesman in Washington, D.C. She hoped there would be more opportunities in the new town. There seemed to always be something changing in the Nation.<sup>203</sup>

---

Post-removal, the Choctaw were desperate to get their children back into school. Having just forcibly left their communities behind, the new western lands were an opportunity to re-assemble away from white encroachment. But it was not that simple. Arriving in their new lands, many had next to nothing and there was certainly no education infrastructure. Yet, the General Council determined their best chance at getting

---

<sup>203</sup> Rhoda Folsom Pitchlynn to PPP, November 29, 1841, PPPP, folder 314, GMA.

the United States to see them as equals necessitated a new strategy. And this strategy was to focus their education efforts on the future mothers of their Nation. With the creation of early schools that developed into Neighborhood and Sabbath Schools, white, and more importantly, Choctaw women took important roles as teachers in a blossoming new Choctaw education system.

### **Early Schools**

Choctaw education was a priority from the beginning in the new lands. While the government would take time to re-establish itself and form its school structure, elite families founded many of the schools with missionary assistance. Though missionaries dominate the education record, there is evidence of both Choctaw initiative to found schools and participation in educating their children.

These schools were, at first, sparse and costly. Missionary Reverend Loring Williams started one of the earliest schools of the region. After arriving in July 1832, Rev. Williams wrote one month later announcing the opening of a school at Mountain Fork just twelve days after arriving, which was placed under the tutelage of his wife, Matilda Loomis Williams.<sup>204</sup> He noted, “several of our neighbours felt unwilling to wait until they could get time to build a school-house, and were willing their children should be taught any where, even if it were in the woods....”<sup>205</sup> While a clear desire for schools existed, the high costs limited those who could afford such a luxury for their children.

---

<sup>204</sup> Sent with the American Board of Foreign Missions, having joined them to work with the Cherokee in 1817. Sarah Josepha Hale, *Woman's Record; Or, Sketches of all Distinguished Women From "The Beginning" Until A.D. 1850* (London: Sampson Low, Son, and Co., 1853), 896.; Bound Biographies of Cyrus Kingsbury & C.C. Copeland, 4 May 1869, SLMC, box 1, folder 10, OHS.

<sup>205</sup> Their children learning outdoors was potentially not quite as shocking of a concept as Reverend Williams thought as the Choctaw regularly participated in outdoor activities. “Camp meetings” of Churches

The cost of these schools make it clear education was at first limited to privileged families. Impressed by the fervor for education, the mission settlement offered schooling at the quarterly rates of \$4 (\$121) for English education and \$3 (\$90.80) for Choctaw only. At the one school, there were already twenty-five students, more than half studying English.<sup>206</sup> This clear differing value of Choctaw and English education, combined with the majority of students taking the English coursework, suggests a number of possible attitudes towards education. The lower price of Choctaw could mean it was easier for students to learn and therefore requiring less teaching. Equally, perhaps missionaries felt the Native Assistants they employed deserved lower pay, though their monthly earnings are unknown. Also, it could suggest a restriction of English for wealthier families who could afford the higher cost. This could also result in their children emerging as major leaders in Choctaw-United States relations in the future. However, since the majority of students were taking the English course, it potentially also shows the missionaries desired to make a larger profit off a highly desired English education. Whatever the motive behind the pricing, the costs were prohibitive to the participation of the average family that struggled to get by on subsistence farming.

Paying for school was largely a privilege of the elite. Considering the average monthly earnings of a farmer in 1830's United States was \$8.85 (\$268) a month, sending

---

replaced traditional ceremonial gatherings. At these multi-day events, people would gather to sing and feast out of doors particularly in wooded areas. Akers, *Living in the Land of Death*, 101. For activities such as Sunday School, missionary Mary Coombs Greenleaf remembers their regular occurrence outside, a small rough cabin only utilized for school and worship during the worst of weather. MCG to Miss A.P., August 31, 1856, in Greenleaf, *Life and Letters of Mary C. Greenleaf*, 294-5. School houses also served as meeting places, as Lavinia Pitchlynn notified her father of a big meeting at Simon's School House in a letter. Lavinia Pitchlynn to PPP, March 26, 1846, PPPP, folder 465, GMA.

<sup>206</sup> Loring S. Williams, "Domestick: Arrival at the New Choctaw Country Extracts From a Letter of Mr. Williams, Dated August 21, 1832," *The Christian Advocate* 1, no. 11 (1833); Williamson, "Seven Ways to Compute the Relative Value of a U.S. Dollar Amount, 1790 to present."

a child to school for \$3-4 (\$90.80-\$121) a quarter was a significant financial investment still only available to those wealthy enough to have disposable income.<sup>207</sup> These payments sometimes came in a barter system, Reverend Williams described, “in such things as I may want and they have to spare.” Having no public funding, Mr. Williams explained “it is, strictly speaking, a private district school, having no connexion [sic] whatever, with the national school fund.”<sup>208</sup> Whether studying Choctaw or English, high prices combined with the students needing to assist with major agricultural events in the late summer prevented many from attending school, again suggesting that likely only children from wealthier families were could afford to attend the earliest schools.

Despite the socio-economic background of students, the desirability of the schools is clear. There were high hopes for these facilities. Mr. Williams hoped to have a school house built the next quarter. At that point, it would transfer to another missionary woman named Miss Eunice Clough, helped by “a native assistant.”<sup>209</sup> Whether this assistant be a woman or man, no-one knows, but they were to be the first of many Choctaws teaching in the territory. Williams’s plan for the school system flourished. In his annual report to the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions (ABCFM), Williams noted the opening of schools in three settlements, in which the pupils learned to read and write in both English and Choctaw, taught by Native teachers. Though “under his superintendence,” these Native teachers illustrate an early commitment of the Choctaw

---

<sup>207</sup> Williamson, "Seven Ways to Compute the Relative Value of a U.S. Dollar Amount, 1790 to present."; U.S. Census Bureau, *Historical statistics of the United States, colonial times to 1970*, (Washington 1975).

<sup>208</sup> Williams, "Domestick: Arrival at the New Choctaw Country " 42.

<sup>209</sup> Williams, "Domestick: Arrival at the New Choctaw Country " 42.

to teaching their children.<sup>210</sup> Most details were not preserved in written records, but it shows that the Choctaw were invested in educating their children. Additional evidence of Choctaw investment in educational opportunities in the Nation is seen in the exorbitant costs they were willing to pay. These newer boarding schools required parents to fund their children's board, clothing, and books while the ABCFM contributed the teachers' pay. Again, those impoverished by their recent relocation could not easily afford these costs. However, there was a large enough population willing and able to invest in their children's education as the schools reached ninety pupils.

Schools continued to multiply with the arrival of more missionaries, all of whom appear to have lived with the Choctaw previously in their Mississippi homelands. The next round of missionaries to arrive were Alfred and Harriett Bunce Wright. The Wrights ran the main Presbyterian mission in Mississippi and after arriving in Indian Territory, the couple founded Wheelock Academy in conjunction with their church.<sup>211</sup> While another wide-reaching epidemic in 1833 removed the teachers, decimated the Choctaw, and closed the school, it was a temporary set-back and later reopened.<sup>212</sup> The re-opening of the schools show a determination of the Choctaw to get their children education as they pushed to keep facilities open.

Though Neighborhood "Day Schools" and boarding schools were rooted in private education, public opportunities emerged early in the Choctaw Nation. Missionaries founded a school at Mr. Ebenezer Hotchkin's mission under the leadership

---

<sup>210</sup> Annual report - American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1832. 113.

<sup>211</sup> Wheelock Academy would continue as a boarding school in various capacities until 1955. Coleman, *The Wheelock Story*, 76.

<sup>212</sup> Coleman, *The Wheelock Story*, 15.

of a Miss Anna Burnham. This site offered some of the first documented Sabbath Schools in the region as of December of 1832, which were taught by Mrs. Hotchkin and Anna Burnham.<sup>213</sup> Connected to church services, this style of education became the most accessible form of school in the Nation. This early documentation of Sabbath Schools suggests public education opportunities were quickly became a priority to the Choctaw.



*Figure 4 Wheelock Church is the only surviving structure of the school from the pre-Civil War period. Though the interior burned at various points, it was rebuilt within the original walls. Photograph taken by Emily Duncan, January 2020.*

The arrival of Mr. Cyrus Byington and his family in November of 1835 signaled the settling and advancement of these early mission-based educational facilities. They

---

<sup>213</sup> A Sabbath School was a course taught on the Sabbath, often including courses for children and adults, which allowed people who could not afford to attend school regularly during the week to have some form of religious education during their day off. Bound Biographies of Cyrus Kingsbury & C.C. Copeland, 4 May 1869, SLMC, box 1, folder 10, OHS.

brought in larger groups of missionaries, particularly women, to run even more schools. A number of women arrived with Mr. Byington, including Electa Kingsbury, a Mrs. Jones with her husband, and Miss Merrill. This group settled near Mountain Fork and under the guidance of a Mr. Wood in early 1836 founded the Pine Ridge mission and school. By 1836, there were ten Presbyterian Schools recorded, five taught by women.<sup>214</sup> But even with these advancements in the mission-based schools, they often aimed at meeting the needs of the elite Choctaw who could afford to pay for their children's access to education.

### **Neighborhood Schools**

“I send all my children to school,” Rhoda Folsom Pitchlynn reported, in a letter to her husband.<sup>215</sup> It was 1841 and the Choctaw's commitment to education continued. Even though they could afford to send their children outside the Nation, wealthy Choctaws such as the Pitchlynn family committed to having their children enrolled in local schools. In a nation seeking to educate all its children, the Neighborhood School served as an essential layer in the emerging public school system. Nestled into the heart of more populated neighborhoods, these coeducational schools provided more access to education. These were the center layer of what would eventually become a three tier public-funded school system created by the Choctaw Nation in 1842. While initially

---

<sup>214</sup> Bound Biographies of Cyrus Kingsbury & C.C. Copeland, 4 May 1869, SLMC, box 1, folder 10, OHS. At Bethabara, Miss Louisa Williams had fifty registered pupils and thirty-two attended on average. At Stockbridge, Miss Merrill had thirty of her forty-seven students regularly attend. Miss Clough ran a classroom at Lukfatatah where twenty-two of forty regularly attended. At Clear Creek, only eleven of Mrs. Hotchkin's thirty students typically came to class.

<sup>215</sup> Rhoda Folsom Pitchlynn to PPP, December 22, 1841, PPPP, folder 320, GMA.



parents had to pay for their children's education at such facilities directly, the Choctaw government in their post-1842 school system put significant funds towards their development. An Act passed in 1843 set aside sixteen percent of the year's budget, \$1,300 (\$45,500), for the Neighborhood and Sunday Schools in Apakshanubbi District alone.<sup>216</sup> The Choctaw were ready to put significant funds towards public education. Even after these regional funds passed, parents sometimes organized to request funding to start schools for their children. A co-authored letter to the General Council from parents asked for funding so their children "be placed on an equal footing" as "we want an Inglishe [sic] Teacher for our Children."<sup>217</sup> For many parents, neighborhood schools were the most accessible way to give their children the education they felt was necessary in a world with increasing Euro-American contact.

Neighborhood Schools varied drastically in size depending on time of year and location. Proud mother Rhoda Folsom Pitchlynn wrote to her husband, Peter P. Pitchlynn, that their eldest daughter, Lavinia, at eighteen already taught sixteen students at Eagletown.<sup>218</sup> For Choctaw Lavinia Pitchlynn and her cousin Tryphena Wall, their larger schools reached on average twenty-five students per class. In other years and at different locations, day schools were smaller. In 1841, Cyrus Byington reported Choctaw teacher Mrs. Anna Folsom teaching eight students at Bok-tuklo and Choctaw Mrs. Nancy C.

---

<sup>216</sup> This came from an intra-Nation education budget of \$20,500 (\$731,000) for the 1843-4 school year. *BIA Reports 1840-5*, 55; Williamson, "Seven Ways to Compute the Relative Value of a U.S. Dollar Amount, 1790 to present."; CGC, "AN ACT for establishing Neighborhood and Sabbath Schools in Apakshanubbi District," in *The Constitution and Laws of the Choctaw Nation*, 52.

<sup>217</sup> Twaing Frazier and Isaac Nelson, and Ufamotubbee to the Iyanubbe Body of the General Council September 1844, PPPP, folder 447, GMA.

<sup>218</sup> Rhoda Folsom Pitchlynn to PPP, December 22, 1841, PPPP, folder 320, GMA.

Dukes teaching fourteen.<sup>219</sup> The student to teacher ratios in the Nation were significantly better than the American public school average of three teachers per one hundred students—and, notably, this was considered an achievement when compared to higher ratios found in other countries at the time.<sup>220</sup> A trend seen in the United States and the Choctaw Nation, attendance was often irregular as parents who needed children's assistance kept them at home or at work, sought to avoid some illness sweeping the region, or simply located in a different area. All reasons explain why enrollment fluctuated greatly. While there was certainly a level of individuality to each school, this also allowed women the opportunity to hold greater influence over running their classrooms.

While there were some similarities in the curriculum, records suggest a variation in class organization at each school. This allowed Choctaw women to shape their students as they not only utilized their own skillsets, but offered subjects they knew would benefit the children. Tryphena Wall divided her class not by advancement level, but strictly by the subject they studied. She reported two history students, one English grammar, eleven arithmetic, eight geography, eleven writing, fourteen in reading in Testament and spelling, two students spelling words of three syllables, and four students studying words of three and four letters. Another major difference was Tryphena's note of reading the Bible as a specific subject.<sup>221</sup> In contrast, Lavinia Pitchlynn taught reading, spelling, geography, and arithmetic. She divided students into four levels grouped by

---

<sup>219</sup> Cyrus Byington to William Armstrong, August 4, 1841, *BIA Reports 1840-5*, 305.

<sup>220</sup> Sun Go and Peter Lindert, "The Uneven Rise of American Public Schools to 1850," *The Journal of Economic History* 70, no. 1 (2010): 3.

<sup>221</sup> Tryphena Wall to William Armstrong, August 1841, in *BIA Reports 1840-5*, 304.

advancement. Lavinia noted she was proud to have decreased her four in alphabet studies to two by the end of the year.<sup>222</sup> These subjects of study are on par with those required by the state of Massachusetts, which in 1839 established a public school system requiring children learn “orthography, reading, writing, English grammar, geography, arithmetic, and good behavior...”<sup>223</sup> These curated subjects played an important role in creating future Choctaw citizens.

The skills learned within these schools were important to daily life in the Choctaw Nation and relations with nearby colonial powers. An 1854 missionary Cyrus Byington noted, “These scholars can read any of the Choctaw book; can read their laws, and write letters, and cipher some; and thus they can prepare to enter some of the boarding-schools.”<sup>224</sup> Over the two decades of schools in the Nation, students learned to read and write in their own language, crucial to understanding the laws written in Choctaw in addition to ensuring its continuation. Additionally, by focusing on academic subjects such as mathematics, reading, and writing, teachers were able to share applicable life skills necessary when interacting with the Americans and the economy in which Choctaw citizens continually became more involved. Rather than pushing a domestic or agriculture labor based curriculum, rampant in later nineteenth-century boarding schools, the focus on academic education as fundamental studies suggests greater weight was given towards making prepared citizens for Euro-American contact rather than foster abilities to manage

---

<sup>222</sup> Lavinia Pitchlynn to William Armstrong, August 4, 1841, in *BIA Reports 1840-5*, 302.

<sup>223</sup> Secretary of the Commonwealth, *Acts and Resolves Passed by the Legislature of Massachusetts in the Years 1839, 1840, 1841, 1842. Together with the Rolls and Messages* (Boston: Dutton and Wentworth, Printers to the State, 1842), 22.

<sup>224</sup> Cyrus Byington to Douglas H. Cooper, August 31, 1854, in *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Transmitted with the Message of the President at the Opening of the Second Session fo the Thirty-Third Congress, 1854*, (Washington, D.C.: A.O.P. Nicholson, 1855), 133.

farms and homes in Euro-American style. With this type of preparation available to most all youths through the Neighborhood Schools, the Choctaw government was able to culture citizens prepared to navigate the challenges of colonialism in North America.

Girls attending these schools learned comparable, if not the same, subjects as their male counterparts. Thirteen year old Patsey Going attended Providence Station School for five years beginning in 1844 and advanced to grammar, geography, and philosophy in addition to general reading and writing. This was the same subject matter as twenty year old male classmate Westley Collins, who additionally studied history and arithmetic.<sup>225</sup> The early Neighborhood Schools have no record of how children advanced from one level to another, whereas the later public schools utilized a structured series of public examinations students had to pass semiannually.<sup>226</sup> The 1844 list of students from Providence Station School shows an array of children from ages five to twenty-three.<sup>227</sup> Utilizing the Lancastrian system, more advanced students helped educate those below them.<sup>228</sup> The lack of assigned levels and noted studies per individual suggests teachers individually evaluated each student as they learned at their own pace. Many younger students, listed attending the school longer, studied more advanced subjects than some of the older pupils which further supports this.<sup>229</sup> Just as found in the United States, there was minimal regulation as to how each school functioned in these early local settings.<sup>230</sup> It seems that it was up to the teacher, and possibly local parental input, to decide how

---

<sup>225</sup> Ramsey D. Potts, List of Students at Providence Station School, 1844, PPPP, folder 449, GMA.

<sup>226</sup> CGC, "AN ACT requiring Board of Trustees to examine the accounts of the Public Schools," in *The Constitution and Laws of the Choctaw Nation*, 55.

<sup>227</sup> Ramsey D. Potts, List of Students at Providence Station School, 1844, PPPP, folder 449, GMA.

<sup>228</sup> Joseph Lancaster, *Lancasterian System of Education, with Improvements* (Baltimore: William Ogden Niles, 1821), 5-6.

<sup>229</sup> Ramsey D. Potts, List of Students at Providence Station School, 1844, PPPP, folder 449, GMA.

<sup>230</sup> Lindert, "The Uneven Rise of American Public Schools to 1850," 5.

students would progress through each level. Again, this allowed the Choctaw to monitor the progress of their students. Though there was a free form structure to the Neighborhood Schools, there were clearly parental expectations and teachers fulfilled a need to educate their children on par with one of the best American education systems at the time.

Neighborhood Schools typically sprang up upon the request of families. The decentralized nature of United States primary schools in 1850 meant that the regions that did offer basic education were “decentralized and spontaneous” movements starting at the grass-roots level.<sup>231</sup> The Choctaw’s school system was equally locally motivated. In 1844, a local school committee that formed at Mount Pleasant, petitioned for financial assistance of \$500 (\$17,600) from the General Council. They built a school house, teacher’s quarters, and agreed to support the teacher, but found it too expensive on their own and worried their teacher, Reverend Joshua Potter, might leave for better paying prospects.<sup>232</sup> A Bureau of Indian Affairs report in 1854 explained from a governmental perspective some of the advantages of this crucial education: “The effort on the part of the Choctaws to get them up, build the houses, procure books, paper, slates, and a teacher, gives a little more sinew to their character....”<sup>233</sup> While this report reflects the dehumanizing mindset of some white BIA reporters, it also illustrates the determination of the Choctaw to control their future. Through their own self-motivation, the Choctaw built an effective school system to suit their needs from the ground up.

---

<sup>231</sup> Lindert, "The Uneven Rise of American Public Schools to 1850," 2.

<sup>232</sup> Pushmataha District School Committee to General Council, September 6, 1844, PPPP folder 429, GMA.

<sup>233</sup> Cyrus Byington to Douglas H. Cooper, August 31, 1854, in *BIA Report 1854*, 133.

Arriving to undeveloped land, the Choctaw-built Neighborhood Schools were often humble, but effective. Not many descriptions remain, but they generally were run out of a person's home or a simple structure. A student of the time, Tishie Hough Inge recalled going to school in Boggy Depot's "log house covered with native clapboards, floored with split logs."<sup>234</sup> While these smaller facilities were by no means elaborate, they were a physical sign of the Choctaws' commitment towards accessible education.

On top of hard work conditions, schools were regularly underfunded, leaving teachers without materials. As Lavinia Pitchlynn reported, "There has been a deficiency of common school books; nor were any writing books furnished for the school. There is now a want of spelling books, reading books, geographies, and writing books."<sup>235</sup> Though the missions often assisted in financing schools attached to their stations, Choctaws funded the majority of each school's budget—through government or private funds. Teachers sometimes applied directly to their Indian Agent to try and access the funds allotted by the United States government. Tryphena Wall wrote to Indian Agent William Armstrong, "I think the scholars have learned well, notwithstanding we have not had a supply of books. If you could forward us some books, they would be very acceptable."<sup>236</sup> Low supplies were not the only challenge.

Working with inconsistent students was often grueling. Reports of illness, children needed for work, and general non-attendance hurt students' progress. Out of Lavinia's twenty-five students enrolled, she only regularly saw fifteen.<sup>237</sup> In some cases,

---

<sup>234</sup> Interview with T.T. Inge, April 14, 1937, IPP, WHC.

<sup>235</sup> Lavinia Pitchlynn to William Armstrong, August 4, 1841, in *BIA Reports 1840-5*, 302.

<sup>236</sup> Tryphena Wall to William Armstrong, August 1841, in *BIA Reports 1840-5*, 304.

<sup>237</sup> Lavinia Pitchlynn to William Armstrong, August 4, 1841, in *BIA Reports 1840-5*, 302.

distance and the weather prevented regular attendance. Malvina Pitchlynn, at age thirteen, used a rainy afternoon to update her father Peter Pitchlynn as to her family's status when she and her brother, Lycurgus, could not make it to class.<sup>238</sup> At Tryphena Wall's school, she had twenty-four students total, but again, "Some have quit school, and others do not attend regularly." Those attending were making progress, but Tryphena registered her concern for students staying home from illness and for work.<sup>239</sup>

Sickness was a major issue. Lavinia, writing to her father Peter P. Pitchlynn, noted that "A great deal of sickness in this neighborhood most all the small children have died with the [w]hooping cough...."<sup>240</sup> Annually, waves of illness struck different schools. Choctaw Isaac Folsom noted struggles in his Sunday School, formerly described as "flourishing," devastated by illness killing nearly all the children. Describing the once vibrant school, Folsom wrote it was "dead, dead! It was like the prairie grass. It burned well and soon burned off. I worked hard all the week and taught them to the last."<sup>241</sup> Despite their struggles, the Neighborhood and Sabbath Schools were an important place of education, providing Choctaw children with essential basic educations and even preparing them to transition to the academies after they were founded in 1842.

---

<sup>238</sup> Malvina Pitchlynn to PPP, September 6, 1841, PPPP, folder 266, GMA.

<sup>239</sup> Tryphena Wall to William Armstrong, August 1841, in *BIA Reports 1840-5*, 304.

<sup>240</sup> Lavinia Pitchlynn to Peter P. Pitchlynn, December 14, 1841, in PPPC, box 1, folder 72, WHC.

<sup>241</sup> Isaac Folsom to PPP, January 4, 1842, PPPP, folder 331, GMA.

## Sabbath Schools

Going on a horseback ride to the local “preach place,” Missionary Mary Coombs Greenleaf rode out to attend the weekly service. As she neared, she found students hard at work in the middle of a lesson in their native language. Sitting on split logs in front of a windowless, un-chinked log cabin of about twenty square feet reserved for poor weather, the children arced around a rude arbor framing the building front.<sup>242</sup> The Sabbath School, Greenleaf discovered, was just one of the most accessible education options available in the region.

The foundation of the Choctaw education system was the Sabbath School. With the broadest grouping of students, weekend meeting times, and grounding in Choctaw language and culture, it served as a way to educate the masses. Largely taught in Choctaw language as a part of local church services, Choctaw teachers were necessary to their function.<sup>243</sup> A beloved missionary to the Choctaw for his long-term work with them, Reverend Cyrus Kingsbury directed “natives” who taught three Sunday Schools at his Pine Ridge station, reaching between sixty and seventy-five adults.<sup>244</sup> The prominence of Choctaw allowed for men and women from the Nation to perpetuate and control the type of education occurring. This meant that while they certainly taught reading, they could

---

<sup>242</sup> MCG to Mrs. A.P., of N.P. August 31, 1856, in Greenleaf, *Life and Letters of Mary C. Greenleaf*, 295.

<sup>243</sup> There are many reports of Sabbath Schools occurring in Choctaw under Choctaw teachers. Following are a few examples: Alfred Wright to William Armstrong, September 23, 1844, in *BIA Reports 1840-5.*, 81; Cyrus Byington to Douglas H. Cooper, August 31, 1854, in *BIA Report 1854.*, 133; C.C. Copeland to Douglas H. Cooper, in *BIA Report, 1855.* August 27, 1855, 158; Simon Hancock, William Cass, and Lewis Cass to Douglas H. Cooper, July 17, 1856, in *Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Accompanying the Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior, for the Year 1856*, (Washington, D.C.: A.O.P. Nicholson, 1857)., 160.

<sup>244</sup> Cyrus Kingsbury to William Armstrong, August 12, 1845, in *BIA Reports 1840-5*, 584.



continue sharing their language and potentially other unknown customs that English speaking missionaries could not.

Sabbath Schools grew extensively in North America throughout the nineteenth-century. In the United States, they evolved from 1790s projects to make sure children received literacy training to more distinct religious programs with Protestant curriculums in the 1830s.<sup>245</sup> After the 1830s there was a decline in adults being taught to read and a focus on just children.<sup>246</sup> In contrast, throughout the 1830-60 period, adults were regularly reported attending Choctaw Sabbath Schools.<sup>247</sup> Northeastern states, such as Pennsylvania and Massachusetts, had the higher rates of Sunday schools while South had considerably less, potentially due to sparseness of populations and private schooling.<sup>248</sup> The 1857 BIA report provides conservative numbers of people connected to Protestant Churches and schools in the Choctaw Nation. Though the missionaries admitted there were local schools run by Indigenous people with unreported quantities of students, their reports give a number off which to base estimates of the population connected to churches and Sabbath Schools.

While exact date comparisons are not available, the 1857 BIA report lists a minimum of 31 Sabbath Schools. In 1860, the estimated population of the Choctaw Nation was 16,819 (13,666 Choctaw, 804 white, and 2,349 enslaved people). This makes an approximate ratio of 1 Sabbath School for every 543 people inside the Choctaw

---

<sup>245</sup> Anne M. Boylan, *Sunday School: The Formation of An American Institution, 1790-1880* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 6-7.

<sup>246</sup> Boylan, *Sunday School*, 25.

<sup>247</sup> Cyrus Kingsbury to William Armstrong, August 12, 1845, in *BIA Reports 1840-5*, 584.

<sup>248</sup> Boylan, *Sunday School*, 30.

Nation around this time.<sup>249</sup> This number shows Sabbath Schools were just as, if not more popular than states in the United States in the mid-nineteenth century (see table 3).

**Table 3. United States Sabbath Schools 1832 & 1875<sup>250</sup>**

State	Number of Schools	White Population	White & Black Population	Population:School Ratio
Arkansas				
1832	3	26,000		8,667
1875	505		473,174	937
Massachusetts				
1832	578	603,000		1,043
1875	1,738		1,457,351	839
Mississippi				
1832	41	70,000		1,707
1875	1,583		791,305	500
Pennsylvania				
1832	679	1,310,000		1,929
1875	7,660		3,502,331	457
Texas				
1832	--	--		--
1875	320		800,000	2,500

With a comparatively high ratio of Sabbath Schools, it is interesting that the Choctaw Nation had a much lower percentage of Protestant church membership to the United States. The at least 2,043 1857 church members combined with the 1860 Choctaw population shows that roughly 12.15 percent (including Choctaw, white, and enslaved

<sup>249</sup> Data compiled from *BIA Report 1857*, 233-51. The academies in the Nation hosted their own Sabbath Schools for the students attending, but missionaries did not always differentiate whether their reported Sabbath Schools contained academy students they are not included in the data. If included, there could be up to eight more Sabbath Schools. Michael Doran's research on Indian Territory population shows 13,666 Choctaw Citizens, 804 white, and 2,349 enslaved people living in the Choctaw Nation in 1860 for a total of 16,819 people. Michael F. Doran, "Population Statistics of Nineteenth Century Indian Territory," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 53, no. 4 (1975): 501.

<sup>250</sup> The states chosen for comparison were selected for the following reasons: Massachusetts and Pennsylvania are often regarded as some of the best education hubs in the United States in the nineteenth-century. Arkansas and Texas were the states bordering the Choctaw Nation in 1857 and Mississippi is the region the Choctaw were forcibly removed from starting in 1831. Data taken from Boylan's tables concerning 1832 Sunday Schools affiliated with the American Sunday School Union and the 1875 Sunday Schools affiliated with the Sunday School National Convention. Boylan, *Sunday School*, 31-3.

people=16,819) of the Choctaw Nation population were church members.<sup>251</sup> For comparison, in 1860 United States records show 24.5 percent of people were Protestant (Baptist, Congregational, Episcopal, Methodist, and Presbyterian).<sup>252</sup> Again, this data is not completely conclusive as the missionaries state they do not have complete numbers of everyone, but it still suggests there was a priority and agency of the Choctaw to educate their people more than their desire to adopt branches of Protestant religion.

Choctaw teachers reached the most people through Sabbath Schools. Like Lavinia, Tryphena Wall reported managing forty-five students in Sabbath School, almost twice the number of her students in the Neighborhood School. Miss Electa McClure, co-teaching with Mrs. J.N. Byington at Mountain Fork just north of Eagletown, had twenty-seven Neighborhood School students but forty Sabbath students.<sup>253</sup> Sundays were the most fruitful day to host Sabbath Schools, though some sites hosted Saturday sessions as well. At a station where they offered Saturday and Sunday lessons, the former hosted twenty-five attendees and the latter fifty.<sup>254</sup> If the sheer quantity of students flocking to these schools is not evidence enough of their popularity, their success showed the quantity of educated people white teacher Orlando Lee met. From his observations while travelling around the school system, the majority of people could read & write Choctaw, having learned it from the Sabbath Schools, and these people overwhelmingly wanted

---

<sup>251</sup> Data compiled from *BIA Report 1857*, 233-51; Doran, "Population Statistics of Nineteenth Century Indian Territory," 501.

<sup>252</sup> Independent Mission Boards and those connected to the ABCFM represented Baptist, Congregational, Episcopal, Methodist, and Presbyterian denominations. Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, "Turning Pews into People: Estimated 19th Century Church Membership," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 25, no. 2 (1986): 190.

<sup>253</sup> Cyrus Byington to William Armstrong, August 4, 1841, in *BIA Reports 1840-5*, 305.

<sup>254</sup> Cyrus Byington to Douglas H. Cooper, August 31, 1854, in *BIA Report 1854*, 133.

their children to continue with English as well.<sup>255</sup> Students from all ages gathered at a community center emerging in significance—the church.

The church grew in importance during this period as an educational facility and a place where traditional practices integrated for preservation. Camp Meetings played a role in the preservation of ceremonial and community gatherings by re-centering them around communion and other Christian events. Choctaw Historian Donna Akers explains the meetings as, “providing continuity in the gather together of the people, with a prescribed, loose format. Singing and feasting formed central elements of these meetings....Traditional stories were told over the campfire; young people flirted and eyed one another; women cooked together, sharing childcare, and laughter.”<sup>256</sup> These gatherings typically began Friday and continued until Sunday evening.<sup>257</sup> The Choctaw were able to combine these traditional meetings with newer education and religious opportunities, making these events not only crucial forms of cultural persistence, but also times to incorporate newer practices as well.

While the popularity of these Sabbath Schools was likely due to their open age range and weekend nature, they were an important point in which Choctaw language and potentially customs could exist in the education system.<sup>258</sup> This is crucial as the erasure of language was a major form of control used in boarding schools while assimilating children. In Sabbath Schools, Choctaw was used primarily. White missionary women

---

<sup>255</sup> Orlando Lee to Mother, August 27, 1860, Colonial Dames Collection, box 2, folder 39, WHC, University of Oklahoma. Here forward CDC=Colonial Dames Collection.

<sup>256</sup> Akers, *Living in the Land of Death*, 101.

<sup>257</sup> Elizabeth Lee to Mother, April 23, 1860, CDC, box 2, folder 26, WHC.

<sup>258</sup> Cyrus Byington to Samuel M. Rutherford, July 20, 1848, in *Annual report of the commissioner of Indian affairs, for the years 1846-1850*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1850), 503.

sometimes also helped to teach, though most did not speak Choctaw. This meant that fewer white women were involved in these types of schools. In missionary Anna Burnham's class of thirty readers, half could read in both Choctaw and English.<sup>259</sup> This meant that even though there were white influences, Choctaw language continued even for those who knew English. Importantly, while people strove to learn English, the ability to read and speak Choctaw retained its value.

Working in these Sabbath Schools provided opportunity for Choctaw female leadership. In addition to her work at the day school, Lavinia Pitchlynn taught thirty Sabbath School students. A fascinating note at the end of her report reads, "In this school I had the assistance of Mrs. Byington."<sup>260</sup> Oddly, this "assistance" reflects a reversal of roles, Lavinia the primary teacher with a white missionary as her assistant. As seen in records, Native persons regularly took the role of assistant to white teachers. This was often due to the commonly held white view of Native people's less "evolved" state. As David Wallace Adams explains, many white colonizers assumed that Indian practices were less civilized simply because they differed from their own.<sup>261</sup> Lavinia listed as the primary teacher challenges this narrative. First, she acknowledges her superior role of teacher within her work with a missionary. Additionally, Mrs. Byington, a respected missionary who had spent decades among the Choctaw, seems to have willingly taken this assistant role, further inferring respect for Lavinia as an equal to a Euro-American woman. Also, it perhaps highlights that Lavinia possessed skills and cultural

---

<sup>259</sup> Anna Burnham to William Armstrong, in *BIA Reports 1840-5*, 337.

<sup>260</sup> Lavinia Pitchlynn to William Armstrong, August 4, 1841, in *BIA Reports 1840-5*, 302.

<sup>261</sup> Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 12.

understanding that made her a better candidate for teaching non-English speaking pupils. While there are no other recorded instances of this, it suggests that being Choctaw did not always relegate women to being secondary level teachers.

In addition to their many duties, teachers at local schools wrangled tight budgets. Running the schools was not cheap. In 1855, Reverend C. C. Copeland reported the local people taught Choctaw Saturday and Sunday schools at a cost of \$50 to \$60 (\$1,500 to \$1,800) a year in addition to books and stationary.<sup>262</sup> Government intervention was therefore essential to maintaining this crucial base-line of education. Of the \$1,300 (\$39,000) set aside for the Neighborhood and Sunday Schools in Apakshanubbi District in 1843, \$50 (\$1,500) was set aside for the eleven Sabbath Schools specifically listed—an expenditure of \$550 (\$16,500).<sup>263</sup> The funding given to these schools illustrates an intentional investment in the education of the Choctaw people. Sabbath Schools stood as the most accessible education option in the Nation.

While the Sabbath Schools largely focused on Choctaw education, they potentially served Black populations of the Choctaw Nation.<sup>264</sup> The existence of a law prohibiting the education of slaves to “read, write, or sing” suggests a need to have further control over non-Choctaw people living in the Nation. Section two of the law specifically addressed that any “acting as a missionary, or a preacher or whatever his

---

<sup>262</sup> C. Copeland to D.H. Cooper, August 27, in *BIA Report, 1855*, 158; Williamson, "Seven Ways to Compute the Relative Value of a U.S. Dollar Amount, 1790 to present."

<sup>263</sup> CGC, “AN ACT for establishing Neighborhood and Sabbath Schools in Apakshanubbi District,” in *The Constitution and Laws of the Choctaw Nation*, 52; Williamson, "Seven Ways to Compute the Relative Value of a U.S. Dollar Amount, 1790 to present."

<sup>264</sup> At this time, harsh slavery laws meant few free Black individuals lived in the Choctaw Nation. Those of Afro-Choctaw heritage additionally were not well documented making it hard to understand how they were affected by the education system. In this study the terms “enslaved,” “slave,” and other renditions reference Black unless otherwise noted.

occupation may be” must stop spreading abolitionist ideas at risk of banishment. Specifically “that teaching slaves how to read, to write or to sing in meeting-houses or schools or in any open place” without the owner’s approval served as sufficient grounds to convict missionaries of abolitionist ideas.<sup>265</sup> While the law blatantly limited Black education in an attempt to keep them subordinate, it also spoke to the need to control white people allowed to live in the Nation. Historian Barbara Krauthamer points out that missionaries occasionally taught enslaved populations to read, not to empower them or preach against their situation, but to teach them what they viewed as Christian virtues of obedience.<sup>266</sup> Nevertheless, the Choctaw worked to solidify their sovereignty over their lands, and sought to keep whites from undermining their emerging racial hierarchy. As non-Choctaws, this underscored whites’ guest status and reinforced Choctaw control of the region.

Though the details of how enslaved persons received education are not clear, there are several signs that with or without a master’s approval, some enslaved people accessed instruction. As permitted by the laws, Peter Pitchlynn educated or purchased literate Black individuals, who served as his overseers. Letters from overseers such as Solomon then reported the status of Pitchlynn’s lands to him while he worked in Washington, D.C.<sup>267</sup> Historian Barbara Krauthamer points out that in Reverend Cyrus Kingsbury’s congregation, enslaved Black populations learned to read at the Sabbath

---

<sup>265</sup> CGC, “AN ACT prohibiting the teaching of slaves to read, write and sing without the consent of the owner,” in *The Constitution and Laws of the Choctaw Nation*, 20.

<sup>266</sup> Krauthamer, *Black Slaves, Indian Masters*, 57.

<sup>267</sup> Snyder, *Great Crossings*, 291.

Schools.<sup>268</sup> While the rate at which enslaved people were educated is unknown, the Sabbath Schools were one of the opportunities available to access education.

An important role Black church attendees filled was that of translator. Though an Indigenous people often filled this role, enslaved Black translators also assisted. Typically not formally educated in either language, enslaved people often learned both Choctaw and English while growing up between dominant cultures. They often took roles as interpreters in daily interaction and occasionally assisted at religious meetings. Reverend William Graham relied on the translating skills of a Black man named Jake who “had the gift of gab amazingly in English” at one service. While Graham was not pleased with the display, the Choctaw congregation did not mind the translation.<sup>269</sup> This follows the trend pointed out by Historians Barbara Krauthamer, who found many enslaved people filled these translator roles in the Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations.<sup>270</sup> For some Choctaw, bi-lingual slaves were an asset to interactions with English speakers.

---

<sup>268</sup> Krauthamer, *Black Slaves, Indian Masters*, 56.

<sup>269</sup> “I objected on the ground that he was a slave, and that his rank in society interdicted him from such a position. He insisted, however, that Indians were not like white folks in that respect, and that with them his services would be quite acceptable. I then remonstrated against the proposal on the ground that he was not pious, not even a Church member; but he replied that he had once been a good Methodist, and that he purposed to be one again.” Graham shortened his sermon, not trusting Jake’s ability to translate theology. Graham was humiliated by the experience, thinking Jake in his incredible worn clothing and “occasionally slinging his long arm over my head and bringing it down with outrageous vigor by way of putting an emphasis on the discourse” looked silly. “In this I succeeded at last, and the conclusion of what Jake afterward was fond of calling a great sermon was reached, with a strong resolution never to be persuaded into such a predicament again. After the closing prayer Jake bent over and, with a most provoking audacity, asked, ‘Shall I ‘zort?’” Graham dismissed his interpreter without the addition. Jake offered his services in the future if needed and Graham made sure to never take him up on the offer. “The Indians behaved themselves all this time with decorum and seriousness; to them our ludicrous procedure seemed to have no impropriety. Their slaves are frequently their interpreters in business transactions with the whites, which is looked upon by them as nothing disreputable.” William Graham, *Frontier Sketches: Indian Camps*, ed. Rev. I.W. Wiley, vol. 24, *The Ladies’ Repository: A Monthly Periodical, Devoted to Literature and Religion*, (Cincinnati: Poe & Hitchcock, 1864), 202-3.

<sup>270</sup> Krauthamer, *Black Slaves, Indian Masters*, 57; Kidwell, *The Choctaws in Oklahoma*, 7.



There is documentation of a significant enslaved presence in churches too.<sup>271</sup> Black workers regularly attended church events connected to education. At Spencer Academy, the Black laborers caught rides or walked along with all the students on their way to the local meeting.<sup>272</sup> Some churches had much larger Black populations, many of whom became church members. In 1842, Alexander Avery at the Pine Grove Mission explained they had lost their school due a lack of funding, but the Native children continued to attend the Sabbath School teaching Choctaw. The five “local” and two white preachers served a congregation of “911 natives, 11 whites, and 49 blacks.”<sup>273</sup> At Wapanucka, Elizabeth, described as “one of the colored servants,” applied for admission to the church.<sup>274</sup> In 1857, the four missionaries who listed their congregation members’ racial makeup noted that in Choctaw churches there were “colored” people ranging from 2.48% to 4.18% and as high as 35.71% of the membership at a nearby Chickasaw church (see table 4). Their relatively high church attendance, for both members and non-members, exposed Black individuals to educational opportunities because of the open air style of churches.

---

<sup>271</sup> There are mentions of Black churches and preachers as well. White Reverend William Benson commented on the meeting of Black congregations, “judging from their zeal and earnestness in singing and praying, they had excellent meetings.” Charles, the Fort Coffee Academy Cook, was known as “a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church” and “thought, by the colored people, to possess rare gifts in exhortation and in prayer.” He was also noted to hold “a regular license as an exhorter.” Henry C. Benson, *Life Among the Choctaw Indians, and Sketches of the South-West* (Cincinnati: L. Swormstedt & A. Poe, 1860), 126, 299-301.

<sup>272</sup> Elizabeth Lee to Mother, April 23, 1860, CGC, box 2, folder 26, WHC.

<sup>273</sup> Alexander Avery to William Armstrong, August 9, 1842, in *BIA Reports 1840-5*, 496.

<sup>274</sup> MCG to Miss E.F., March 16 1857, in Greenleaf, *Life and Letters of Mary C. Greenleaf*, 352.

**Table 4. 1857 BIA Report Church Racial Composition<sup>275</sup>**

	Choctaw/ Chickasaw Members	Choctaw/ Chickasaw %	White Members	White %	“Colored” Members	“Colored” %	Total
<b>Bennington, Mount Pleasant, and Six Town Churches (3 total)</b>	192	95.04	5	2.48	5	2.48	202
<b>C.H. Chickasaw Church</b>	72	64.28	0	0	40	35.71	112
<b>New Hope/Fort Coffee (6 Churches in Region)</b>	242	92.01	10	3.80	11	4.18	263
<b>Wheelock Presbyterian Church (1 Church)</b>	263	94.6	5	1.8	10	3.6	278

While the full effect of Sabbath School education on the enslaved Black populations during this period are unknown, it served as an opportunity for many to learn during a time when it was extremely limited. At the very least enslaved Henry Crittenden, Teena Crittenden, John Ross Shoals, and Hattie Crittenden Shoals all attended Reverend Cyrus Kingsbury’s sermons and went on to champion Black education as free persons. After the Civil War, they moved to what is now Valliant, OK and became proponents of education, helping found the Oak Hill Sunday School in 1876 and Academy in 1878 for their descendants.<sup>276</sup> While there was little purposeful inclusion of Black individuals in most of these systems, the Sabbath Schools stood as an opportunity to learn present in few places.

<sup>275</sup> *BIA Report 1857*, 238-9, 44, 48.

<sup>276</sup> Robert Elliott Flickinger, *The Choctaw Freedmen and the Story of Oak Hill Industrial Academy* (Pittsburgh: Presbyterian Board of Missions for Freedmen, 1914), 103, 377-80.

## Other Education

The emerging public school system made many steps towards reaching all students in the Nation. While Sabbath and Neighborhood schools made education accessible to the average Choctaw person, a final option for elite families was utilizing governesses. Not a prominent practice, some families utilized this style of education specifically for their daughters.

Though not as well documented as the other schools, some wealthier families still selected to privately educate their children. Some of these parents struggled to find the right education for their daughters, utilizing expensive means of instruction. Throughout the early period of Choctaw schools, elites searched to ensure their daughters received the best education available to them. Sarah Ann Harlan, though she previously served as a public school teacher in the Nation, described her multi-year trial to find a suitable governess for her children. Harlan was a slave-owning Choctaw woman who had multiple daughters from her first and second marriages. After moving into the Chickasaw portion of the Nation, she did not want to send her daughters to the local Chickasaw Academy.<sup>277</sup> Not living near a desirable school her daughters could attend, Harlan opted to send them out of the Nation to boarding schools as well as employ governesses.

By hiring a governess, families kept girls closer to home and gave them individualized education. Harlan initially sent her daughter, Belle, to St. Anne's Academy in Ft. Smith, Arkansas. After her daughter refused to attend any longer, she

---

<sup>277</sup> Interview with Sarah Ann Harlan, August 24, 1937, IPP, WHC.

returned to try a governess.<sup>278</sup> Harlan was not the only person to employ a governess. Elba Colbert Sharp, a Chickasaw, recalled how her Euro-American mother came to Indian Territory to teach at a school, but “in those days, the wealthy Chickasaws and Choctaws employed governesses for their children....So my grandfather, Samuel A. Colbert went to that school...selected Mother a governess for a while for his children. He built a little log school house out close to his” just for the purpose too. Initially just for Colbert’s children, the school house later served other local children too.<sup>279</sup> In rural areas where Nation funded schools were unavailable, governesses filled a major need for families who could afford to keep their children close to home.

At times governesses were useful when there was a lack of schools available, but interestingly all recorded governesses were white. Harlan documented at least four of the governesses, all white, she contracted to come care for her daughters.<sup>280</sup> A widow suggested by friends in Bonham, Texas, only lasted five months. Belle’s advancement in French, Latin, and music rendered the governess’s skills obsolete, so Belle returned to St. Anne’s. Not having luck with the education level of women nearby, Harlan began searching farther away this time, securing a Miss Lizzie Fulton from Georgia. Fulton lasted two years, her only fault being “unqualified in music.” Poor Belle returned to Ft. Smith after the final governess left.<sup>281</sup>

The use of white women as governesses suggests that racial hierarchy was not always as constricting as it sometimes appears. The inability to keep up with Belle’s

---

<sup>278</sup> Interview with Sarah Ann Harlan, August 24, 1937, IPP, WHC.

<sup>279</sup> Interview with Elba Colbert Sharp Gardner, March 29, 1938, IPP, WHC.

<sup>280</sup> *Governesses are Widow Scandal* (125), *post-Civil War Miss Alice Hunt* (151). Interview with Sarah Ann Harlan, August 24, 1937, IPP, WHC.

<sup>281</sup> Interview with Sarah Ann Harlan, August 24, 1937, IPP, WHC.

advancement resulted as the primary issue with the many governesses, suggesting the best governesses found higher paying and desirable locations on the East Coast. Utilizing white women additionally provided Choctaw daughters with comparable education to their Euro-American counterparts as parents sought to illustrate their equal standing.

The developing school system of the Choctaw allowed most any Choctaw person to access some form of education. Their commitment to providing opportunities shows how they aimed to use it as a tool to re-establish themselves in their lands and prepare for a future fighting further Euro-American encroachment. Choctaw women quickly became an important feature of these schools, working to care for their communities' best interests. While they had less of a presence in the top tier of schools, the academies, the Sabbath and Neighborhood schools were an important first step for preparing the future teachers of the Nation.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE ACADEMIES

Reverend Ebenezer Hotchkin was pleased with his annual report to the United States Agent for the Choctaw. He described his pupils' great success at Koonsha Female Academy, the progress of his church congregation, and challenges of "groggery" in the region as he led a temperance movement. To close out his letter to the commissioner, Hotchkin felt it important to emphasize the most important subject on Choctaw minds—education. He shuffled through papers, finding Malinda Dwight's letter, intending to forward her imploring note to Peter Pitchlynn, "When can you give us a school-teacher?" He recalled that the past Sunday when concerned parents stopped him after the service and confronted him with questions: "Is your board acquainted with our situation? Will you not write them to send us out a teacher?" How better to explain the need for teachers to the U.S. Agent than use the people's words? Hotchkin commenced his final remarks of the report, "The subject of education may be termed the great subject among the Choctaws. Schools! Schools! Schools! Sound on the ear wherever I go..."<sup>282</sup>

---

<sup>282</sup> The above vignette is inspired by Ebenezer Hotchkin's annual report to William Wilson, the United States Agent for the Choctaw. It reads, "The subject of education may be termed the great subject among the Choctaws. Schools! Schools! Schools! sound on the ear wherever I go. Inquiries are often made—'When can you give us a school-teacher?'... 'Why not give us a school as well as to others?' 'Are not our children as needy as others? Have not we as many? Then why so partial, &c.?' 'Is your board acquainted

---

The Choctaw Academy system (not to be confused with the Choctaw Academy from Kentucky) was the crucial step to having Choctaw educators for future generations. Choctaw parents recognized that the empowerment of education and acceptance into the Nation's highest level of education advantaged children by providing language skills that better prepared them for inevitable future contact with representatives of the United States. The General Council also knew that investing in their daughters meant they could, in turn, independently educate their future generations. But they could not act alone. While educating their generation of future Indigenous teachers, the Choctaw relied on white missionaries for assistance. Incredibly popular, the academy system had an intensive application process, created an English immersion opportunity, and was largely a desired system—though there were some cases of resistance in the Nation.

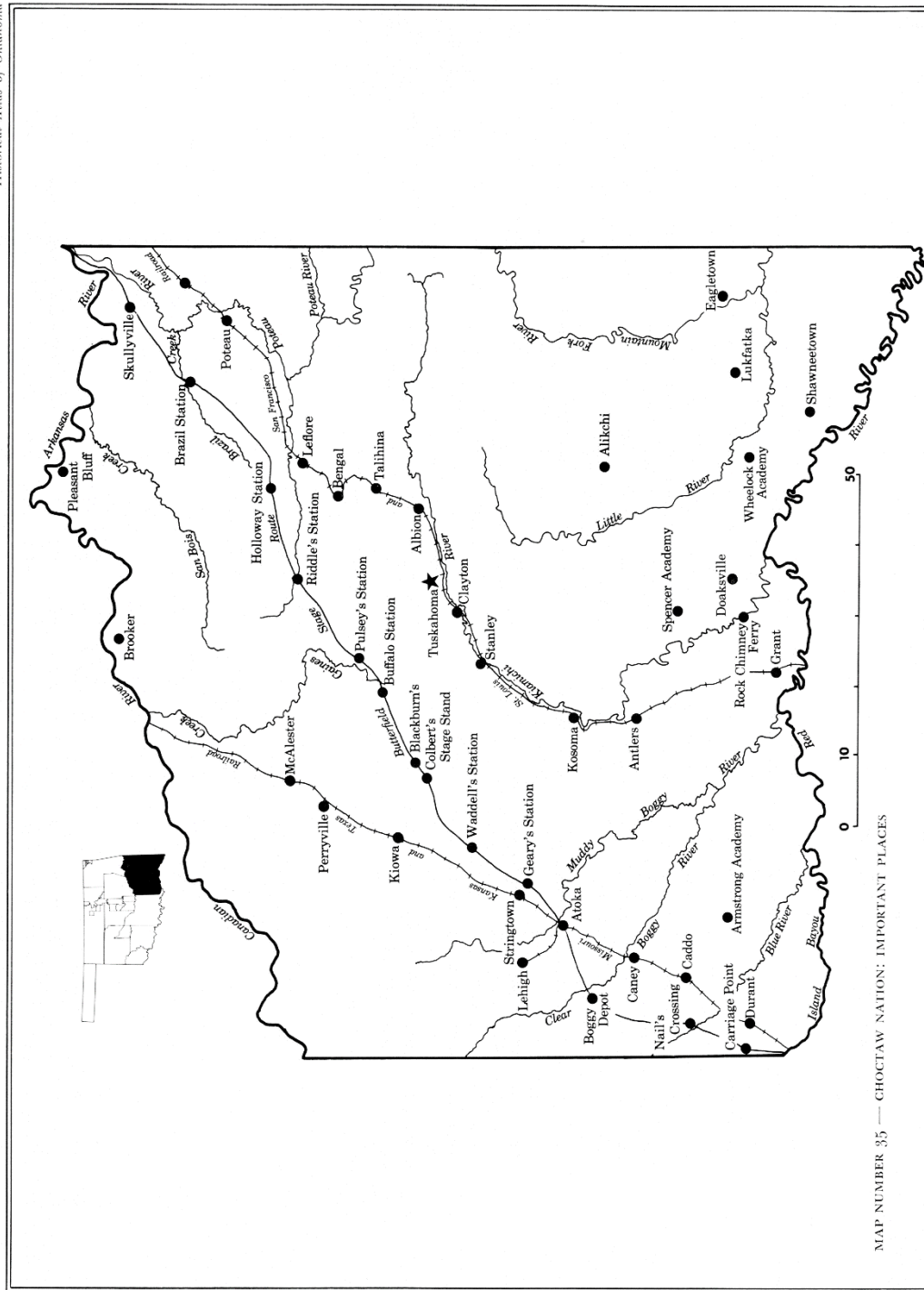


Figure 5 Map of larger Choctaw towns and some academies. Wheelock was in the in the Southeast region, New Hope near Scullyville in the Northeast, Chuahla was located near Doakville in the South-central region, Iyanubbee near Eagletown on the Southeast border, and Koonsha in off the Kiamichi River in the central part of the Choctaw Nation. Choctaw Nation: Important Places, map no. 35 in John W. Morris, Charles R. Goins, and Edwin C. McReynolds, *Historical Atlas of Oklahoma*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1965).



## Application Process

While they dreamed of being able to support all capable children, the General Council never had enough funding to do so. Despite the annually allotted \$1,600-3,000 (\$51,800-97,000) per academy, there was never enough to support the overwhelming number of girls who wished to attend.<sup>283</sup> Choctaw Agent William Armstrong noted that there was only enough funding for about one-tenth of the Choctaw children to receive education. Therefore, the application process was intense. The extensive legislation passed in 1842 to formalize the creation of the Choctaw Academies, also known as seminaries, laid out strict rules for students to receive appropriated funds. As each application was judged by the Board of Trustees for each school, the General Council set male to female school ratios, age, and family limits to make the system more accessible to all and not just the wealthy and connected.

The intense desire for these boarding-style schools cannot be overemphasized. As discussed, in addition to male education, the emphasis on the need for female education was a prominent feature of this period of Choctaw education. Between 1842 and 1846, nine academies for male and female students opened in the Nation. The female academies looked at in this study include Choctaw Koonsha, Ayanubbee, Chuwahla, Wheelock, and

---

with our situation? Will you not write them to send us out a teacher?' These and similar questions are often put to me. I could in this vicinity, and at the present time, employ two or three teachers if I could get them; and, if they could be obtained, the people would help support them." Malinda Dwight is listed in Peter Pitchlynn's papers on a list of parents applying for their daughters to enter the National school system. While it is unknown if Hotchkin and Dwight conversed, they are representative of the pressure to provide education. Ebenezer Hotchkin to William Wilson, June 19, 1852, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Transmitted with the Message of the President at the Opening of the Second Session of the Thirty-Second Congress, 1852*, (Washington: Robert Armstrong, 1852), 129-30.; "Names of those who have applied to place their daughters in school" 1844, PPPP, folder 465, GMA.

<sup>283</sup> CGC, "AN ACT providing for a system of public instruction in the Choctaw Nation," in *The Constitution and Laws of the Choctaw Nation*, 40. There are dozens of different spellings of these names documented. For the purpose of cohesions, this paper uses the spellings provided by Kidwell, *The Choctaws in Oklahoma*, 10.

New Hope Seminaries as well as Chickasaw Wapanucka Academy, which utilized many of the same teachers at the nearby Choctaw academies.<sup>284</sup> The valuable insight of missionary Mary Coombs Greenleaf at Wapanucka and the combination of the two Nations until 1856 make it a useful addition to understanding schools in this region. The slew of female academies opened in 1842 attempted to balance out the already existing male schools.<sup>285</sup> This division was important as it meant girls specifically had opportunities reserved for their education.

These facilities are reminiscent of many twentieth century schools—divided by gender, white teachers, etc. But there were major differences—freedom of choice to attend and Choctaw control. Unlike later schools, children were not forcibly removed from their families to attend and Choctaw community members had input into how the schools were run. Problematically, the system's small scale meant they became incredibly competitive. In fact, parents were often disappointed that the schools did not have enough slots for their children. As the Choctaw government created these schools, they set up parameters in order to filter the copious applications. Choctaw desire for these schools is evident in the rigorous application process and standards required to stay at the academies.

This free opportunity at education, similar to Neighborhood Schools, made a basic education available to more than just wealthy children, the Choctaw government

---

<sup>284</sup> The following seminaries opened in 1842. Male: Spencer Academy and Fort Coffee Academy. Female: Koonaha (Kunaha or Sunsha) Female Seminary, Ayanubbee (Ianubbee) Female Seminary, Chuwahla (Chuwalla) Female Seminary, and Wheelock Female Seminary. In 1845 New Hope Seminary was a female schools added and Armstrong Academy a male school. In 1846, Norwalk Academy, was another male school added. Miles, "Choctaw Schools."

<sup>285</sup> Most schools did have only one gender of student, but some allowed students of the opposite gender to attend if it was the only education available. One such occurrence was at Stockbridge in 1854 when seventeen of the fifty-seven students listed as male. Cyrus Byington to William Armstrong, September 3, 1846, in *BIA Reports, 1846-50*, 144.

made academies to give more children access to advanced education despite their socioeconomic status. One example of this was the act reserving a tenth of all slots for orphans.<sup>286</sup> Other students competed with those with good connections or enough money to ensure their child a place. Robert M. Jones, a wealthy Choctaw planter and businessman, wrote a questioning letter to Peter P. Pitchlynn wondering why he had not received an answer regarding finding his daughter spot at an academy.<sup>287</sup> While there were ways in which wealthier and more connected girls could get into the academies, they still competed for state-funded slots and their many requirements.

The limit of the number of children attending schools was one of the rules to control quantities of students. Each family could only have one child, male or female, in the public institutions of the Choctaw Nation. This funding, while limited, suggests how desired schools were. While poorer families were restricted to educating one child, those with expendable wealth had other options. A loophole allowed any second children enrolled in 1842 to remain in school until they graduated; however, if more than two children were attending public institutions, they had to immediately withdraw all but one student or the family would have to pay their tuition.<sup>288</sup> This meant wealthy families could continue to send as many of their children as they desired.

---

<sup>286</sup> CGC, "AN ACT providing for a system of public instruction in the Choctaw Nation," in *The Constitution and Laws of the Choctaw Nation*, 39.

<sup>287</sup> Robert M. Jones was a prominent Choctaw who owned multiple plantations, stores, approximately 225 slaves at one point, and two steamboats. Jones played a role in government negotiations but was also a challenging figure with opinions that not all Choctaw were capable of assimilation. Robert M. Jones to Peter P. Pitchlynn January 26, 1855, PPPC, box 2, folder 61, WHC; Michael L. Bruce, "Jones, Robert M.," in *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture* (Oklahoma Historical Society). <https://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry.php?entry=JO022>.

<sup>288</sup> CGC, "AN ACT regulating the ages of those received on the appropriation; also prohibiting any one from having more than one child on the appropriation," in *The Constitution and Laws of the Choctaw Nation*, 41.

Wealthy families sometimes became patrons for children without the financial means to attend schools. Young Choctaw Mary Dukes, when brought home from the east coast of the United States from a bad education set-up there, had her academy education funded by Colonel George Harkins to avoid a break in her studies.<sup>289</sup> While there were rules, enough money seemed to ensure better education options.

Exactly who was attending these schools is largely unknown, but some lists show a fairly diverse student group, though there are a fair amount of prominent planter families included on almost every list. In Peter Pitchlynn's papers, held at the Gilcrease Museum's Helmerich Center for American Research, an 1844 note lists twenty-five guardians applying for their daughters to attend the academies. Of these, a few guardians share last names with more prominent economic and Christian figures in the Choctaw Nation. These include Dwight, Armstrong, McKenney, Durant, LeFlore, and Gardner.<sup>290</sup> Similarly at Wheelock girls' school, members of the Folsom family—Jacob, John, and Sampson—served as guardians of various pupils and financially supported them.<sup>291</sup> While the exact economic status for these individuals is unknown, their connection to prominent families may have given them more access. All the same, it appears historically that better known families made up between a third and a fifth of applicants. While there is simply too little information to make conclusions from this information, it is important to know that the wealthiest of families had a large, but not dominating presence in these schools.

---

<sup>289</sup> Mrs. Walker, Nancy Dukes and Joseph Dukes to PPP, April 22, 1856, PPPP, folder 1135, GMA

<sup>290</sup> "Names of those who have applied to place their daughters in school," 1844, PPPP, folder 465, GMA.

<sup>291</sup> "Names of pupils, time when they entered school, ages &c." 1844-51, PPPP, folder 664, GMA.

Often the only way to cut out applicants was to stick to an age range. “AN ACT regulating the ages of those received on the appropriation; also prohibiting any one from having more than one child on the appropriation” passed in 1842 as a part of the female seminary legislation requiring girls be between eight and fourteen to attend on government funding.<sup>292</sup> In comparison, twelve year old girls with prior education were the suggested student pool for Pennsylvania high schools at the time. In Pennsylvania, the aim was for girls to graduate from the school by age sixteen.<sup>293</sup> But the supplication of applicants was difficult to weed through. Choctaw Agent William Armstrong noted at Chuahla Female Seminary, “The trustees often find it difficult to refuse pressing solicitations for the admission of persons beyond the proper age.”<sup>294</sup> Cyrus Byington reported enrolled students ranging from “4 years to 20 and upwards” suggesting parents still found ways to get their students into the schools without the appropriation funds.<sup>295</sup> With the education system so new in the Nation, students simply did not all have uniform foundational education before entering the academies. Thus, ages and progress varied greatly between schools.

The divisions of skill in the classes, while generally increasing in advancement by age, were dependent on a girl’s pace. In the ideal Pennsylvanian High School, students would have multiple teachers and progress each year as a class to the next level, with all students entering the school at twelve.<sup>296</sup> As in the Neighborhood Schools of the

---

<sup>292</sup> CGC, “AN ACT regulating the ages of those received on the appropriation; also prohibiting any one from having more than one child on the appropriation,” in *The Constitution and Laws of the Choctaw Nation*, 41.

<sup>293</sup> Alexander D. Bache, *Report on the Organization of a High School for Girls, and Seminary for Female Teachers* (Philadelphia: J. Crissy, 1840), 3-4.

<sup>294</sup> William Armstrong to W. Medill, October 20, 1846, in *BIA Reports, 1846-50*, 129.

<sup>295</sup> Cyrus Byington to William Armstrong, September 3, 1846, in *BIA Reports, 1846-50*, 144.

<sup>296</sup> Bache, *Report on the Organization*, 4.

Choctaw Nation, the Lancasterian system was utilized, especially with only one or two teachers typically available at schools. Entering at all ages, the girls varied greatly in age for each class. At an unspecified academy in the Nation in the 1840s, the class record reports that the fourth, or lowest grade, class contained a five, seven, and ten year old. The third grade included a seven and two nine year olds. The upper grades ranged much more in age. Second level girls were an average of ten years old, the youngest seven and the oldest twelve. In the top class, girls ranged from ten to twenty, but the average was fourteen years old.<sup>297</sup> In Mary Dickinson's class at Chuahla, girls' subject progression even within a class varied greatly. In the first class, girls were split between those completing "arithmetic as far as Reduction" and "Mental Arithmetic." Only two, Elizabeth Kemp and S.L. Smith made it to the History of the United States. Lower classes show similar sub-divisions of skill.<sup>298</sup> Ending around age fourteen was a natural point for many girls as they transitioned into various roles of adulthood.

The age of fourteen seems young for education to stop, but accounts suggest that girls were marrying quite young within the Nation. White teacher Mary Coombs Greenleaf observed, "The girls are not educated specially for teachers, for they marry so young here, we want to fit them for good wives and mothers, and hope they will teach the next generation what they know themselves."<sup>299</sup> Only six of her thirty plus students were "grown into womanhood," the oldest being sixteen, the majority being under the age of

---

<sup>297</sup> "Names of pupils, time when they entered school, ages &c.," 1844-51, PPPP, folder 664, GMA.

<sup>298</sup> Cyrus Kingsbury, "Report of the Chuahla Femal [sic] Seminary," September 1844, PPPP folder 448, GMA.

<sup>299</sup> MCG to Mrs. J.B., September 17, 1856, in Greenleaf, *Life and Letters of Mary C. Greenleaf*, 299.

twelve.<sup>300</sup> Daughter of a white missionary and Choctaw Sally Gibson, Margaret Erwin Oakes attended school at Chuwala until she married at sixteen.<sup>301</sup> Thus while the Choctaw wanted trained teachers for the future, they also desired educated mothers.

Even with these laws limiting state funded students, there were larger quantities of applicants than spots available. As Armstrong explained in his BIA report, “The consequence is, that the number of applicants always greatly exceeds the number that can be received in the schools.”<sup>302</sup> At Wheelock Female Seminary in 1843, fifty applicants competed for only fourteen openings.<sup>303</sup> At the same school in 1844, thirteen of the fifty-three total students were supported “by parent and friends” as boarders and thirteen were just day students. The first year Chuahla Female Seminary opened, 1844, it only offered space for sixteen students—three from Moshuletubbee district, four from Pushmataha district, and nine from Apukshunnubbee district. There was such great interest in the school, enrollment increased to twenty-one students. Even with added state-supported slots, twelve additional students then boarded at the expense of their parents.<sup>304</sup> In the 1845-6 school year, Chuahla had twenty-four students on appropriation, three boarded by their parents, and another three students working outside of class to pay for their board.<sup>305</sup> In 1858, Missionary H. Balantine wrote to Peter Pitchlynn asking for his help because forty-four students showed up at Koonsha when they only expected thirty.<sup>306</sup> This issue

---

<sup>300</sup> MCG to M.P.S., October 5, 1856; Miss S.T., October 30, 1856, in Greenleaf, *Life and Letters of Mary C. Greenleaf*, 310, 24.

<sup>301</sup> Interview with Margaret Oakes, June 9, 1937, IPP, WHC.

<sup>302</sup> William Armstrong to W. Medill, October 20, 1846, in *BIA Reports, 1846-50*, 129.

<sup>303</sup> Alfred Wright to William Armstrong, July 3, 1843, *BIA Reports 1840-5*, 341.

<sup>304</sup> Cyrus Kingsbury to William Armstrong, August 26, 1844, *BIA Reports 1840-5*, 82.

<sup>305</sup> Cyrus Kingsbury to William Armstrong, August 12, 1845, in *BIA Reports 1840-5*, 584.

<sup>306</sup> H. Balantine to PPP, December 28, 1858, PPPP, folder 1614, GMA.

with not having enough available spaces for students, shows a desire for female education.

Once the schools ran for a decade, they consistently attracted the same amount of students as comparable rural schools in the United States. In 1851, the Choctaw female academies averaged 43 students and typically had only one academic teacher, but sometimes two.<sup>307</sup> By 1858, the average enrollment was 40 students, but there were typically two teachers devoted to academic teaching at each school.<sup>308</sup> While regular attendance was low, the average rural American school in 1850 had thirty-three students enrolled per teacher.<sup>309</sup> This means that these seminary schools admitted a comparable number of students to the average American public school from their inception.

Once a girl arrived at her academy, she would have to work hard to stay. “AN ACT providing for the removal of children on the appropriation in the school who are incapable of learning” passed in 1842. This was an attempt to make sure only the strongest scholars in the Nation received this important education. After two years, a student could be removed from the school by the trustees of the basis of “mental inability,” being “incapable to learn or improve.”<sup>310</sup> The willingness to pull underperforming students from the program again suggests there were plenty of people waiting to get into these highly praised schools.

---

<sup>307</sup> *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Transmitted with the Message of the President at the Opening of the First Session of the Thirty-Second Congress, 1851*, (Gibson & Co., 1851), 109-10, 13-14, 16.

<sup>308</sup> *BIA Report, 1858*, 161, 63-64.

<sup>309</sup> Lindert, "The Uneven Rise of American Public Schools to 1850," 4.

<sup>310</sup> CGC, “AN ACT providing for the removal of children on the appropriation in the school who are incapable of learning,” in *The Constitution and Laws of the Choctaw Nation*, 40.



## English Immersion

While there were clearly loopholes for wealthy children to attend the academies, the demographics of the students speaks to the success of the Choctaw Nation at making education accessible to more than just elites. Though the racial makeup of the students is unknown, the missionaries regularly judged girls on their physical characteristics. This diversity was made clear in the racially-charged comments of missionaries. Reverend Byington commented students, “vary much in their ages and complexion [sic]....”<sup>311</sup> Of his thirty-six pupils, Reverend Kingsbury had nineteen “mixed-blood,” only six of whom spoke English. The rest of the students were “full-blood” Choctaw.<sup>312</sup> At Koonsha in 1852, seven students described as from “wild woods” were noted by missionaries as largely improved; “All in this school can now read and commit to memory, except one, and she could if she had a memory; but as it relates to books her memory is powerless.”<sup>313</sup> The elite and wealthy families of the Nation were largely from mixed heritages and were a large presence in the schools. But many students also could not speak English upon their arrival, suggesting students from many backgrounds were accepted into the schools. While clearly noticed by white missionaries, a girl’s ancestry does not appear to have made a difference in her acceptance to the schools.

While in some ways acculturative, boarding schools allowed students to learn the language in which their treaties and negotiations occurred. With an understanding of English important to these schools, the heavy use of white missionary teachers in the early years was necessary as not enough English speaking teachers were available in the

---

<sup>311</sup> Cyrus Byington to Samuel M. Rutherford, July 20, 1848, in *BIA Reports, 1846-50*, 503.

<sup>312</sup> J.P. Kingsbury to William Armstrong, July 30, 1843, in *BIA Reports 1840-5*, 339.

<sup>313</sup> Ebenezer Hotchkin to William Wilson, June 19, 1852, in *BIA Report, 1852*, 128.

Nation. This, of course, meant there were growing pains as children were subjected to some white acculturative practices. But these issues were endured, knowing English was a part of a long-term plan to prepare their children for continued commerce and negotiations with the United States in order to ultimately protect tribal sovereignty.

While students had a choice in attending these schools, once admitted, there were impositions. A method of missionaries in transforming the girls to white standards was the changing of their names. Mary Coombs Greenleaf mentions three girls that she personally renamed during her year at the Chickasaw Wapanucka Academy. This was certainly not a new practice. Children of mixed descent with western style names typically maintained them, getting a new name was a practice that occurred in Choctaw boarding schools from the founding of the Choctaw Academy.<sup>314</sup> From white perspectives, this was certainly meant to have a westernizing effect, but Choctaw might interpret it in their own ways. Historian Christina Snyder presents the possibility that the change of names was not as demeaning as it may appear. Culturally, many Indigenous people would have several different names.<sup>315</sup> A visiting father at Wapanucka Academy did not seem to mind that his daughter had been renamed Mary Margaret Wilson, after one of the teacher's aunts.<sup>316</sup> All the same the intent of mission women was to westernize the children with these names.

The changing of names ties closely to the missionary expectation for Choctaw people to physically transform. The standard of Euro-American superiority permeates the conversation especially when considering the dress, beauty standards, and development

---

<sup>314</sup> Snyder, *Great Crossings*, 77-9.

<sup>315</sup> Snyder, *Great Crossings*, 78.

<sup>316</sup> MCG to Mrs. J.B., January 1, 1857, in Greenleaf, *Life and Letters of Mary C. Greenleaf*, 336-7.

of the girls. When McBeth first arrived at Wapanucka she described meeting missionary Miss Culbertson as, "One of the sweetest faces I have ever seen. Perhaps it looked lovelier in its surroundings, and purer and saintlier after the coarse dark faces I had met for a week...." Already relieved by seeing a white woman that stood out against their future pupils, McBeth would make further judgments on her pupils, holding them to white standards. Teaching the older students who ranged from around age six to as old as twenty years old, McBeth described, "Many of my girls are as large, or larger than myself. The majority are full Choctaws, but there are a number of half breeds, as fair as Europeans." When discussing the fairness of some of the students, teacher Mrs. Jones remarked that "change of food and habits and absence of exposure does make a change in the color of the Indians sometimes. She has noticed the difference which even a few years will make."<sup>317</sup> The teachers saw beauty as white. They therefore felt they could help their students acculturate best by transforming them to white standards, even if that meant avoiding the sun to even physically make the skin appear whiter.

Missionary women also judged the girls by their dress. McBeth was impressed with a young Choctaw girl she met while away from school who had just come back from studying at an unspecified women's seminary in the United States. She described her as "a neatly even tastefully dress young Choctaw girl, self possessed and lady like in her manners."<sup>318</sup> Manners such as using pocket handkerchiefs were viewed as victories for "civilizing" efforts.<sup>319</sup> At a school in Scullyville, students were described as "dressed as

---

<sup>317</sup> April 1860, Susan L. McBeth, "Diary of a Missionary to the Choctaws," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 17, no. 4 (1939).

<sup>318</sup> April 1860, McBeth, "Diary of a Missionary to the Choctaws."

<sup>319</sup> MCG to Mrs. J.B., May 15, 1857, in Greenleaf, *Life and Letters of Mary C. Greenleaf*, 376.

well as children generally are in country schools in the States.” McBeth recounted that to attend the school, parents would provide girls with calico dresses and sun bonnets.<sup>320</sup> What she interpreted as a major transformation was really less revolutionary than she described.

Choctaw people adapted Euro-American attire to suit their needs decades earlier than the academies. Orlando Lee observed after living and travelling in the Choctaw Nation for about a year that “They dress very much as the poorer people out of the villages and away from the large cities do in the States do. Of course the clothing is not generally so thick & their love of bright colors shows itself, especially in the men’s coats.”<sup>321</sup> Mary Coombs Greenleaf observed the Choctaws along the roads throughout the Nation, concluding that the majority “dress like the whites” except for the women using handkerchiefs over their heads in lieu of bonnets.<sup>322</sup> People’s choice of clothing was a hybrid. A visiting father to the school came wearing a peacock feather bedecked turban, blanket, and tomahawk.<sup>323</sup> The Choctaw selectively incorporated what they felt worked best for them. The huge variety of clothing observed shows that Euro-American standards of dress were certainly not the only accepted standard in the Choctaw Nation. There were still those who chose to wear more traditional garb.

Furthermore, the Choctaw Nation actually supplied western inspired attire for students at schools. They published an act in 1846 mandating that all children’s clothes were to be returned to the school whether student quit or returned to the school another

---

<sup>320</sup> April 1860, McBeth, "Diary of a Missionary to the Choctaws."

<sup>321</sup> Orlando Lee to Mother, August 27, 1860, CDC, box 2, folder 39, WHC.

<sup>322</sup> MCG to Mrs. J.N.C., June 27, 1856, in Greenleaf, *Life and Letters of Mary C. Greenleaf*, 266.

<sup>323</sup> MCG to Mrs. J.B., January 1, 1857, in Greenleaf, *Life and Letters of Mary C. Greenleaf*, 336.

year.<sup>324</sup> The act was passed as a means of saving money from annually losing clothing, but it shows that the General Council was providing the Euro-American style clothing to students as a part of their training to work with American society. While some students grew up adhering to white dress codes, it is important to remember that many girls were pressured or physically forced to appear “white” by white teachers. Dress varied greatly in the Nation and forced wearing of clothes for some was therefore a means of assimilation. Ultimately, the white teachers attempted to conform the girls to their own beauty standards, illustrating a drastically different goal for the mission schools than empowering children with education.

Children attending academies entered an immersive English education program. At the mission schools, English speaking teachers committed to living on-site, typically in the same buildings as their students, resulting in constant contact and surveillance. While the majority of teachers at the academies were white women, there are mentions of three Indigenous women working as teachers, though two of these women may be the same person. The first, Emily Dwight, was Choctaw and an early graduate from the Choctaw Academy System.<sup>325</sup> A Choctaw woman named Elizabeth Dwight is also mentioned as working in the schools.<sup>326</sup> Emily and Elizabeth have very little background information but were working around the same time and location so it is unknown whether they are the same person, relative, or disconnected. The other, Clara Stanialaus,

---

<sup>324</sup> CGC, *The Constitution and Laws of the Choctaw Nation*, Session XIII, Section 3, October 15, 1856, 60.

<sup>325</sup> Cyrus Byington to William Armstrong, September 3, 1846, in *BIA Reports, 1846-50*, 144.

<sup>326</sup> Cyrus Kingsbury to D.H. Cooper, July 12, 1859, in *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Accompanying the Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior, for the Year 1859*, (Washington, D.C.: George W. Bowman, 1860), 199.; C. Kingsbury to Douglas H. Cooper, August 1, 1857, in *BIA Report 1857*, 243.

was “Canada Indian” and came to the Choctaw Nation with the missionaries. Little is known about Stanialaus. The 1860 U.S. Census even notes “Refused to give her age.”<sup>327</sup> Dwight, however, was sister to local minister Jonathan Dwight. The siblings were both educated in the Choctaw western-style schools, though little else is known about their early educations. Aside from these Indigenous women, the girls attending school mostly lived with white English speakers.

The women teaching and living with the girls in close quarters meant that the girls had nearly constant immersion in English and western customs. With students ranging from ages four to twenty, at Iyanubbi, Emily Dwight lived in a framed house that measured thirty-six by eighteen feet.<sup>328</sup> Together, Dwight and her students enjoyed four meals per day: breakfast, dinner, a snack, and supper.<sup>329</sup> The Chickasaw school at Wapanucka was a large limestone three story structure.<sup>330</sup> While Mary Coombs Greenleaf loved the view her third floor north-east windows provided of the sunrise over the prairies, she selected it for the practical reason of being near her students.<sup>331</sup> Her private seventeen square foot room had the luxury of its own fire place and adjoined to the communal room her thirty pupils occupied.<sup>332</sup> These close quarters were partially required by the General Council. They stipulated that teachers and superintendents “shall board at the same table with the pupils,” continuing the regular contact and non-special

---

<sup>327</sup> "United States Census, 1860," database with images, *FamilySearch*, digitized from NARA microfilm M653 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.).

<sup>328</sup> Cyrus Byington to William Armstrong, September 3, 1846, in *BIA Reports, 1846-50*, 144.; Cyrus Byington to Samuel M. Rutherford, July 20, 1848, in *BIA Reports, 1846-50*, 504.

<sup>329</sup> Cyrus Byington to William Armstrong, September 3, 1846, in *BIA Reports, 1846-50*, 145.

<sup>330</sup> MCG to Mrs. J.B., July 23, 1856, in Greenleaf, *Life and Letters of Mary C. Greenleaf*, 269.

<sup>331</sup> MCG to Mrs. J.B., October 7, 1856, in Greenleaf, *Life and Letters of Mary C. Greenleaf*, 315.

<sup>332</sup> MCG to Mrs. J.B., September 17, 1856, in Greenleaf, *Life and Letters of Mary C. Greenleaf*, 298.

treatment of teachers.<sup>333</sup> These close quarter set-ups furthered the immersive style of academy created by the Choctaw.

The Female Academies, unlike the Neighborhood and Sabbath Schools, were English only—in theory. This was a practice not necessarily to erase native languages, but an intentional recreation of an immersive learning experience. Similar to what Snyder describes as “a kind of study-abroad experience” found at the Choctaw Academy in Kentucky, the female academies within the Nation kept their children near, but exposed them to white American’s customs and manners.<sup>334</sup> Schools adhered to strict English-only rules for academies. From Sue L. McBeth’s teaching experience, the girls were taught in English and not permitted to speak to each other in Choctaw. Girls of mixed heritage often had the advantage of knowing some English already. More advanced students interpreted for others until they could grasp the basics, thus aiding those not knowing any English.<sup>335</sup> Having a variety of students proficient in English was useful at Koonsha, where the superintendent reported, “A favorable feature of the school... is the fact that most of the large girls belong to families in which the English language is the spoken language of the household....So far as this is the case it is valuable for two reasons—first, it gives the teacher immediate access to the minds of such pupils; and second, such pupils themselves help to Anglicize the school.”<sup>336</sup> While missionaries saw blended heritage students as an “anglicizing” influence, the English-speaking students played an influential role helping non-English speakers adjust. This was especially

---

<sup>333</sup> CGC “AN ACT providing for a system of public instruction in the Choctaw Nation,” in *The Constitution and Laws of the Choctaw Nation*, 37.

<sup>334</sup> Snyder, *Great Crossings*, 39-40.

<sup>335</sup> April 1860, McBeth, "Diary of a Missionary to the Choctaws."

<sup>336</sup> H. Ballentine to Douglas H. Cooper, July 15, 1856, in *BIA Report, 1856*, 160.

important because of the lack of language training given to female missionaries. For students sent to learn English at the academies, having western English only teachers was a growing pain while raising future Choctaw educators.

From the missionary perspective, this English requirement also meant white female teachers were able to directly work with the children without any major linguistic training. Sue McBeth rationalized that using English made teaching easier and more comfortable for white teachers.<sup>337</sup> Their purpose, according to the mission groups, was to teach and stay within the mission. They were, therefore, deemed as not needing the same training, such as knowing Choctaw, which men working as missionaries required.

Many white women felt frustration at the communication gap caused by inability to speak their student's primary language. Women such as McBeth joined the missions with the goal not to teach academically, but to convert. For her, not learning Indigenous languages limited her access to the people she wanted to share the gospel with. McBeth expressed frustration at knowing little to no Choctaw, only learning the phrase "Chi Chukma" for "Are you well," and was completely unable to get to know locals who visited the school, limiting her to building friendships with other English speaking missionaries.<sup>338</sup> She felt this hindered her from fulfilling her full potential, limited by the ABCFM's gendered opinion of what role a female missionary needed to know. Ironically, by not teaching female missionaries foreign language skills, the ABCFM was equipping Choctaw children to be more prepared for cross-cultural encounters than the whites sent to teach them.

---

<sup>337</sup> April 1860, McBeth, "Diary of a Missionary to the Choctaws."

<sup>338</sup> May 1860, McBeth, "Diary of a Missionary to the Choctaws."



Other female teachers recorded feelings on their lack of language training. Mary Coombs Greenleaf noted she did not learn Chickasaw as, “It is a difficult matter to learn that language, and of very little use, as the teaching is all in English.” But she stated it was important for the preachers, such as Mr. Wilson, who hoped to someday preach without an interpreter. Men, who preached and worked outside the mission “household” learned and utilized Indigenous languages in their work preaching and interpreting.<sup>339</sup> Reminiscent of the separate sphere ideology, the lack of language preparation served as a sort of barrier, whether intentional or not, from missionary women building extensive connections and working outside the mission bases. As white women worked within the mission walls primarily, few of those who joined the academies were formally taught the local language.

The emphasized use of English did not mean that Native languages were non-existent at these female schools; rather it was plentiful outside of instruction. Teachers, particularly those who cared for students outside of academic work, certainly picked up phrases in the first language of their pupils. Greenleaf shared with her friends the Chickasaw phrases she quickly learned—“Ul-pa-sah” (that is right), “Ik-sho” (none), “Minta” (come), and “Oke-she-tah” (shut the door) a phrase she notes, “I have to say many times a day in winter.”<sup>340</sup> One can imagine the fifty-seven year old lady chiding the young girls to shut the door from the bracing cold and assist with chores. Clearly attempting to pick up key phrases, the Chickasaw speaking girls spent plenty of time puzzling over their teacher’s English requests when they were without a friend to translate. Greenleaf also attempted communication through pictures while sharing the

---

<sup>339</sup> MCG to Miss M.P.S., June 11, 1857, in Greenleaf, *Life and Letters of Mary C. Greenleaf*, 393.

<sup>340</sup> MCG to Miss M.P.S., June 11, 1857, in Greenleaf, *Life and Letters of Mary C. Greenleaf*, 394.

Gospel, but again fretted it was doing very little good.<sup>341</sup> Struggling with verbal communication for advanced conversations, often simple methods were used to communicate basic needs.

With young Chickasaw student Jane Greenleaf (whom Greenleaf named), Mary Greenleaf felt she had found an understanding. While other students still proved shy, “She [Jane] understands my smile, and a pat on her head, as marks of approbation, and is very obedient, so far as she understands my directions. The children are generally silent in my presence, and seldom speak to me, except in a whisper.” Still just getting to know Greenleaf, it took time for teachers and students to build trust. Shyness did not always mean a poor relationship. Greenleaf wrote of an afternoon where, “a little smiling face peeped in, and when I inquired, ‘What is it, Ann Eliza?’ she ran in and put a few berries in my hand, and then ran out smiling, though she spoke not a word They are affectionate, and sometimes come and stroke my hair, or manifest affection in other ways, which is very pleasant.”<sup>342</sup> Greenleaf had ten students who did not speak English. While she admitted, “It is quite amusing to witness their attempts to do as they are told,” they appear to have figured out the rules and requests of their matron.<sup>343</sup> Though the communication was broken at times, there were definitely relationships built that transcended such barriers. The giving of small gifts, such as berries they had discovered, or curiously touching her hair, gave missionaries like Mary Coombs Greenleaf hope that they built relationships with their charges to some extent.<sup>344</sup>

---

<sup>341</sup> MCG to Mrs. J.B., May 15, 1857, in Greenleaf, *Life and Letters of Mary C. Greenleaf*, 380.

<sup>342</sup> MCG to Mrs. C.B., November 1, 1856, in Greenleaf, *Life and Letters of Mary C. Greenleaf*, 327.

<sup>343</sup> MCG to Mrs. H.S., November 15, 1856 and MCG to Miss P.H, April 2, 1857, in Greenleaf, *Life and Letters of Mary C. Greenleaf*, 329, 24.

<sup>344</sup> MCG to Mrs. C.B., November 1, 1856, in Greenleaf, *Life and Letters of Mary C. Greenleaf*, 327.

At some schools, girls were able to speak to each other in their native tongues during breaks and while translating. The girls of Koonsha were given a recreation hour, which they often spent forming various horses, riders, and other livestock out of the red clay.<sup>345</sup> Up in her second-floor sitting room at Wapanucka, Mary Coombs Greenleaf observed her girls in action. While writing one letter, she was surrounded by Jane Greenleaf and her troupe of classmates, “jabbering away in Chickasaw, and examining every nook and corner.”<sup>346</sup> At places like Wapanucka and other schools supportive of Indigenous languages, girls continued using their language with their peers. These times in the yard and chatting in their teacher’s sitting-rooms illustrates that while English was the academic language of the school it certainly was not the only social language of this school.

While some schools allowed Indigenous languages, it is important to note some did not. Former Choctaw student at New Hope Academy, Elizabeth Jacobs Quinton, recalled the punishment for those who spoke Choctaw. She stated in an interview, “When they first started most of the children couldn’t speak any English. If they talked Choctaw they gave them a teaspoonful of red pepper for every Choctaw word they said. I didn’t know any Choctaw so I didn’t have any trouble.”<sup>347</sup> At New Hope, punishment meant to erase language and cultural identity and drew stark lines between girls who could and could not speak English. This did not stop students from sharing their language, however. Quinton described a time asking the girls to teach her the word for “two,” *tuklo*. Marching around repeating *tuklo*, the other students who did not like her reported her to

---

<sup>345</sup> April 1860, McBeth, "Diary of a Missionary to the Choctaws."

<sup>346</sup> MCG to Miss E.G., December 14, 1856, in Greenleaf, *Life and Letters of Mary C. Greenleaf*, 332.

<sup>347</sup> Whaley, "Elizabeth Jacobs Quinton," 130.

the teachers for speaking Choctaw.<sup>348</sup> For Quinton, she recalled learning a few words out of curiosity, but for others speaking their language could be a form of resistance. Other examples of language issues at the schools are as of now unfound, but it is important to acknowledge the prominent issue of language erasure found in later boarding schools existed in this period as well even if it was not a universal issue.<sup>349</sup>

A difference from later documented schools was the amount of contact the girls had with their communities. This took the form of having family and friends visit, going to church services, and on field trips. Little Mary Margaret Wilson at Wapanucka was not the only child to have her non-English speaking father come visit.<sup>350</sup> While the girls at Wapanucka lived in close proximity to the teachers, the main building had a space known as the “Chickasaw Room,” where parents came to visit almost every day. Unlike the rest of the building, where English predominated, in this room at the end of the house the mission women “can only smile and shake hands, and speak through an interpreter.”<sup>351</sup> Very rarely would families venture further from this space, though Mary Margaret Wilson’s father met with Greenleaf in her sitting room and took dinner with them.<sup>352</sup> Koonsha welcomed families as well. Parents and siblings also came to visit students in the evenings and special occasions. McBeth observed one of these visits that “Little Elsie” had from her mother and siblings. Elsie spoke in Choctaw to her family, who did not know English, and served as an interpreter for an orphan student named Rosa who

---

<sup>348</sup> Whaley, "Elizabeth Jacobs Quinton," 130.

<sup>349</sup> Coleman, *The Wheelock Story*, 87; Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 140-1.

<sup>350</sup> MCG to Mrs. J.B., January 1, 1857, in Greenleaf, *Life and Letters of Mary C. Greenleaf*, 336-7.

<sup>351</sup> MCG to Mrs. S.W.T., May 9, 1857 in Greenleaf, *Life and Letters of Mary C. Greenleaf*, 362-3.

<sup>352</sup> MCG to Mrs. J.B., January 1, 1857, in Greenleaf, *Life and Letters of Mary C. Greenleaf*, 336-7.

only spoke English but wanted to learn Choctaw and interact with the family.<sup>353</sup> Family connections and visits were valuable ways for girls to maintain their cultural identities.

Another opportunity to see family occurred at times between male and female academies built in close proximity. At New Hope Female Seminary and Fort Coffee Male Academy, students had a number of opportunities to see each other. At New Hope, a pair of boys came every week to deliver agricultural goods and pick up any washing or mending the girls had completed. Reverend Alexander Graham described the excitement surrounding the event as the boys would appear for the trip “dressed in their best style from top to toe, decorating themselves with various fanciful extras, such as fringed hunting-shirts, scarlet sashes, and striped blankets.”<sup>354</sup> Brothers at Fort Coffee were also allowed to occasionally visit their sisters and any other girls they had befriended.<sup>355</sup> There were also days set aside in the winter for boys to go en masse to New Hope and cut wood for the girls. Graham elaborated, “At such times a special dinner was prepared, and the young ladies waited on the table to the infinite delight of both parties....” Quarterly meetings of the schools, alternating location, were another time students got see each other.<sup>356</sup> These visits were important as they helped maintain family bonds and allow for further contact with the students’ people.

The girls also were exposed to Native speakers when they attended church. As a part of a mission, people flooded into the area for church and communion. At New Hope Academy, local Skullyville residents came to their services.<sup>357</sup> While the message was in

---

<sup>353</sup> April and May 1860, McBeth, "Diary of a Missionary to the Choctaws."

<sup>354</sup> William Graham, *Frontier Sketches: New Hope*, ed. Rev. I.W. Wiley, vol. 24, The Ladies' Repository: A Monthly Periodical, Devoted to Literature and Religion, (Cincinnati, 1864), 413.

<sup>355</sup> Graham, *Frontier Sketches: New Hope*, 24, 414.

<sup>356</sup> Graham, *Frontier Sketches: New Hope*, 24, 414.

<sup>357</sup> Graham, *Frontier Sketches: New Hope*, 24, 414.

English at Koonsha services, one of the student's fathers, Mr. Yale, would translate for the majority of the non-English speaking population near who attended.<sup>358</sup> Attending a service, Greenleaf observed singing and reading out of the Chickasaw and Choctaw hymnal and Bible. She recalled, "Then we all sung them, for I can read the book, though I do not know the meaning." Then a Chickasaw man prayed for everyone in their own language followed by some English prayers by the missionaries.<sup>359</sup> While the white women may have been clueless, at these church services, the girls had access to Choctaw Sabbath Schools and participated in accompanying camp meetings.

There were typically no days the students and teachers were separate. School days were carefully planned to maximize educational opportunities, though there were variances at each school. The length of the school year varied from site to site and even year to year. Provided there was no disruption due to conflicts or disease, the academic years were roughly six to eight and a half months, starting as early as October first and ending as late as July twenty-first.<sup>360</sup> While the children typically went home for the summer and sometimes a spring break of sorts, they also had days off on major holidays. On New Years, the girls of Wapanucka spent the day playing outdoors and with ragdolls by the fire.<sup>361</sup> For a May Day Celebration, everyone went out to a picnic in front of nearby caves, erecting a flower bedecked pole and enjoying "cold ham, bread and butter,

---

<sup>358</sup> April and May 1860, McBeth, "Diary of a Missionary to the Choctaws."

<sup>359</sup> MCG to Miss A.P., August 3, 1856, in Greenleaf, *Life and Letters of Mary C. Greenleaf*, 295-6.

<sup>360</sup> Cyrus Kingsbury to William Armstrong, August 12, 1845, in *BIA Reports 1840-5*, 583.; Cyrus Byington to William Armstrong, September 3, 1846, in *BIA Reports, 1846-50*, 144.; Cyrus Kingsbury to William Armstrong, August 26, 1844, in *BIA Reports 1840-5*, 82.; Cyrus Kingsbury to William Armstrong, September 30, 1846, in *BIA Reports, 1846-50*, 139.

<sup>361</sup> MCG to Mrs. J.B., January 1, 1857, in Greenleaf, *Life and Letters of Mary C. Greenleaf*, 336.

buns and gingerbread, with cold water.”<sup>362</sup> These were just some of the regular outings in which girls participated.

Fieldtrips were also a part of the schooling in places such as Koonsha. McBeth described an April afternoon where she and Miss Hotchkin rode out on horseback with all the girls of the school walking to a nearby pool. McBeth had the orphan Rosa riding in front of her and a girl named Selina behind. She recalled, “The older girls walking sedately beside us or making short detours through the woods in quest of berries; the little ones running here and there, peeping out through bushes at us as they searched for flowers or fruit; taking care not to go out of the [range of] sound of the little bell Miss H[otchkin] carried.”<sup>363</sup> During spring at Wapanucka, the girls gathered wild flowers to decorate the house as well as took walks among the frolicking calves with their three dogs, Scamp, Rover, and Tyler. Winter meant they slid on a frozen creek or in the summers swam in it and went on miniature cave exploration missions along the riverbank.<sup>364</sup> While there were certainly grueling chores and studies, the girls often explored the natural world around them. There were many social occasions for girls to enjoy together.

The days were packed with work of various kinds. Everyone rose early at Wapanucka. The morning bell rang at half-past five in the morning, after which girls

---

<sup>362</sup> MCG to Miss M.S., May 11, 1857, in Greenleaf, *Life and Letters of Mary C. Greenleaf*, 372.

<sup>363</sup> April 1860, McBeth, "Diary of a Missionary to the Choctaws."

<sup>364</sup> The creek was a nearby source of fun. In the summer it was great for swimming and in the winter it provided a sliding arena and also had a number of caves that they hosted their May Day picnic at and explored on field trips. MCG to Mrs. J.B., May 15<sup>th</sup>, 1857 380; MCG to Mrs. J.B., January 23, 1857, 340; MCG to Miss M.S., May 11, 1857, 372; MCG to Mrs. J.B., May 15, 1857, 374; MCG to Mrs. J.B., May 15, 1857, 377; MCG to Master T.V., May 18, 1857, 385; MCG to Miss P.H., April 2, 1857, 357, in Greenleaf, *Life and Letters of Mary C. Greenleaf*.

would dress and go to their second-floor sitting-room to access the piazza (which ran the length of the building) to wash before breakfast at 6:45 a.m.<sup>365</sup> After serving breakfast at their communal tables, they would proceed to prayers, hymns, and Bible reading.<sup>366</sup> At most of the schools, girls would spend their mornings and early afternoons in the classroom for anywhere from five to six hours.<sup>367</sup> At Wapanucka, a half hour outdoor recess followed the noon meal hour. When class ended just before five, students proceeded to dinner, family worship and sewing an hour or two before bed at 8 o'clock.<sup>368</sup> The students of Sue L. McBeth were often not freed from work until after nine o'clock; they hosted the nightly meal, and attended worship services.<sup>369</sup> Weekends were equally busy. Mary Coombs Greenleaf noted the only time she was not managing the girls on the Sabbath was "when they were in Sabbath school, and an hour early in the morning... We had meeting in the morning, but I must have my eye upon them all the time."<sup>370</sup> It was certainly a rigorous schedule for all involved. The regular contact meant teachers had a tremendous influence on student development. Thus, a need for Choctaw educators was more important than ever.

---

<sup>365</sup> MCG to Miss S.T., October 30, 1856, in Greenleaf, *Life and Letters of Mary C. Greenleaf*, 321.

<sup>366</sup> MCG to Miss S.T., October 30, 1856, in Greenleaf, *Life and Letters of Mary C. Greenleaf*, 322.

<sup>367</sup> Ebenezer Hotchkin to William Armstrong, August 7, 1845, in *BIA Reports 1840-5*, 581-2.;

Alfred Wright to William Armstrong, September 23, 1844, in *BIA Reports 1840-5*, 81.

<sup>368</sup> MCG to Miss S.T., October 30, 1856, Greenleaf, *Life and Letters of Mary C. Greenleaf*, 323.

<sup>369</sup> April 1860, McBeth, "Diary of a Missionary to the Choctaws."

<sup>370</sup> MCG to Miss M.P.S., October 5, 1856, in Greenleaf, *Life and Letters of Mary C. Greenleaf*, 310.



## Challenges

Though the schools were designed as a positive force within the Nation, there is evidence of student rebellion. These ranged from small to large acts. Early on, beloved Jane Greenleaf was described by Mary Greenleaf as not only high-spirited but also mischievous. Greenleaf commented, “At first I was almost sorry I had given her my mother’s name, because she did many naughty things. I do not regret it now, as she has improved very much.”<sup>371</sup> This may be a reference to Jane’s penchant for pilfering. Greenleaf wrote about Jane’s regular visits, leading a gaggle of girls, noting “all are pilferers, I have to watch them as I write. They are delighted with pictures, particularly Daguerreotypes, and I often hear little feet on the stairs, and a rap at my door, and three of four little girls smiling ask if they may stay awhile; this is during play hours, when one would think the woods would have more charms for them than any room.”<sup>372</sup> One wonders what treasures Jane snuck from Greenleaf’s apartments. Another day, Jane was described as “full of life and spirits. She is an interesting child, and has none of the stubborn, intractable ways which some have....”<sup>373</sup> While Jane was a challenge at first, she matured and was noted for her talents in later reports. Smaller levels of behavior were likely connected to simply being a little girl, but larger issues did exist.

While children such as Jane probably stole knickknacks and caused minor problems for their teacher, there were students opposed to adopting western lifestyles. Teachers at times used harsh disciplinary methods and students found various forms of

---

<sup>371</sup> MCG to Miss E.G., December 14, 1856, in Greenleaf, *Life and Letters of Mary C. Greenleaf*, 332.

<sup>372</sup> MCG to Miss E.G., December 14, 1856, in Greenleaf, *Life and Letters of Mary C. Greenleaf*, 332.

<sup>373</sup> MCG to Mrs. J.B. May 15, 1857, Greenleaf, *Life and Letters of Mary C. Greenleaf*, 380.

rebellion. The instance of the red pepper for speaking Choctaw at New Hope was one such example. Greenleaf concluded that student behavior was rooted in being “naturally wild, and being accustomed at home to live without any order, it takes time to bring them into subjection.”<sup>374</sup> She kept a rod around for such circumstances where the girls got out of hand, “but it is not often necessary to use it.”<sup>375</sup> Despite being popular, the schools had issues. The impression these methods of discipline had on families is unknown. The silence in records suggest a number possibilities. These include: they were acceptable to families; considered a necessary pain to endure while raising their own students; or such situations went unreported to Choctaw authorities over the school. There are no rebukes against this discipline on record, but student behavior suggests some rebellion. While missionaries often assumed student’s behavior was due to their supposed “natural state,” they did not consider that the students may have disliked the schools and being away from family.

Even though rules were in place to westernize the girls, they certainly found ways to rebel and participate in cultural practices. When journalist Albert Richardson visited the Choctaw Nation, he reported the New Hope girls’ nighttime activities:

The sixty pupils all slept in a long hall. Sometimes at the dead of night one would strike up a sacred hymn; one by one all the little sleepers would wake and join her, until the building rang with their voices. Next some little copper-hued girl in night-gown would mount a chair for a religious exhortation. Others would follow, till the little devotees with their groans, sobs and shrieks, rivaled a camp meeting...At other times a single girls would wake and begin some low weird song. One after another all would rouse and join her, the chant swelling until all these little throats roared

---

<sup>374</sup> MCG to Miss S.T., October 30, 1856, in Greenleaf, *Life and Letters of Mary C. Greenleaf*, 323-4.

<sup>375</sup> MCG to Mrs. J.B., May 15, 1857, in Greenleaf, *Life and Letters of Mary C. Greenleaf*, 374.

forth the old war whoop of the Choctaw tribe! The teachers could not prevent these midnight entertainments even by whipping.”<sup>376</sup>

While Richardson was potentially drawn to the story as a sign of the “wild” nature of Choctaw people for his Euro-American audience, the event in context of Choctaw culture these camp meeting-like events show a larger scale rebellion of students. Additionally, it illustrates a determination as a group to continue some type of cultural communal practice despite the punishment they faced. While details as to their activities are vague, it shows that some schools faced girls’ persistence in cultural activities.

Though sanctioned by the Choctaw Nation, living under such white standards and keeping up with the grueling schedules was exhausting. Greenleaf was shocked to find one of her own students elected to run away from the school within the first few months. She mused, “No reason can be assigned for their going, except the usual love of their homes, and their dislike of restraint, for mine had not been punished at all. It was a long way for her to go to her home on foot, but they do not mind that, if disposed to depart. Generally the children are wild and thoughtless....”<sup>377</sup> Instead of looking at the larger issues that might be occurring at the school, the runaway was dismissed as having a lack of discipline and poor judgement.

Cyrus Kingsbury wrote to Peter P. Pitchlynn on July 1, 1844 from Chuwala to report a problem student. Malsay Buchanan kept running away, and Kingsbury did not

---

<sup>376</sup> Albert D. Richardson, *Beyond the Mississippi: From the Great River to the Great Ocean. Life and Adventure on the Prairies, Mountains, and Pacific Coast* (Hartford: American Publishing Company, 1869), 222.

<sup>377</sup> MCG to Miss M.P.S. ,December 28, 1846, in Greenleaf, *Life and Letters of Mary C. Greenleaf*, 333.

want her to return since she kept causing problems. Her mother suggested they take one of her younger daughters instead of Malsay, but dropped Malsay off in addition to the other child. The reason why the mother left both daughters is unknown, but Kingsbury agreed to give her one more chance. He reported “she had been here but one day, before she wanted some of the girls to run away with her. No one was found willing to go—last night she got her clothes put up to go but Mrs. K[ingsbury] told her she should not go off in the night. If she was determined to go she must take day time for it. And to day [sic] she went.” Hoping she would not be brought back, he noted, “Such girls are a great injury to the school and make us much trouble.”<sup>378</sup> This situation is interesting because the mother clearly wanted her children to receive education, even trying to replace the available slot with another daughter. While Malsay clearly did not want to attend the school, her behavior became concerning to the school reputation. Kingsbury’s worries might have included raising community suspicion something was wrong with the school or disapproval from the Board of Trustees. Malsay’s perspective on the issue will never be known, but it shows that not all students were willing participants.

While many Choctaw, especially those in the government, felt that western-style education was the key to their success in future United States relations, it was not a unanimous sentiment. It is important to remember that the Choctaw voices preserved on the subject of education are largely male, from mixed families, and wealthy plantation owners. The overall success of the schools speaks to a larger desire for education, but the readily available sources do not allow for those who did not write English or opposed the incorporation of more Euro-American practices to be heard. While some schools reported

---

<sup>378</sup> Cyrus Kingsbury to PPP, July 1, 1844, PPPP, folder 422, GMA.

far too many students trying to attend, occasionally some academies faced a lack of attendees. In the early years of the academies Charles C. Copeland, frustrated with low attendance, ruminated that “children are often detained at home, to perform errands, and assist about the farm, or look after the stock; and, finally, from the cold indifference of many parents on the subject.”<sup>379</sup>

While children certainly did play important roles in the survival of their families and farms, there were also those who overtly did not want anything to do with Euro-American education. Ultimately, attending the academies was an opportunity not all were interested in. If they wanted to educate their children, Choctaw education options were available at many Neighborhood and Sabbath Schools. Even then, not everyone believed a western-style education inspired by the country that had forcibly uprooted their entire lives was worth their time. While the primarily wealthy plantation owners on the General Council supported western-style education efforts, it is important to remember that it was not a unanimous opinion among the Choctaw.

Aside from those challenging school attendance, there were a number of hardships the schools faced. Prominent issues were sickness and weather. Just like the rest of the Nation, the academies were annually faced with severe waves of illness, killing many students and faculty. There was a loss of students in March of 1845, during a measles outbreak that caused many students to return home and fall so far behind that many did not return to complete the semester.<sup>380</sup> At Ayanubbee that same year, a measles outbreak that kept many away, delaying their April public examinations until July 14<sup>th</sup>.<sup>381</sup>

---

<sup>379</sup> Charles C. Copeland to William Armstrong, August 15, 1844, in *BIA Reports 1840-5*, 80.

<sup>380</sup> Alfred Wright to William Armstrong, July 1845, in *BIA Reports 1840-5*, 589.

<sup>381</sup> Cyrus Byington to William Armstrong, September 1, 1845, in *BIA Reports 1840-5*, 587.

Mary C. Greenleaf wrote of her own ill students, staying up late to listen to the weak cries of “o-kah” for water or sending them home to recover with family.<sup>382</sup> Of course, in that case students ran the risk of spreading disease to their own families.

Teachers also saw more traditional Choctaw practices through these hardships. Greenleaf was confused by the traditional burial practices she observed for two of her students, describing the three months to a year the body rested before a funeral, which featured a missionary-preached message and a two day camp meeting with a feast.<sup>383</sup> This may be a reference to a traditional, though fading in practice, form of burial where bodies were placed on a scaffold for a period while families and friends mourned. A final “cry” was held in the form of a public gathering to remember the deceased. A bone picker would then remove remaining flesh from bones during various religious rites. The bones were finally placed in a box and given to the family.<sup>384</sup> Following a final feast, the box of bones was placed in the family’s charnel house, called a *hatak illi foni aiasha*. This house was raised about six feet from the ground and had a roof.<sup>385</sup> No matter the selected burial practice, families were certainly deeply affected by the loss of children at school.

Teachers were not exempt from the illnesses attacking their schools. Mary C. Greenleaf died of the dysentery she spent weeks nursing her pupils through.<sup>386</sup> A similar sickness killed Choctaw teacher Elizabeth Dwight in 1859, while she was working at the

---

<sup>382</sup> MCG to Miss E.G., March 16, 1857, in Greenleaf, *Life and Letters of Mary C. Greenleaf*, 150.

<sup>383</sup> MCG to Mrs. S.W.T., May 9, 1857, in Greenleaf, *Life and Letters of Mary C. Greenleaf*, 363.

<sup>384</sup> "Ancient Choctaw burial practice," *Biskinik* 2012.

<sup>385</sup> "Ancient Choctaw burial practice."

<sup>386</sup> Reverend C.H. Wilson to Reverend Dr. Dana, July 3rd, 1857, in Greenleaf, *Life and Letters of Mary C. Greenleaf*, 404.

Female Seminaries.<sup>387</sup> Sophia Hibbens Payne remembered growing up near the ruins of Koonsha Academy, well acquainted with the moss covered tombstones reading, “L.C. Downer. Missionary. Died October 1st, 1848.” And “C.M Belden. November 5, 1848. Missionary.”<sup>388</sup> That same year, a bad case of scarlet fever affected fourteen students; whooping cough another seventeen. Finally, mumps affected twenty-seven pupils, however, none died.<sup>389</sup> After the deaths of Downer and Belden, coursework suffered and Rev. Ebenezer Hotchkin reported that “In consequence of the reduction of our teachers by death, carding, spinning, and weaving have been necessarily omitted.”<sup>390</sup> It was with great reluctance that Reverend Ebenezer Hotchkin reported the early closure of the school, having “come to the settled conclusion, that under the present arrangement this school cannot be carried on successfully for any length of time. The requisitions are too severe; they are so for scholars; they are so for the teachers. The fact is, we are over-worked—we are over-driven.”<sup>391</sup> The physical and emotional toll the schools faced during times of illness and death was tremendous for all involved. Yet they persevered.

Living in relatively rural regions, there was always the threat of the weather stopping school. While spring flooding was known for cutting off supplies and mail deliveries, those in Indian Territory experienced one of the worst natural phenomenon—tornados. On March 19th, 1848, a major tornado hit Chuahla Female Seminary. The twister destroyed buildings, fences, and more. Girls huddled in their hall experienced a direct hit to their shelter. Cyrus Kingsbury later recalled that, “as one instance, twelve

---

<sup>387</sup> Cyrus Kingsbury to Douglas H. Cooper, July 12, 1859, in *BIA Report, 1859*, 200.

<sup>388</sup> An Interview with Mrs. Sophia Hibben Payne, October 15, 1937, IPP, WHC.

<sup>389</sup> Ebenezer Hotchkin to Col. Drennen, August 8, 1849, in *BIA Reports, 1846-50*, 172.

<sup>390</sup> Ebenezer Hotchkin to Col. Drennen, August 8, 1849, in *BIA Reports, 1846-50*, 173.

<sup>391</sup> Ebenezer Hotchkin to Col. Drennen, August 8, 1849, in *BIA Reports, 1846-50*, 173.

bedsteads were in one house, and, after the tornado, not a whole one could be made from what remained unbroken of them all. And yet seventeen females were in the same house, and, with the exception of the small bone of one ankle, not a limb was broken....” Losing its roof, the two story house was completely destroyed, causing several students and teachers to have no living quarters.<sup>392</sup> Even if buildings were standing, the girls at Wapanucka would shiver in the winter months around their small fireplace, stitching in the voluminous limestone hall.<sup>393</sup> Despite these hardships, the schools rebuilt and continued until the Civil War brought this educational period to a close.

Creating the Female Academies was a huge feat for the Choctaw Nation, not without challenges. With the aim to produce their own teachers for future generations, the mission-based education at the facilities was an important step in an autonomous system. The efforts of the administrators and students from all backgrounds are what brought much of the success seen in these facilities. Some loved the opportunity to attend and others loathed it, but the Choctaw persevered in their roughly twenty-year experiment to completely manage their own schools.

---

<sup>392</sup> Cyrus Kingsbury to S.M. Rutherford, June 30, 1848, in *BIA Reports, 1846-50*, 507.

<sup>393</sup> MCG to Miss E.G., December 14, 1856, in Greenleaf, *Life and Letters of Mary C. Greenleaf*, 331.



## CHAPTER VII

### ACADEMY CURRICULUMS

Elizabeth settled into the deep arm chair, lighting her pipe with an ensuing puff. Dr. Grant Foreman welcomed her to his Muskogee home. What year was it? When she hit one hundred years old, she stopped counting. Dr. Foreman began the interview. She mentioned living a couple miles from New Hope Academy, where she went to school. This piqued Dr. Foreman's interest, he asked more about that. Her mind flashed to the third floor classroom. She was quilting with another older girl. Across the room, a dejected girl began unraveling the sock she almost finished—the teacher noticed she missed a few stitches back at the beginning and forced her to start over. She explained to Dr. Foreman, “They made us learn to do things right. That's the reason I can sew now, blind as I am.” She heard his chuckle and scrape of a new note page. My how times had changed.<sup>394</sup>

---

<sup>394</sup> Dr. Grant Foreman interviewed Elizabeth Jacobs Quinton at an unknown date and then sent the interview to the *Chronicles of Oklahoma* for publication in 1951. Quinton was a Choctaw centarian who attended New Hope Academy sometime between 1845 and 1850. Whaley, "Elizabeth Jacobs Quinton," 126-9. Elizabeth referenced Superintendent McAlister as the principal of New Hope during her time. *BIA Reports, 1846-50*, 144, 64; *BIA Report, 1851*, 108.

Elizabeth Jacobs Quinton was one of the last surviving students from the pre-Civil War Choctaw female academies. When interviewed by Dr. Grant Foreman at some time in the 1930s, her school memories focused on the sewing and weaving she learned. But this was part of a larger education scheme set out for the daughters of the Nation. To accomplish Choctaw education goals and accommodate missionary conversion aims, their daughters were taught in three educational fields—academic, spiritual, and domestic. While a mix of Choctaw and colonial goals, the schools largely prepared girls to stay in the Nation and replace missionaries as the future educators of these academies.

It is difficult to directly compare coursework in women's upper division schools during this time period. Because schooling was not widespread, there was no uniform standard. Additionally, terms such as "Academy," "Seminary," and "High School" were used interchangeably in some places and meant completely opposite in others.<sup>395</sup> Typically, these terms referenced upper division coursework, at least in the United States. While it was a goal for academies to serve as a form of higher education, the student make-up shows a huge range of ages. The school system in the Choctaw Nation was incredibly young and experimental.

The academy curriculums became the foundation of later post-Civil War labor-based boarding schools, but they featured some crucial differences. Historian Brenda J. Child describes the mentality towards these schools between 1900 and 1940: "It was

---

<sup>395</sup> Academies were a type of secondary school in 1800s United States, eventually declining with the popularity of high schools at the end of the century. Amanda Cobb explains, "Academies, sometimes called seminaries or institutes, were secondary schools that were privately controlled and financed by individuals or church denominations; however, in most cases, any student who could pay tuition could attend." Hundreds were established in the 1800s throughout the United States. Mount Holyoke, a women's college, was one and became a model for girls academies across the United States and in Bloomfield Academy. Cobb, *Listening to Our Grandmothers' Stories*, 46.

widely assumed that vocational education not only suited the ‘native mentality’ but would also help to solve the Nation’s so-called ‘Indian problem’ by training the growing number of impoverished and landless Indians for wage labor.”<sup>396</sup> Historian David Wallace Adams also explains the motives of white educators creating labor school models. He describes schools, “As an instrument for fostering social cohesion and republicanism...important in the spread of the American system. In the case of Indians, the challenge facing educators was particularly difficult: the eradication of all traces of tribal identity and culture, replacing them with the common-place knowledge and values of white civilization.”<sup>397</sup> While acculturative practices did occur in the academies, they were different than post-Civil War schools as the Nation maintained them.

Women’s education during this period looked very different than today. While academic education was important to all schools, the domestic arts were a common part of any woman’s education. This is reflected in the mandated curriculum of the Choctaw Nation. In 1842, “AN ACT providing for a system of public instruction in the Choctaw Nation” passed defining exactly what type of education the Choctaw expected their daughters to receive while attending their academies. Section six stated, “In the Female Schools, in addition to Letters, the pupils shall be instructed in Housewifery and Sewing, &c.”<sup>398</sup> These expectations were incredibly broad. They established a labor school style of education, but left the interpretation of what academic and practical subjects should be taught up to the missionaries and their Choctaw Board of Trustees. Looking at the

---

<sup>396</sup> Child, *Boarding School Seasons*, 13.

<sup>397</sup> Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 335.

<sup>398</sup> CGC, “AN ACT providing for a system of public instruction in the Choctaw Nation,” in *The Constitution and Laws of the Choctaw Nation*, 39.

subjects taught compared to this illustrate how much control the Choctaw Nation possessed over their schools.

While the Choctaw set their own goals for their daughter's education, the reality of using white missionaries to teach meant there were other motives involved. It is important to recognize the mark of white female teachers, who acted through maternal colonialist ideals while teaching.<sup>399</sup> While the white teachers did not initiate the removal of children to these boarding schools and there was regular contact with their culture, their motives were almost entirely set on civilizing and acculturating girls into a Euro-American lifestyle.<sup>400</sup> Their efforts were rooted in what would develop into an integral white female role in the removal of children for post-Civil War schools. But the schools were important to the Choctaw. The female academies used the girls' domestic labor as a teaching tool between 1831 and 1861, but they continued to grow in popularity as a means to teach their daughters how to survive in a world of increasing Euro-American presence. Furthermore, the schools were created by the Nation as a means to teach their children skills they deemed as valuable.

## **Academics**

The academics of these institutions were on par with that of the United States and increasing in difficulty as the schools became further established. Ongoing research into the best schools of other countries intended to ensure the Choctaw system excelled. A

---

<sup>399</sup> Jacobs, "Maternal Colonialism."

<sup>400</sup> Jacobs, "Maternal Colonialism," 454.

note of introduction to Peter Pitchlynn on June 10, 1846 noted the visitor, an A.H. Mechlin, came with a report on the Massachusetts school system, written directly from a presentation by Horace Mann.<sup>401</sup> Progress in just ten years is evident in Reverend Ebenezer Hotchkin's 1852 report at the development of Koonsha, "It would now be no very difficult work to carry most of this school through the course of study adopted at Mount Holyoke, or any other similar institution in the United States." The Nation was pleased at this progress too, "The chiefs and headmen" requested two teachers be obtained to fulfill this higher coursework. "The standard of female education in this nation should be raised, and as the people themselves have proposed it, surely there ought not to be any insurmountable difficulty."<sup>402</sup> With their sights set on levels equal to those of Mount Holyoke, there was a clear plan to improve these schools to be on par with women's higher education in the United States.

While the Choctaw academies taught mostly the same curriculum, there were variations to the subjects taught.<sup>403</sup> At Ayanubbee, between 1845 to 1846, the subjects of study were a fairly common curriculum: "the English language, reading, spelling, writing, arithmetic, geography, natural philosophy, English grammar, and sacred music." Rather than utilizing a grade system, students simply studied individual subjects until they could master them and move on in that specific subject.<sup>404</sup> Rev. Cyrus Byington, who added botany and penmanship in 1848 to Ayanubbee, is an example of such

---

<sup>401</sup> Folder 541—A.H. Mechlin to PPP, June 10, 1846, PPPP, folder 541, GMA.

<sup>402</sup> Ebenezer Hotchkin to William Wilson, June 19, 1852, in *BIA Report, 1852*, 128.

<sup>403</sup> Cyrus Byington to William Armstrong, September 3, 1846, in *BIA Reports, 1846-50*, 145.; Alfred Wright to William Armstrong, September 23, 1844, in *BIA Reports 1840-5*, 81.; Ebenezer Hotchkin to William Armstrong, August 7, 1845, in *BIA Reports 1840-5*, 581.; Cyrus Byington to Samuel M. Rutherford, July 20, 1848, in *BIA Reports 1840-5*, 503.

<sup>404</sup> Alfred Wright to William Armstrong, September 23, 1844, in *BIA Reports 1840-5*, 81.

variations.<sup>405</sup> Educational texts at schools were also common teaching tools from the United States. Reverend Alfred Wright's record of schoolbooks include, "Reading books used: New Testament, Child's Guide, Intelligent Reader, Todd's Truth Made Simple, and Gallaudet's Natural Theology. Spelling books: Town's, Webster's, New York, and New York Primer."<sup>406</sup> The schools were then very much a Euro-American style of education.

While these subjects for the most part match those of the subjects suggested for Pennsylvania High Schools and that of Holyoke Seminary (Table 5), there are some key differences. Subjects such as telling time highlight a number of possibilities. One being that clocks were not a household feature among the Choctaw and another that the students attending were simply younger. With an unenforced age limit, the Choctaw schools had to adapt to teach younger children basic skills. More interestingly is the difference in language offerings. While Mount Holyoke offered Latin and French, the Choctaw schools offered foreign language too—English. For many girls, this was their first time learning the language, so spelling and basic courses were essential. In contrast, it was recommended Pennsylvania High Schools avoid foreign languages, as they would be too advanced for girls between twelve and sixteen.<sup>407</sup> While various classes of advancement took on various subjects in all these schools, the overall course offering shows that the Choctaw schools were on par with upper division education in the United States, nearing the equivalent a college such as Mount Holyoke. The academics at the schools were excellent, but these were often intertwined with religious training.

---

<sup>405</sup> Cyrus Byington to Samuel M. Rutherford, July 20, 1848, in *BIA Reports 1840-5*, 503.

<sup>406</sup> Alfred Wright to William Armstrong, September 23, 1844, in *BIA Reports 1840-5*, 81.

<sup>407</sup> Bache, *Report on the Organization*, 4.

**Table 5. Subjects Taught**

	American (Pennsylvania) High School 1840 <sup>408</sup>	Choctaw Academies 1844-52 <sup>409</sup>	Mount Holyoke 1837-49 <sup>410</sup>
French			X
Latin			X
English Language		X	
English Spelling		X	
English Grammar	X	X	X
English Reading	X	X	X
English Composition & Writing	X	X	
Divisions of Time		X	
Geography	X	X	X
History of United States & World	X	X	X
Rhetoric & Logic	X	X	X
Natural & Moral Philosophy	X	X	X
Constitution and Economics	X	X	
Arithmetic	X	X	
Algebra	X		X
Geometry/Euclid	X	X	X
Trigonometry	X		
Astronomy		X	X
Chemistry	X		X
Geology			X
Physiology	X	X	X
Botany		X	X
Penmanship		X	
Biblical Studies	X	X	X

<sup>408</sup> Bache, *Report on the Organization*, 4-6.

<sup>409</sup> While these subjects were taught at most schools, there were slight variations depending on the teachers and materials available at the location and time. Cyrus Kingsbury, "Report of the Chuahla Femal [sic] Seminary," September 1844, PPPP, folder 448, GMA; Cyrus Byington to William Armstrong, September 3, 1846, in *BIA Reports, 1846-50*, 145.; Alfred Wright to William Armstrong, September 23, 1844, in *BIA Reports 1840-5*, 81.; Ebenezer Hotchkin to William Armstrong, August 7, 1845, in *BIA Reports 1840-5*, 581.; Cyrus Byington to Samuel M. Rutherford, July 20, 1848, in *BIA Reports 1840-5*, 503.; Ebenezer Hotchkins to William Wilson, June 19, 1852, in *BIA Report, 1852*, 128.; Alfred Wright to William Armstrong, September 29, 1846, in *BIA Reports, 1846-50*, 135.; Nathaniel M. Talbott to William Wilson, August 9, 1852, in *BIA Reports 1840-5*, 126.

<sup>410</sup> Mary Lyon was the founder and President of Mount Holyoke from 1837 to 1849. Mary Lyon, "Notes on curriculum and studies for each class (Junior, Middle, Senior)" Undated. Mary Lyon Collection, Mount Holyoke College Collections.

## Religious

The presence of religious training was a side-effect of missionary presence. Likely written by one of the male members of the mission, the educational goal described in Electa May Kingsbury's funeral oration elaborated the importance of being "early impressed with correct religious and moral instruction and where they would be gradually formed to the habits of sober industry. In the schools they would acquire a knowledge of the English language, which would at once place in their hand not only the Bible, but other valuable books."<sup>411</sup> Not only did missionaries want to expose tribal members to the Euro-American world, but the missions also wanted to transform Natives into white citizens—reiterated again later in the oration. They wrote that the ultimate goal was "to instruct the children of the Indians in the truths and ways of God and in the manners, customs, laws of good whitemen."<sup>412</sup> Pushing for religious conversion became a colonizing tool. For missionaries it was the first and most important step to "saving" the Choctaw. Female teachers' supposed innate maternal qualities made them ideal for introducing girls to Euro-American morals that paired with religion.

An interested portion of the curriculum that was not included in the government mandated requirements for the schools is the emphasis on morality and Christianity. Because missionaries were necessary to running the schools while the Nation raised their own teachers, religious teaching was unavoidable. Unlike Sabbath Schools and

---

<sup>411</sup> "Funeral Oration for Electa May Kingsbury," June 21, 1864, Sue L. McBeth Papers, box 1, folder 4, OHS.

<sup>412</sup> "Funeral Oration for Electa May Kingsbury," June 21, 1864, Sue L. McBeth Papers, box 1, folder 4, OHS.



Neighborhood Schools where students often commuted, academies forced most girls to be under constant Christian authority. Each day began and ended with religious studies. Morning lessons at Wheelock commenced with a hymn and prayer led by the teacher. Those capable then recited a verse of scripture.<sup>413</sup> Koonsha began the same way and ended with singing and prayer, singing being one of the taught branches.<sup>414</sup> Of their textbooks, many were religious in nature, the most important being the Bible. At Wheelock, the Bible was “daily and carefully studied by all who can read.”<sup>415</sup> The Bible became an important educational tool, meant to convert and teach. While Christianity threaded throughout the day, it did mesh with some cultural practices as well.

While often used as a religious practice, students readily adapted to the singing offered at the schools. Cyrus Kingsbury explained the importance of this skill, “We regard singing as an important branch of female education; and the progress of the pupils in this art has been gratifying.”<sup>416</sup> Singing was considered by American educators to be beneficial as physical education, a moral influence, and a method to deter children “from the tendency *out of school* to substitute proper for improper songs. Singing will be practiced, whether taught at school or not; and it is important to improve the taste beyond the point at which vulgar melodies, and coarse words, will give pleasure.”<sup>417</sup> More importantly, singing is culturally important to the Choctaw, recorded as avid singers since first European contact. There are songs for events from funerals to ball games, each

---

<sup>413</sup> Alfred Wright to William Armstrong, September 23, 1844, in *BIA Reports 1840-5*, 81.

<sup>414</sup> Ebenezer Hotchkin to William Armstrong, August 7, 1845, in *BIA Reports 1840-5*, 582.

<sup>415</sup> Alfred Wright to William Armstrong, September 23, 1844, in *BIA Reports 1840-5*, 81.

<sup>416</sup> Cyrus Kingsbury to William Armstrong, August 12, 1845, in *BIA Reports 1840-5*, 584.; Alfred Wright to William Armstrong, September 23, 1844, in *BIA Reports 1840-5*, 81.

<sup>417</sup> Bache, *Report on the Organization*, 7.

having a powerful meaning.<sup>418</sup> The Choctaw also readily accepted hymns in Choctaw, a hymnal was published through a collaboration of missionaries and Choctaw religious men in 1829 and an extended version in 1850.<sup>419</sup> While the missionaries used English religious music, singing was a point of familiarity for students to practice a new language and, at least at church services, sing in their own language.

Euro-American teachers prided themselves in religious education, showing it was at times a form of maternal colonialism. As Euro-American women were considered pious and moral authorities in the United States, they envisioned themselves as saviors in the Choctaw Nation.<sup>420</sup> For Sue L. McBeth, the goal was to save souls before anything else. In April of 1860 she taught her first class, recording in her journal that rather than simply practice reading Biblical passages, she led her pupils in reading and then deeply discussing a chapter of Revelations. For her, “the main object of these missions is work among souls. Intellectual culture, and care for the body are only accompaniments and subordinate.”<sup>421</sup> McBeth proudly pointed out that her curriculum was the most heavily based in religion at her school, Koonsha. While the women taught mostly what they desired, it was not always easy, given the language and cultural barriers. Mrs. Wright explained the difficulties, “The Bible is daily read and studied; and great pains are taken to convince the scholars that they are not merely intellectual, but also moral and

---

<sup>418</sup> Akers, *Culture and Customs of the Choctaw Indians*, 131.

<sup>419</sup> The hymnal was written by missionaries Alfred Wright, Cyrus Byington, John Kingsbury, and Loring S. Williams. The other men were Choctaw: Peter Pitchlynn, Joseph Dukes, David Folsom, Pliny Fisk, George L. Williams, Israel Folsom, and Jonathan Edwards Dwight. "The Choctaw Hymns," *Biskinik* 2014.; Read more about Traditional Music: James H. Howard and Victoria Lindsay Levine, *Choctaw Music and Dance* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990).

<sup>420</sup> Jacobs, "Maternal Colonialism," 461.

<sup>421</sup> April 1860, McBeth, "Diary of a Missionary to the Choctaws."

accountable beings; and hence the inculcation of divine truth is made prominent.”<sup>422</sup>

While both women made attempts at general “intellectual” education, it is clear in the cases of McBeth and Wright that they hoped to convert girls more than anything. Their priorities strayed greatly from Choctaw aims, of academic and domestic development. Though some Choctaw Christians likely supported Biblical education, the missionaries’ goals certainly did not always align with those they served.

With missionary involvement in education, Christian teachings were unavoidable. While some Choctaw were Christians and others found singing a useful exercise, the emphasis on religion was not a required part of education laid out by the Nation. The emphasis on religion shows more so how Euro-American missionaries, specifically women, were able to push their own colonial agenda in an attempt to “civilize” students.

### **Domestic & Textiles**

Perhaps the most controversial portion of the curriculum was the domestic work utilized to teach girls how to run Euro-American style households. The Choctaw specified that some form of the broad subjects of sewing and housewifery be taught at the schools. Not all Choctaw agreed upon the importance of these skills, but in their many variations indicate what some felt their daughters needed to know. While the teachers were primarily white, one of the listed teachers was a former Choctaw student. A decade after serving as a teaching assistant, a Miss Dwight moved on to managing girls at

---

<sup>422</sup> “Bound Biographies of Cyrus Kingsbury & C.C. Copeland,” 4 May 1869, Sue L. McBeth Papers, box 1, forward 10, OHS.

Chuwala Female Seminary on her own. A young missionary woman known as Miss Child instructed the girls in the classroom, but “Miss Dwight, a full Choctaw, and sister of Mr. J. E. Dwight, has had the care of the girls out of school, and instructed them in plain sewing and in other domestic labors.”<sup>423</sup> Dwight is one of the earliest women fulfilling the plan to have Choctaw women teach girls at the academies. A small step, her participation shows how important domestic skills were to the Nation’s developing school system. With sewing the only explicitly named skill, its teaching was in line with Choctaw aims. Annually, school reports show girls produced and maintained hundreds of items completely by hand. For the purpose of this research, sewing will encompass all textile work, including knitting and weaving.<sup>424</sup> Choctaw Agent, William Armstrong reported on the schools in the Nation as a whole 1841, “In addition to their general education, which is as liberal as you will find in most of our female schools, the girls are taught knitting, sewing, needlework, and such a knowledge of domestic affairs as my render them useful in after life.”<sup>425</sup> These skills were vital for any woman of this period to know and Choctaw girls were thoroughly educated in them.

The girls were anything but lazy when it came to producing hand-sewn goods.

---

<sup>423</sup> Dwight was the sister of a Choctaw preacher in the Choctaw Nation. Cyrus Byington to William Armstrong, September 3, 1846, in *BIA Reports, 1846-50*, 145.; Cyrus Kingsbury to Douglas H. Cooper, September 13, 1858, in *BIA Report, 1858*, 164.

<sup>424</sup> Webster’s 1828 dictionary describes to sew as “To practice sewing; to join things with stitches.” To knit is defined as “To unite, as threads by needles; to connect in a kind of net-work; as, to *knit* a stocking.” To weave, “to unite threads of any kind in such a manner as to form cloth. This is done by crossing the threads by means of a shuttle. The modes of weaving, and the kinds of texture, are various. The threads first laid in length are called the warp; those which cross them in the direction of the breadth, are called the weft or woof.” Each of these are distinct skillsets, but all commonly taught to women in the nineteenth century. Noah Webster’s dictionary was used at least at Fort Coffee Academy as a tool for teaching English. Noah Webster, “American Dictionary of the English Language,” (1828). W.L. McAlister to William Armstrong, August 1, 1846, in *BIA Reports 1840-5*, 142.

<sup>425</sup> William Armstrong to T. Hartley Crawford, October 6, 1841, in *BIA Reports 1840-5*, 296.

New Hope student Elizabeth Jacobs Quinton recounted in a 1930s interview the sheer quantity of textile crafts the girls produced. Elizabeth recalled the time spent on the third floor learning, “They made us do it right. If it wasn’t right they made up rip it out. I’ve seen the girls have a sock almost done and the teacher would make her ravel it all out. Same way with the sewing. They made us learn to do things right. That’s the reason I can sew now, blind as I am.”<sup>426</sup> Typically, girls sewed their own clothing but produced hundreds of different items.<sup>427</sup> Of course, they also mended their clothes regularly.<sup>428</sup> The following figure (see table 6) shows how many types of items were reported various years at different institutions. Students learned to make more than clothing too. House linens and quilts were a common project. Quinton recollected, “We made bed clothes— sheets and pillow cases. The seamstresses would take bleaching and mark out patterns; they used to use a saucer for a pattern; they would mark around them, and then we would make the quilts.”<sup>429</sup> Knowing how to sew household linens and quilts meant women could provide for their future homes. It was the more advanced items, such as quilts, coats, pants, and shirts, that would be laid out for visitors to view at examination time, though the dresses the girls wore also spoke to their acumen.<sup>430</sup> This element of required curriculum was easily met at all schools.

---

<sup>426</sup> Whaley, "Elizabeth Jacobs Quinton," 129.

<sup>427</sup> Cyrus Kingsbury to William Wilson, August 17, 1852, in *BIA Report, 1852*, 131.

<sup>428</sup> Alfred Wright to William Wilson, September 1, 1851, in *BIA Report, 1851*, 114.

<sup>429</sup> Whaley, "Elizabeth Jacobs Quinton," 129.

<sup>430</sup> Nathaniel M. Talbott to William Wilson, August 9, 1852, in *BIA Report, 1852*, 126.

**Table 6. Textiles Produced at Schools**

Items	Ayanubbee 1846 <sup>431</sup>	Wheelock 1850-1 <sup>432</sup>	Chuwahla 1851-2 <sup>433</sup>	Wapanucka 1856-7 <sup>434</sup>
Dresses	68		50+ <sup>435</sup>	85
Skirts				57
Aprons				101
Pantaloon	20		38	
Suits of Male Clothing				5 <sup>436</sup>
Vests			7	
Coats			13	
Roundabout (boy's jacket)			4	
Shirts			37	
<b>Total Sewn Articles of Clothing:</b>	88	209	149	248
Knit Stockings		12	30+	
Handkerchiefs				100+
Knit Lace	Unknown			
Knit Lady's Cap	Unknown			
Sacks				9
Pillow Cases				4
Table Cloths				3
Towels				12
Bacon Sacks				Unknown Quantity
Wagon Curtains				Unknown Quantity
Patchwork Quilt	3	1		1

<sup>431</sup> Cyrus Byington to William Armstrong, September 3, 1846, *BIA Reports, 1846-50*, 145.

<sup>432</sup> Alfred Wright to William Wilson, September 1, 1851, in *BIA Report, 1851*, 114.

<sup>433</sup> Cyrus Kingsbury to William Wilson, August 17, 1852, in *BIA Report, 1852*, 131.

<sup>434</sup> MCG to Miss A.P., May 22, 1857, in Greenleaf, *Life and Letters of Mary C. Greenleaf*, 388.

<sup>435</sup> The girls are noted to have completed ten dresses for ladies in the neighborhood in addition to making their own clothes. With forty students, there were then at least fifty dresses made through the year if not more.

<sup>436</sup> Sewn for local Black men and boys.

Weaving was also an important part of a girl's textile education. Interestingly, it is not recorded in detail as often at schools, but it was an incredibly common practice. Elizabeth Jacobs Quinton recalled the process at New Hope, "We learned to spin and run the loom—make cloth."<sup>437</sup> At Koonsha, the students also learned to card, spin, and weave.<sup>438</sup> But, with all crafts, there were levels of skill that came with practice. At Koonsha, Rev. Hotchkin noted, "Forty-two can card and spin cotton; nine can weave. Forty yards have been woven by them this term. The filling for the above has been spun by the smaller girls."<sup>439</sup> In comparison, Alfred Wright noted, "Of those boarded at Wheelock, fifteen can card and spin well; others are learning."<sup>440</sup> While cotton loom weaving was relatively new to the Nation, it was becoming a more common practice in households. After the introduction of cotton in their Mississippi homelands in 1800, Choctaw women, already experienced in weaving barks and other vegetation, quickly began cultivating the crop and creating textiles from it.<sup>441</sup> By the post-removal period, weaving was an integral part of many households. In the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek, one thousand wheels, one thousand cards, and four hundred looms in their new lands were among the treaty stipulations.<sup>442</sup> Choctaw women adapted weaving to play an important part of their daily lives. The mission schools teaching this skill was another way to promote it amongst their daughters.

---

<sup>437</sup> Whaley, "Elizabeth Jacobs Quinton," 127.

<sup>438</sup> S. M. Rutherford to W. Medill, October 11, 1848, in *BIA Reports, 1846-50*, 500.

<sup>439</sup> Ebenezer Hotchken to S.M Rutherford, July 7, 1848, in *BIA Reports, 1846-50*, 514.

<sup>440</sup> Alfred Wright to William Armstrong, September 23, 1844, in *BIA Reports 1840-5*, 81.

<sup>441</sup> Jennifer Byram, "Reawakening Chahta Nan Tvanna (Choctaw Textiles)" (paper presented at the Textile Society of America, 2018).

<sup>442</sup> Article XX in U. S. Department of State, *Treaty with the Choctaws, 1830*, Dancing Rabbit Creek: 1830. Accessed January 22, 2021. [choctaw.org/aboutMBCI/history/treaties1830.html](http://choctaw.org/aboutMBCI/history/treaties1830.html).

The tremendous amount of sewing became a flow of revenue at some schools, though funds went to mission work rather than education. The work was sometimes auctioned off at the schools, but other times the girls did commission work. At Chuwahla, Electa May Kingsbury documented the girls in 1852 “spend[ing] one afternoon every two weeks in sewing for persons in the neighborhood, and in the manufacture of various articles with the needle. In this way they earn from \$40 to \$50 (\$1,370-1,710) a term, which is applied to some objects of benevolence.”<sup>443</sup> At the end of the year, they made “ten dresses for ladies in the neighborhood” and knitted over thirty pairs of socks and stockings for men in the vicinity.<sup>444</sup> At Wapanucka, the girls sewed sets of clothing for local Black men.<sup>445</sup> When the girls did this, profits would return to the school or join the funds raised from selling off their other work at the end of the year examinations.

The efforts of female students resulted in the production of hundreds of items each year. Often, the schools sold the miscellaneous items and put the money towards various projects. This perhaps is one of the largest examples of student exploitation. The year before the official academies were established, the girls of what would become Wheelock made and sold \$54.50 (\$1,880) worth of “plain and fancy needle-work.” While the girls were given some control of the money, it was limited to “benevolent objects which the children themselves may choose.”<sup>446</sup> In other words, they had to give it away to charities of their choice rather than earning the money from their own labors. At Koonsha all their items, practical and fancy, sold for a total of \$55.71 (\$1,920), which

---

<sup>443</sup> Electa May Kingsbury to William Wilson, August 17, 1852, in *BIA Report, 1852*, 131.

<sup>444</sup> Electa May Kingsbury to William Wilson, August 17, 1852, in *BIA Report, 1852*, 131.

<sup>445</sup> MCG to Miss A.P., May 22, 1857, in Greenleaf, *Life and Letters of Mary C. Greenleaf*, 388.

<sup>446</sup> Alfred Wright, to William Wilson, September 1, 1851, in *BIA Report, 1851*, 111.



was sent to the American Board of Foreign Missions “as a donation from this school to spread the gospel.”<sup>447</sup> Another year, the Koonsha girls again sold many items and the funds were donated “for missionary purposes.”<sup>448</sup> The third year, the girls interestingly doubled their profits, selling their fancy work from the year at \$119 (\$4,040), sending \$100 (\$3,410) on to the ABCFM and reserving \$19 (\$649) to pay for materials.<sup>449</sup> The sales at Chuahla “twenty or thirty dollars” (\$698-1,050) went to books for Sunday schools in Pushamataha.<sup>450</sup> While it suggests the girls were involved and connected to their community, they also had no financial control. In a way, their labor was being exploited to provide for further colonizing projects of the missions. While the funds sometimes went to nearby sources, the girls work was used for the missionary’s goals and not their own.

## **Housewifery**

Housewifery was the other vague skillset explicitly required at the academies. Of course, this could mean a variety of skills. Noah Webster’s 1828 dictionary describes housewifery as “The business of the mistress of a family; female business in the economy of a family; female management of domestic concerns.”<sup>451</sup> Learning to cook, clean, make soap, and manage a budget were then all important facets of this broad skill. Catharine

---

<sup>447</sup> Ebenezer Hotchkin to William Wilson, September 22, 1851, in *BIA Report, 1851*, 114-5.

<sup>448</sup> Ebenezer Hotchkin to William Wilson, June 19, 1852, in *BIA Report, 1852*, 128.

<sup>449</sup> Ebenezer Hotchkin to Douglas H. Cooper, August 22, 1853, in *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Transmitted with the Message of the President at the Opening of the First Session of the Thirty-Third Congress, 1853*, (Washington, D.C.: Robert Armstrong, 1853), 180.

<sup>450</sup> Cyrus Kingsbury to William Armstrong, August 12, 1845, in *BIA Reports 1840-5*, 584.

<sup>451</sup> Webster, "American Dictionary of the English Language."

Sedgwick in her 1840 self-help book explained an American woman should know how to cook, preserve food, clean, and do the laundry. Even if wealthy, she argued a woman should be able to inspect the quality of a servants work and if a servant fall ill, “herself kneads the bread, sweeps, and irons.”<sup>452</sup> Alfred Wright was proud of the Wheelock curriculum focusing on “making the girls acquainted with all that pertains to a well-regulated household.”<sup>453</sup> The schools’ daily upkeep then became a laboratory of housewifery.

The domestic education of the girls was not an easy feat. For the development of their domestic abilities, one teacher might find herself tasked with teaching a wide variety of skills. Reverend Cyrus Byington described their work at Ayanubbee:

Their labors in the dining-room and kitchen are systematized as much as possible, There are four classes in these labors, each class having some large and some small girls, and remaining a week at a time. They are taught to keep the rooms and tables in order, to prepare food, to make butter, soap, candles, &c. Some attention has been paid to making cheese, and a carpet. Several of the larger girls are capable of preparing an ordinary meals for the whole family, with the help of the small members of the same class.<sup>454</sup>

At both Wapanucka and Wheelock, girls were additionally responsible for caring for their dairy. This was certainly not a small task, “Several of the girls now milk in the morning, there being forty-five milch cows.”<sup>455</sup> Each school featured different daily needs that girls participated in. The most universal chores taught were cleaning and cooking.

---

<sup>452</sup> Catharine Maria Sedgwick, *Means And Ends, Or, Self-training* (Boston: Marsh, Capen, Lyon, & Webb, 1840), 67.

<sup>453</sup> Alfred Wright to William Wilson, September 1, 1851, in *BIA Report, 1851*, 114.

<sup>454</sup> Cyrus Byington to Samuel M. Rutherford, July 20, 1848, *BIA Reports, 1846-50*, 503.

<sup>455</sup> William Armstrong to T. Hartley Crawford, November 3, 1843, in *BIA Reports 1840-5*, 333.; MCG to Miss E.D., April 21, 1857, in Greenleaf, *Life and Letters of Mary C. Greenleaf*, 361-2.

To tackle the daily cooking and cleaning, academies each devised their own plan of attack depending on the staff available to assist the girls.<sup>456</sup> Elizabeth Jacobs Quinton recalled:

There was a big bell hanging way up there. They would pull the string and we all knew what that meant, and every Friday evening four of the girls were chosen to cook and four to wash, and four for this and four for something else; we'd have to do it all week, that is the big girls would.—the little girls carried water to the rooms. Then every Friday they changed, so that we could all learn how to do all kinds of work.<sup>457</sup>

With classrooms, bedrooms, and common spaces, cleaning took up a large portion of their daily labors. Rather than cleaning personal spaces, academy school schedules provided for chores to be completed communally. Teacher Mary C. Greenleaf at Wapanucka created a cleaning schedule, “I appoint two of the girls weekly, for housekeeping in the sitting-room, and they make the fire, sweep and dust the room. Two also take care of the bed-room, all the girls making their own beds, the others sweeping the room and stairs.”<sup>458</sup> By rotating these various cleaning chores, girls would then graduate with the skills to manage a Euro-American home. At the same school they also had to clean up after meals, “Several of them are employed in the dining-hall after every meal, washing dishes.....”<sup>459</sup> Girls’ experiences in the kitchen were described far less, but it is evident they were cooking at some schools. The biggest difference that varied how girls were employed in kitchens was the labor of Black women working at some of the

---

<sup>456</sup> Cyrus Byington to Samuel M. Rutherford, July 20, 1848, in *BIA Reports, 1846-50*, 503.; Cyrus Kingsbury to William Armstrong, August 12, 1845, in *BIA Reports 1840-5*, 584.; Alfred Wright to William Armstrong, September 23, 1844, in *BIA Reports 1840-5*, 81.; Cyrus Byington to William Armstrong, September 3, 1846, in *BIA Reports, 1846-50*, 145.

<sup>457</sup> Whaley, "Elizabeth Jacobs Quinton," 130.

<sup>458</sup> MCG to Miss S.T., October 30, 1856, in Greenleaf, *Life and Letters of Mary C. Greenleaf*, 321-2.

<sup>459</sup> MCG to Mrs. S.W.T., May 9, 1857, Greenleaf, *Life and Letters of Mary C. Greenleaf*, 364.

schools (their experiences will be discussed in the following chapter) who largely managed all the cooking.

The hours of labor the girls performed at the school beg the question of whether the emphasis was on them learning skills or being taken advantage of as free labor. Their work fell most often into two categories: paying off their educations and maintaining school facilities. At Chuwala under the care of Mrs. Kingsbury, three girls assisted regularly in the kitchen and dining room to pay off their room and board; the rest of the girls only had to work those positions every other week. A BIA report elaborates, "The larger of these girls have risen at about half past four o'clock, and with the assistance of Mrs. K. have prepared breakfast for about forty persons...."<sup>460</sup> While paying off their schooling was sometimes the focus of their labor, the girls at most schools regularly had to upkeep the entirety of the school and provide for local male academies.

The girl's labor also served others than themselves at the schools. While doing work in public areas makes sense, they were often charged with caring for the private apartments of teachers. After worship, Sue L. McBeth described her surprise at finding two of the older students tidying her room.<sup>461</sup> This type of work resembles servitude a bit more than simply learning to keep house. With Fort Coffee nearby, Elizabeth Jacobs Quinton learned a lot about making clothes for the boys. "We had to make pants and coats—had to make all the shirts for them. We learned to spin and run the loom—make cloth."<sup>462</sup> In exchange, boys would chop wood, raise livestock, and manage fields (a

---

<sup>460</sup> Cyrus Kingsbury to John Drennen, September, 1849, in *BIA Reports, 1846-50*, 168.

<sup>461</sup> April 1860, McBeth, "Diary of a Missionary to the Choctaws."

<sup>462</sup> Whaley, "Elizabeth Jacobs Quinton," 127.

traditionally Choctaw female job).<sup>463</sup> Chuwahla produced forty pairs of pantaloons for the male Spencer Academy “for which, payment is expected.”<sup>464</sup> This type of reciprocal labor exchange is not commonly documented, but shows that the girls were responsible for the care of an extended mission family.

While training in housewifery was momentous task, teacher Mary Coombs Greenleaf deemed “on a review of what has been accomplished, it seems as much as could reasonably be expected of any school girls.”<sup>465</sup> These skills were all pertinent to the average Euro-American home, but the continuation of using mission assistance suggests the Choctaw Council was pleased with the skills their daughters were learning. Yes, it was a method of acculturating girls, but it was done under the guidance of the Nation as a means to prepare their daughters for their future encounters with Euro-American society. Through this system, Choctaw girls became well acquainted with the nuances of the housewifery the Nation wanted them to know and ready to train their own daughters, presumably.

### **Fancy Work**

While the Nation asked for girls to learn sewing and housewifery, the teaching of fancy work was not explicitly stated. Fancy work was any crafting of a superfluous and non-functional nature. The use of fancy work was contentious amongst missionaries, but

---

<sup>463</sup>Graham, *Frontier Sketches: New Hope*, 24, 413-4.; Graham, *Frontier Sketches: Mission School at Fort Coffee*, 24, 162.

<sup>464</sup> Cyrus Kingsbury to William Armstrong, August 12, 1845, in *BIA Reports 1840-5*, 584.

<sup>465</sup> Greenleaf to Miss A.P., May 22, 1857, in Greenleaf, *Life and Letters of Mary C. Greenleaf*, 389.

also amongst American education proponents. The 1840 self-help author Catherine Sedgewick criticized learning fancy work through a story where a girl did not learn housewifery and instead spent her time, “studying French, learning Latin, and painting on velvet, &c. &c.”<sup>466</sup> Cyrus Kingsbury felt strongly against fancy work education for his students at Chuwahla. He pridefully reported, “Less ‘fancy work’ is done here than at some of the other schools. We think the Choctaws, in their present circumstances, need a knowledge of what will be useful rather than of what is merely for show and ornament.”<sup>467</sup> While missionaries made their opinions known, that of Choctaws is unknown.

**Table 7. Domestic Arts and Work**

	<b>American (Pennsylvania) High School 1840s<sup>468</sup></b>	<b>Choctaw Academies 1844-60<sup>469</sup></b>	<b>Mount Holyoke pre-1849<sup>470</sup></b>
Drawing	X	X	X
Painting		X	
Wax Sculpture		X	
Coral Work		X	
Embroidery		X	
Music	X	X	
Housewifery	X	X	

While there was a large emphasis on practical sewing skills, many schools offered the unpractical fancy work that Kingsbury scorned. Pleased with their progress in more

<sup>466</sup> Sedgewick, *Means And Ends, Or, Self-training*, 71.

<sup>467</sup> Electa Kingsbury to William Wilson, August 17, 1852, in *BIA Report, 1852*, 131.

<sup>468</sup> Bache, *Report on the Organization*, 4-6.

<sup>469</sup> Alfred Wright to William Armstrong, September 23, 1844, in *BIA Reports 1840-5*, 81.; Ebenezer Hotchkin to William Wilson, September 22, 1851, in *BIA Report, 1851*, 114-5.; Ebenezer Hotchkin to William Wilson, June 19, 1852, in *BIA Report, 1852*, 128.; MCG to Miss E.D., April 21, 1857, in Greenleaf, *Life and Letters of Mary C. Greenleaf*, 361.

<sup>470</sup> Mary Lyon was the founded and President of Mount Holyoke from 1837 to 1849. Mary Lyon, “Notes on curriculum and studies for each class (Junior, Middle, Senior)” Undated. Mary Lyon Collection, Mount Holyoke College Collections.

general education, the girls of Koonsha advanced “to drawing and painting, also to worsted work and wax work.”<sup>471</sup> The following year, students were taught painting, drawing, as well as needle and coral-work.<sup>472</sup> At schools, such as Wheelock, four afternoon hours each day were devoted to their domestic and finer skills.<sup>473</sup> For those who taught fancy skills, there was a significant amount of effort put into the teaching of miscellaneous skills on top of their practical work. When remarking on her student’s improvements over the course of the year at Wapanucka, Mary C. Greenleaf praised her favorite student’s abilities in finer arts and demeanor more than anything else. The formerly feisty Jane Greenleaf was praised for her musical ear while an H. S. described as “a very good girl, quick and obedient, sews pretty well, and is now marking the alphabet on canvass.”<sup>474</sup> From the inconsistency of subjects taught, fancy work seems to be the emphasis of missionaries and not the Nation.

Until 1860, Euro-American women learned fancy skills to better qualify themselves for marriage to a middle- or upper-class man. It was seen as the “manifestation of culture and refinement” especially when combined with the uplifting and moral training of music and literature.<sup>475</sup> In the 1840s, Horace Mann began to argue that all students could benefit from the moral effects of drawing and arts, but it was still an early idea to blend this private school feature to the basic academics of common

---

<sup>471</sup> Wax work was the sculpting of wax, popular in the late eighteenth century and popularized throughout the nineteenth by Madame Tussaud. Tussaud, Marie. *Madame Tussaud’s Memoirs and Reminiscences of France: Forming an Abridged History of the French Revolution*, (London: Saunders and Otley, 1838), 17.; Ebenezer Hotchkin to William Wilson, September 22, 1851, in *BIA Report, 1851*, 114-5.

<sup>472</sup> Ebenezer Hotchkin to William Wilson, June 19, 1852, in *BIA Report, 1852*, 128.

<sup>473</sup> Alfred Wright to William Armstrong, September 23, 1844, in *BIA Reports 1840-5*, 81.

<sup>474</sup> MCG to Miss E.D., April 21, 1857, in Greenleaf, *Life and Letters of Mary C. Greenleaf*, 361.

<sup>475</sup> Arthur D. Efland, "Art and Education for Women in 19th Century Boston," *Studies in Art Education* 26, no. 3 (1985): 133.

school.<sup>476</sup> Both the Mount Holyoke and the Pennsylvanian High School Plan did not provide for the same level of fancy work, though Pennsylvania advocated for housewifery. Perhaps the teaching of these skills was in an attempt to provide girls with social mobility in American circles. On the contrary, a teacher might simply possess a specific skill she shared that year. Whatever the purpose, fancy work shows that the education of many academies were a blend of high school, finishing school, and the equivalent of women's colleges.

The curriculum at the schools show both a degree of Choctaw control, but also growing pains of a young school system relying on outsiders' assistance. While the Choctaw contracted mission groups to assist, it was only a temporary arrangement while they could raise their own teachers. The academy system was strengthening throughout this period and they were beginning to see the fruit of their labors. They endured this knowing that their daughters, like Emily Dwight, would gradually take over their schools.

---

<sup>476</sup> Efland, "Art and Education for Women in 19th Century Boston," 134-5.



## CHAPTER VIII

### INVISIBLE WORK

“Steal Away” by Wallace Willis

1. Steal a-way, steal a-way, steal a-way to Je-sus!  
Steal a-way, steal a-way home, I haint got long to stay here.
2. My Lord calls me, He calls me by the thun-der; The  
trumpet sounds it in my soul,--I hain't got long to stay here.
3. Green trees are bend-ing, poor sin-ners stand trembling; The  
trumpet sounds it in my soul,--I hain't got long to stay here.
4. My Lord calls me—He calls me by the lightning; The  
trumpet sounds it in my soul: I hain't got long to stay here.
5. Tombstones are bursting—poor sinners stand trembling; The  
trumpet sounds it in my soul: I hain't got long to stay here.<sup>477</sup>

Minerva Willis began the third chorus of “Steal Away” as she chopped some beef to add to the pot Sally stirred. Sally wiped the sweat from her brow, stirring in rhythm to the music. Thirteen year old Hattie sat in the corner working on some mending as she absorbed the music flowing through the kitchen—Mrs. Wiggins would not miss her. Their song streamed out the open door, relieving the heat of the kitchen, and spilled

---

<sup>477</sup> Jubilee Singers of Fisk University, "Steal Away," in *Jubilee Songs: As Sung by the Jubilee Singers, of Fisk University, Under the Auspices of the American Missionary Association* (New York: Biglow & Main, 1872), 28.

into the school courtyard. Reverend Reid passed, he particularly loved this piece that Wallace composed. Perhaps they could perform it for the students of Spencer Academy that night after supper.<sup>478</sup>

---

Invisible in most records, yet the backbone of the mission-based schools, were the African-descended people enslaved to the Choctaw. The largest Black experiences within the school system did not occur in the classroom, but in the various service roles necessary to help the schools function. The Choctaw education system relied heavily upon this population, yet their contributions and experiences go largely undiscussed in histories of the subject. The academies were thus a microcosm of perspectives on race in the Choctaw Nation. Without enslaved labor, many of the schools would not be able to function. White and Choctaw women formed the dominant group over enslaved Black laborers. While white, largely New England, perspectives survive they are useful in understanding how crucial this group of women were to daily life. The missionaries' arguments for the necessity of slave-labor, the treatment of Black women within the academy system, and the labor they performed were built around the idea of what work was appropriate for white, and sometimes Choctaw, women to perform.

---

<sup>478</sup> Wallace and Minerva Willis are often credited with the creation of several famous spirituals including "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," "Roll, Jordan, Roll," "Steal Away to Jesus," "I'm A-Rollin', I'm A-Rollin'," and "The Angels Are A-Comin'." Reverend Alexander Reid served as Spencer Academy Superintendent, where the couple were hired and heard their music. In 1871, Reid is credited with sharing the songs with the Jubilee Sings of Fisk University, which they performed and popularized. Judith Michener, "Willis, Uncle Wallace and Aunt Minerva," in *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture* (Oklahoma Historical Society); Snyder, *Great Crossings*, 291-2.

## “Indispensable” Slave Labor

Slavery at the mission-based academies was a contentious subject. While the Choctaw slave owners dominated the School Boards, the primarily New English missionaries faced criticism from home. The 1848 *Annual Report of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions* published a battle over the subject between the board and the missionaries. The concern centered on the ownership of slaves by missionaries and the acceptance of slave-holders into the church. In the letter from the Choctaw Nation missionaries to the board, they weakly defend their flaccid stance on these issues. The missionaries quoted Isaiah 30:7 saying “Their strength is to sit still” to support their neutral stance on slavery amongst the Choctaw, claiming they do not wish to “endanger our own unity” with the Nation.<sup>479</sup> The letter continues to admit the Choctaw missions connected in two ways to slavery; employing them as laborers and admitting slave-owners into the church. The first issue they claimed was solved because they did not personally own slaves “save for the single purpose of emancipation.”<sup>480</sup> As to the employment of slaves, they stated the boarding schools “made the employment of slave labor indispensable.”<sup>481</sup> Low budgets and harsh working conditions deterred the use of other labor pools. The missionaries also claimed that they could not fight slave-owning church members.

---

<sup>479</sup> Cyrus Kingsbury, Alfred Wright, Cyrus Byington, Ebenezer Hotchkin, C.C. Copeland, David Breed, Jr., H.K. Copeland, D.H. Winship, and J.C. Strong To The ABCFM Prudential Committee, March 31, 1848, in *Annual report - American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions*, (Boston: American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, 1848), 98.

<sup>480</sup> Cyrus Kingsbury, Alfred Wright, Cyrus Byington, Ebenezer Hotchkin, C.C. Copeland, David Breed, Jr., H.K. Copeland, D.H. Winship, and J.C. Strong To The ABCFM Prudential Committee, March 31, 1848, in *Annual report - American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions*, 98.

<sup>481</sup> Cyrus Kingsbury, Alfred Wright, Cyrus Byington, Ebenezer Hotchkin, C.C. Copeland, David Breed, Jr., H.K. Copeland, D.H. Winship, and J.C. Strong To The ABCFM Prudential Committee, March 31, 1848, in *Annual report - American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions*, 98.

They stated slavery was constitutional for the Choctaw and as foreigners, they felt it not their duty to fight the law of the land.<sup>482</sup> The ABCFM's response, though pushing the missionaries to resist slavery, is concerning in its weak stance on the larger issue. The ABCFM's board replied to this that they understood people sometimes were forced into slaveholding, but the issue was that the Choctaw were voluntarily continuing as slaveholders. They demanded that starting in March that same year, 1848, the missionaries stop utilizing slave labor. If they continued, missions risked losing ABCFM support.<sup>483</sup> While the board of the ABCFM tried to enforce new policies against the use of slave-owning, they were certainly tepid in their critique of slavery.

Slave-ownership was an accepted practice in the Choctaw Nation, though smaller numbers of people directly owned slaves.<sup>484</sup> Determining the exact number of enslaved people in the Choctaw Nation is difficult, but studies suggest around 2,349 people were enslaved in 1860.<sup>485</sup> Historian Jeffrey Lee Fortney made conservative estimates based on

---

<sup>482</sup> Cyrus Kingsbury, Alfred Wright, Cyrus Byington, Ebenezer Hotchkin, C.C. Copeland, David Breed, Jr., H.K. Copeland, D.H. Winship, and J.C. Strong To The ABCFM Prudential Committee, March 31, 1848, in *Annual report - American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions*, 100.

<sup>483</sup> S.B. Treat To Members of the Choctaw Mission at Missionary House, June 22, 1848, in *Annual report - American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions*, 104, 09. The ABCFM pulled their support of the schools in 1859 when the Choctaw refused to end abolish slavery. The Presbyterian Foreign Mission Board took over the schools until they close in 1861 due to the Civil War. Coleman, *The Wheelock Story*, 27.

<sup>484</sup> For further reading on slavery among the Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, and other Nations, see: Harmon, *Rich Indians*; Christina Snyder, *Slavery in Indian Country: The Changing Face of Captivity in Early America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010); Perdue, *"Mixed Blood" Indians*; Saunt, *Black, White, and Indian: Race and the Unmaking of an American Family*; Krauthamer, *Black Slaves, Indian Masters*; William Loren Katz, *Black Indians: A Hidden Heritage* (New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 1986).

<sup>485</sup> Barbara Krauthamer writes, "Arriving at an accurate count of the number of freedpeople in the nations is a challenging as determining the number of enslaved people. The 1860 census enumerates 2,297 enslaved people owned by Choctaws and 917 people owned by Chickasaws. By contrast, wartime estimates placed the enslaved population in the Choctaw Nation at 3,000 and that of the Chickasaw Nation at 2,000. Early twentieth-century censuses of the Choctaw and Chickasaw nations counted 5,994 former slaves and their descendants in the Choctaw Nation and 4,670 former slaves and their descendants in the Chickasaw Nation." Doran, "Population Statistics of Nineteenth Century Indian Territory," 501; Krauthamer, *Black Slaves, Indian Masters*, 175.

the 1860 Census, finding 5.26 percent of Choctaw families owned slaves. Each of these families owned an average of 6 slaves.<sup>486</sup> In the United States at this time, the average slaveholder owned 10 slaves.<sup>487</sup> But there were people who owned significantly more. Peter Pitchlynn owned 81 people in the 1860 census, 3.45 percent of the enslaved population in the Choctaw Nation.<sup>488</sup> Robert M. Jones lavishly lived on his Rose Hill Plantation with 225 slaves at any given time, 9.59 percent of all the slaves in the Choctaw Nation in 1860, making him the largest slave-owner in the Nation.<sup>489</sup> For comparison, 23 percent of slaveholder in the United States had 5 slaves, 2 percent owned 50, .5 percent owned 100, and .06 percent amounted to owning 200 slaves.<sup>490</sup> While slavery was not as wide-spread as in the United States, there was a large enough population of wealthy slave-owners to influence the perspective on the subject.

While the majority of missionaries did not directly own slaves, they frequently hired them from local Choctaws. Sarah Ann Harlan recalled hiring out those enslaved to her “for a mere pittance,” making \$5 (\$159 in 1860) a month per worker.<sup>491</sup> However, there are known cases of the missionaries amongst the Choctaw participating in slave-ownership. The 1860 Census lists multiple missionaries and even academies owning Black people.<sup>492</sup> Lewis Tappan in 1858 wrote an op-ed article exposing the ABCFM for

---

<sup>486</sup> Jeffrey Lee Fortney, "Robert M. Jones and The Choctaw Nation," 32.

<sup>487</sup> Lee Soltow, "Economic Inequality in the United States in the Period from 1790 to 1860," *The Journal of Economic History* 31, no. 4 (1971).

<sup>488</sup> Jeffrey Lee Fortney, "Robert M. Jones and The Choctaw Nation," 35; Doran, "Population Statistics of Nineteenth Century Indian Territory," 501.

<sup>489</sup> Bruce, "Jones, Robert M."; Doran, "Population Statistics of Nineteenth Century Indian Territory," 501.

<sup>490</sup> Soltow, "Economic Inequality in the United States in the Period from 1790 to 1860," 825.

<sup>491</sup> Interview with Sarah Ann Harlan, August 24, 1937, IPP, WHC.

<sup>492</sup> In the 1860 slave census, there is certainly evidence of white Reverends, working as Academy Superintendents, owning slaves. Alexander Reid (Spencer Academy) owned a sixty year old Black woman, Ebenezer Hotchkin (Koonsha Female Seminary) owned a thirty-five year old Black man, and Cyrus Kingsbury (Chuwala Female Seminary) was the guardian for a “Bartley,” who owned a “nominal” enslaved

knowing that one of its missionaries previously owned slaves for the past six years.<sup>493</sup> In another newspaper criticizing the board that same year, Tappan fumed, “Slaves are hired of their masters to do mission work, and their masters receive the pay. Church-members buy and sell church-members. No slaveholder has been refused admission into the mission church simply for being a slaveholder.” He pointed out the huge number of slaveholders in the church, noting that in 1848 the Cherokee admitted twenty four slaveholders and the Choctaw missions thirty-eight. In the Cherokee churches there were twenty-three slaves and in the Choctaw one hundred and four enslaved members.<sup>494</sup> As early as 1854, an article from the New York Tribune criticized Reverend Dr. Bacon, an ABCFM board member, for a poor view of new slavery laws in the Choctaw Nation. The article describes, “In former years there had difficulties arisen in the Board from the employment of slaves in the families of the Choctaw missionaries.” The Board was against the use of slave labor, but, Bacon’s argument countered, “But they must have help. The slaves so employed were instructed in the mission houses and in Sabbath Schools. This law is intended to prevent such teaching.”<sup>495</sup> Perhaps thinking education offset their moral errors of slave owning, Bacon illustrates the mindset of missionaries

---

one-hundred year old Black man. “Fort Coffee Academy” is listed as having its own slave, though listed in the care of Reverend Dr. Paine. She was a fifty year old Black woman. An “Armstrong” with an illegibly scratched out second word could potentially be Armstrong academy, as it was listed the same day as Fort Coffee Academy. Armstrong owned owns 7 slaves with 2 slave houses. All Black. Females 12, 15, and 35 and Males 10, 13, 14 (marked as deaf/dumb), and 17. "United States Census (Slave Schedule), 1860," *FamilySearch* ; citing NARA microfilm publication M653 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.)

<sup>493</sup> Lewis Tappan, "The American Board of Foreign Missions and Slavery," *Frederick Douglass' Newspaper* (Rochester, N.Y.), February 16, 1858, 4.

<sup>494</sup> Lewis Tappan, "The American Board," *The Independent*, September 2, 1858, 8.  
<http://argo.library.okstate.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/90090048?accountid=4117>.

<sup>495</sup> "Meeting of the American Board," *Frederick Douglass' Paper* September 29, 1854, 2.

dabbling in slavery. With the tension of slavery, missionaries tried to hide their labor best they could but some of their experiences persevered in the record.

Writing about their experiences in the mission-field for Northern audiences after 1860, self-proclaimed abolitionists Reverend Goode and Reverend Benson both defended the use of slaves at Fort Coffee as early as 1843. Goode claimed he felt societally pressured in order to complete mission work, insisting that “I was advised by a brother minister to employ among our laborers one or more negro slaves, lest, by seeming to avoid them and employing white persons in preference, I should incur the imputation of being an ‘abolitionist.’”<sup>496</sup> A weak excuse, Goode’s reasoning points out the strength of pro-slavery sentiments surrounding the schools, Protestant churches, and mission communities within the Choctaw Nation. This is important because it highlights the wide acceptance of slavery in the Choctaw Nation, specifically among the government officials and wealthy tribal members the missionaries wanted to influence. Though claiming to support abolition, the missionaries were willing to sacrifice the well-being of Black populations in order to further their own efforts.

Both men also pointed out their inability to keep workers. The German family initially working as cooks at Fort Coffee became dissatisfied with having no German community and decided to return to Cincinnati. Thus, Mrs. Benson and Mrs. Goode took over the labor while other help was found.<sup>497</sup> Goode argued the strain on the white women forced the search for alternative labor as “the severe and unintended drudgery

---

<sup>496</sup> William H. Goode, *Outposts of Zion, with Linnings of Mission Life* (Cincinnati: Poe & Hitchcock, 1863), 149-50.

<sup>497</sup> Benson, *Life Among the Choctaw* 183; Graham, *Frontier Sketches: Fort Coffee*, 24, 128; Goode, *Outposts of Zion, with Linnings of Mission Life*.

temporarily imposed upon members of our own household, created a case of necessity which could be disposed of in no other way.”<sup>498</sup> The “drudgery” viewed as too difficult for white women shows a devaluation of both Choctaw and Black women whom they sought to fill the positions. By hiring Black labor, Mrs. Goode and Mrs. Benson were released “from the heavy labors which, for a time, they had voluntarily assumed, and allowing them to return to their appropriate positions.”<sup>499</sup> The idea of “appropriate” positions permeates the many ways enslaved women labored at the schools.

But who were these people working at the schools? There is no simple answer. With only white perspectives of Black laborers, it is easy to fall into seeing people through a white American perspective. While the condition of enslaved people in the Choctaw Nation is reminiscent of the American South, it is important to recognize there were differences in slave owning. Of course, this was not uniform, but it is important to acknowledge the complexities and differences that came with living in Choctaw society.

The Black laborers of the schools were primarily enslaved people due to harsh laws limiting free men and women from living in the Nation. Upon arrival, Choctaw elites who carried their slaves with them implemented laws similar to those they adopted while living in the Southeast. Their 1836 Constitution featured a provision prohibiting any non-Choctaw or Chickasaw Black person from settling in the Nation or ever holding a place in office.<sup>500</sup> An 1840 act ordered all free Black people out of the Nation with a penalty of permanent enslavement to the highest bidder at auction if they stayed.

---

<sup>498</sup> Goode, *Outposts of Zion, with Linnings of Mission Life*, 149.

<sup>499</sup> Goode, *Outposts of Zion, with Linnings of Mission Life*, 145.

<sup>500</sup> CGC, “General Provisions” in *The Constitution and Laws of the Choctaw Nation*, 12.



This same law ensured white settlers and missionaries, who could bring Northern abolitionist sentiments, abided by Choctaw laws concerning free Blacks. The law specifically stated, “That any white man in this Nation, who shall abet, encourage, or in any way whatever conceal a free negro, in order to screen them from the provisions of this law, shall be forthwith ordered out of this Nation.”<sup>501</sup> In 1846, the Choctaw Council passed a series of laws prohibiting free Blacks from working in the Nation. Then, they created a stricter emancipation process, holding “That no negro slave can be emancipated in this Nation, except by application or petition of the owner to the General Council” and even with their approval, the law required the owner to be completely debt free. If granted freedom, they had thirty days to leave the Nation with the consequence of being sold into five more years of slavery should they remain.<sup>502</sup> If a free Black entered the Nation searching for work, they potentially suffered the penalty of “not less than one hundred lashes” on their bare back in addition to the seizure of all property in their possession.<sup>503</sup> Legally, the Choctaw Nation became a land hostile and inhospitable to free Black people.

There are reports of greater freedom for enslaved populations. When journalist Albert D. Richardson travelled through Indian Territory, he asked the inhabitants of Fort Smith about the state of slavery. They judged it to be going “Badly. The Cherokees and Choctaws don’t govern them...[they] do about as they please.”<sup>504</sup> With often reported lax

---

<sup>501</sup> CGC, “AN ACT prohibiting free negroes to reside in the Nation, and also making the employer liable to punishment, and further, making it the duty of the light-horse-men to take up negroes suspected free,” in *The Constitution and Laws of the Choctaw Nation*, 32

<sup>502</sup> CGC, “Be it enacted, &c., That no negro slave can be emancipated,” in *The Constitution and Laws of the Choctaw Nation*, 64.

<sup>503</sup> CGC, “Be it enacted, &c., That from and after the passage of this act, no negroes from the United States,” in *The Constitution and Laws of the Choctaw Nation*, 64.

<sup>504</sup> Richardson, *Beyond the Mississippi*, 216.

treatment, enslaved people seem to have had more privileges than some of their Southern counterparts. All the same, being Black was not a socially acceptable part of a Choctaw's identity, at least at the academies. Orphaned student Isaac M'Kee entered the Fort Coffee Academy when he was about fourteen, thinking he was completely Choctaw. His father was Choctaw; however, his mother, it turned out, was "a bright mulatto slave" housekeeper and sold at the death of M'Kee's father. Taunts soon commenced at Fort Coffee as students recognized his darker complexion and curling hair.<sup>505</sup> M'Kee went to his Choctaw guardian, William Riddle, who confirmed his mother's identity and a half hour later, a gunshot was heard. M'Kee was found dying of a self-inflicted wound.<sup>506</sup> There were lines of acceptability among many Choctaw and while Blacks seem to have some freedoms, they were to stay a separate and laboring class.

### **Treatment of Black Women**

There was no typical enslaved experience while working at the missions. Circumstances and conditions varied greatly: free, enslaved, hired, married, and single.<sup>507</sup> There are other instances of couples working for the schools. At Spencer Academy, Wallace and Minerva Willis were hired out from Choctaw Brit Willis. They reportedly

---

<sup>505</sup> Benson, *Life Among the Choctaw* 216-7.

<sup>506</sup> Benson, *Life Among the Choctaw* 217. Other studies on Afro-Indians: Krauthamer, *Black Slaves, Indian Masters*; Miles, *Ties that Bind: The Story of an Afro-Cherokee Family in Slavery and Freedom*; Snyder, *Slavery in Indian Country*; David A. Chang, *The Color of the Land: Race, Nation, and the Politics of Landownership in Oklahoma, 1832-1929* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

<sup>507</sup> While slaves could not legally marry, I use the term "married" to describe some couples who are referenced in accounts as husbands, wives, life-long partners, and/or married upon freedom.

lived on their own cabin near the school and were hired on as labor periodically.<sup>508</sup> At Fort Coffee Academy in the mid-1840s, one Black family provided all the labor after the departure of the German family. Charles served as cook while his wife Louisa and daughter, Ellen, completed the housekeeping and laundry.<sup>509</sup> Interestingly, Charles was a freeman, who after purchasing his freedom, bought his daughter's freedom as well. His wife and remaining unnamed children, still enslaved, were rented from a Mr. B. in Van Buren, Arkansas.<sup>510</sup> Interestingly, the arrangement at Fort Coffee was as follows. Charles rented his family's labor from their owner, but was then paid by the academy for his and his family's work.<sup>511</sup> Reverend William Goode elaborated the challenges of the arrangements, "He hired the time of his wife for stipulated sum, besides maintaining for the owner a large family of fine, healthy slave-children, with their annual growth and increase in value, and an almost annual addition to their numbers."<sup>512</sup> The instance of Charles and Louisa is interesting because it shows the complexities of slavery and freedom, labor, and value.

While primarily New English people ran missions, it did not mean enslaved individuals were seen as equals. Even as a freeman, Charles was kept in a place of inferiority. Reverend Benson felt Charles needed reminding of his place in life when accused of stealing, "flour, sugar, butter, and fruit to make rich pastry for his wife and children."<sup>513</sup> He wrote in his memoir, "Charles was usually faithful and trustworthy, yet a

---

<sup>508</sup> Joseph B. Thoburn and Muriel H. Wright, *Oklahoma, a History of the State and its People* (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, Inc., 1929), 826-7.

<sup>509</sup> Benson, *Life Among the Choctaw* 183, 298-9.

<sup>510</sup> Benson, *Life Among the Choctaw* 183.

<sup>511</sup> Benson, *Life Among the Choctaw* 184.

<sup>512</sup> Goode, *Outposts of Zion*, 150.

<sup>513</sup> Benson, *Life Among the Choctaw* 300.

little watching did him good, as it served to lessen his temptation to do wrong; it also reminded him of his appropriate place and duty.”<sup>514</sup> Graham placed himself to the position of master in this admonition. “Charles was past the meridian of life, and I felt myself to be altogether too young to assume the authority of a *master*.”<sup>515</sup> Yet, he managed to find it in himself to admonish Charles as a master rather than an employer.

The experiences of thirteen year old Harriet Coursey provide insight into what Black women experienced day-to-day while living at the missions. She was in a unique position while living at Spencer Academy in 1860; her status of freedom was ambiguous. A Black girl born in New York, at age three she was listed as living in the white household of New Yorkers Nathaniel and Maria Wiggins.<sup>516</sup> Since slavery ended New York in 1827, she was potentially an illegally kept slave, a ward, servant, or both to the family. However, the 1860 United State Census of those living in the Choctaw Nation does not list Harriet with the rest of the Wiggins family even though Elizabeth Lee’s accounts place her with them at that time.<sup>517</sup> By 1860, Harriet or Hattie, as she is often referred to, was living at male Spencer Academy with the Wiggins where Nathaniel served as the “Steward of Spencer Academy,” Maria as the “House Keeper,” and their daughter Sarah, at age twenty-six, was the “Assistant House Keeper.”<sup>518</sup> While she came

---

<sup>514</sup> Benson, *Life Among the Choctaw* 299-300.

<sup>515</sup> Benson, *Life Among the Choctaw* 300.

<sup>516</sup> "United States Census, 1850," *FamilySearch*; citing NARA microfilm publication M432 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.).

<sup>517</sup> Elizabeth Lee was a white woman who accompanied her husband, Orlando, to Spencer Academy in 1859. Orlando was a teacher and preacher in the Choctaw Nation. Her letters to her mother record her observations and opinions of life at the Choctaw boys’ academy. Colonial Dames Collection, box 2, WHC; "United States Census, 1860." Here forward CDC=Colonial Dames Collection.

<sup>518</sup> "United States Census, 1860."

west with a white family, Harriet was subject to many of the challenges faced by enslaved women at the schools.

Living at a mission did not offer the same protections it might a white woman. Gender norms were not the same depending on the class and race of women. Elizabeth Fox-Genovese explained for the American South, “Violations of the norm painfully reminded slaves that they did not enjoy the full status of their gender, that they could not count on the ‘protection’—however constraining and sometimes hypocritical—that surrounded white women.”<sup>519</sup> This was certainly the case for enslaved women in the Choctaw Nation as well. Within the academies, there were two documented incidents surrounding the sexual activity of Black women—both at male schools of similar structure to girls schools. Just reaching puberty, Hattie caused a stir at the all-male academy she dwelt at. Infuriated by some unknown recent events, Elizabeth Lee vented to her mother “[Mr Reid] is going to take Mrs. Wiggin[']s Hattie on with him as she is getting to be a bad girl they cannot keep her away from the boys & is commonproperty for any of them. Mrs. W[iggins] has no control over her.”<sup>520</sup> In a later letter, Elizabeth described the young girl as “a perfect nuisance here among our boys.” She blamed the likely enslaved workers for Hattie’s behavior, “She has learned from the blacks here very loose notions on some points which she is perfectly willing to put in practice. Dr. Wilson ought to have known better than to have had them bring her. It is no place for such a girl both for her sake and for the boys.”<sup>521</sup> While Elizabeth’s racist views are problematic in

---

<sup>519</sup> Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household*, 194.

<sup>520</sup> Elizabeth Lee to Mother, May 30th 1860, CDC, box 2, folder 29, WHC; Elizabeth Lee to Mother, June 16, 1860, CDC, box 2, folder 30, WHC.

<sup>521</sup> Elizabeth Lee to Mother, June 16, 1860, CDC, box 2, folder 30, WHC.

their own right, she illuminates the Black community that existed on the school premises. Clearly concerned with maintaining a sense of propriety, she points out concerns about the treatment of Harriet by the boys at the school. Certainly not the place for a young girl, Harriet's race left her in a vulnerable position.

Harriet was not the first Black girl to be involved in sexual exploits at Choctaw boys' schools. The Choctaw Academy faced issues of male students having sexual relations, ranging from consensual to rape, with Black women located there.<sup>522</sup> While white slave-owning Southerners might send their sons to boarding school to keep them away from enslaved women, the prevalent use of slave-labor at male boarding schools made this less possible in Choctaw Academies.<sup>523</sup> With clear freedom to move around the schools as she wished and Mrs. Wiggins too busy or sick to keep up with her, young Hattie easily found herself in trouble. Willing or not, she was readily accessible to male students. Her recent transition into puberty likely did not diminish her as a target. How Hattie's story ends is unknown, but the last that was heard of her was her being taken to visit, if not permanently stay, at Koonsha Choctaw Female Seminary.<sup>524</sup> Young or old, slave or free, Black women were left exposed as sexual targets.

Harriet's case is not the only questionable relationship surrounding Black women connected to the Choctaw schools. Nicholas Cochnaver wrote to Peter Pitchlynn March

---

<sup>522</sup> Snyder, *Great Crossings*, 116-9.

<sup>523</sup> Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household*, 325.

<sup>524</sup> Just returned from a two week visit to Wapanucka Elizabeth Lee wrote, "It was quite unexpected to us to go to Wapanuka but the wagon had to go to carry Mr. Wentz & Hattie & Miss Hitchcock to Good Water." And "We went in real emigrant style [in] a big farm wagon with canvas cover four mules & a colored man to drive he rode one of the mules this is a way of traveling you never saw in L[ong] I[sland] but it is quite common here." Elizabeth Lee to Mother, July 9, 1860, CDC, box 2, folder 33, WHC.

18, 1856 and shared the news Superintendent Andrew Grey Moffat of Armstrong Academy was disgraced for his relationship with a woman of Black decent. The infuriated local Baptist population around Armstrong Academy were “to try him for adulterating with his molatto [sic] girl in Mrs. Moffatts lifetime.” And this relationship apparently occurred for some time as Cochnaver addresses local gossip, “This is a thing that has been talked about a long time.”<sup>525</sup> Moffat’s well-known relationship suggests Choctaw society grudgingly tolerated such mixed-race relationships within limits. Historian Brenda E. Stevenson explains these types of relationships in the United States, “It was a common occurrence by any measure, widespread and obvious” though still looked down upon if the man was married.<sup>526</sup> Cochnaver was pessimistic about the consequences writing, “I am of the opinion they can do nothing with him on that matter. But his Choctaw brethren say they will silence him from preaching. That he is no better than they are.”<sup>527</sup> The church in ruins, Moffat left the Nation for Fannin, Texas.<sup>528</sup>

Any further information about this event is lost in time. Yet it is important as it highlights the vulnerability of Black women in the Choctaw Nation, even amongst the many missionaries claiming to be abolitionists. Likely, the adultery occurred with a woman near or at the mission. Just after marrying his wife Elizabeth J. Barkley in April 26, 1851 in Warren County, Mississippi, Moffat moved to Armstrong Academy in

---

<sup>525</sup> Nicholas Cochnaver to PPP, March 18, 1856., PPPC, box 2, folder 77, WHC.

<sup>526</sup> Stevenson offers an in-depth look at the societal place, expectations, relationships, and resistance of enslaved women serving as concubines in the South. Brenda E. Stevenson, "What's Love Got to Do with It?: Concubinage and Enslaved Women and Girls in the Antebellum South,," in *Sexuality and Slavery: Reclaiming Intimate Histories in the Americas*, ed. Daina Ramey Berry and Leslie M. Harris (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2018), 161, 70.

<sup>527</sup> Nicholas Cochnaver to PPP, March 18, 1856., PPPC, box 2, folder 77, WHC.

<sup>528</sup> "United States Census, 1860."

1851.<sup>529</sup> She was likely nearby the academy as Moffat did not have much time to travel, inheriting a decrepit school infrastructure when suddenly promoted from teacher to Superintendent of the academy in 1854. This left all the school labor to Moffat, his wife, a Miss Chenowith, the male pupils working the fields, and likely unmentioned enslaved workers.<sup>530</sup> As a mulatto woman, she could have been a free woman of mixed Choctaw or Chickasaw and Black heritage living nearby, a slave at a local plantation, or a hired slave at the school. At similar institutions, such as the male Spencer Academy, hired enslaved women were crucial to the schools domestic labors. They served as laundresses, cooked the food, served in the dining rooms, and fulfilled any other miscellaneous tasks needed. Thus, the affair was potentially connected to the school and clearly not that well-hidden.

Serving as a Reverend provided Moffat access to women. While there is the possibility that this woman's and Moffat's relationship was consensual, there certainly would have been an imbalanced power dynamic putting her in danger. As Fox-Genovese explains, "Despite occasional examples of tenderness and loyalty between masters and slave concubines, the masters' unchecked power over their slave women brought into the center of the household that public violence against which white women were protected."<sup>531</sup> The biggest issue the Choctaw Baptists had was that he committed adultery, not that he had possibly taken advantage of a woman. This aligns with many nineteenth-century beliefs that men were most likely to become sexually promiscuous

---

<sup>529</sup> Certificate of Marriage (White Records) of Andrew Grey Moffat to Elizabeth H. Barkley, April 26, 1851, Vicksburg, Warren County, Mississippi. Filmed by the Genealogical Society of Utah, Microfilm MISS 268, Roll No. 65. "Mississippi Marriages, 1800-1911", *FamilySearch*; Ramsay D. Potts to William Wilson, July 14, 1852, in *BIA Report, 1852*, 134.

<sup>530</sup> A.G. Moffatt to D.H. Cooper, September 5, 1854, in *BIA Report 1854*, 142.

<sup>531</sup> Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household*, 294.



with too much unbridled power. Unfortunately, other mindsets of the period did not view Black women, especially those enslaved, as victims in the often unequal sexual relationships that occurred with men in positions of power. Enslaved women might even find themselves blamed in a society that considered her a manipulator of men to get something she needed.<sup>532</sup> Other times, enslaved women as the objects of a man's sexual desire were forced to serve as concubines for a master or figure of power.<sup>533</sup> Any way this liaison existed, it was not a relationship of equals.

Though his adultery was known, Moffat's removal was not rooted in his misconduct, but rather in his disagreements with the General Council. In 1855, when negotiating the terms for the Domestic Board of the Southern Baptist Convention to partner with the Nation in running Armstrong Academy, he rejected two of their seven conditions. Specifically the third clause protecting scholars from manual labor without the Board of Trustees permission and the sixth stating the contract could not be broken without six months notice.<sup>534</sup> Instead of a counter offer, the trustees accepted Moffat's

---

<sup>532</sup> Ronald G. Walters "The Erotic South: Civilization and Sexuality in American Abolitionism" *Affect and Power : Essays on Sex, Slavery, Race, and Religion*, edited by David J Libby, et al., University Press of Mississippi, 2005. ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/oks-ebooks/detail.action?docID=619191>. 7, 11; Fox-Genovese, Elizabeth. *Within the Plantation Household : Black and White Women of the Old South* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988 292; White, Deborah G. *Ar'n't I a Woman? : Female Slaves in the Plantation South* Rev. ed. New York: W.W. Norton, 1999, 29-46.

<sup>533</sup> Stevenson, "What's Love Got to Do with It?: Concubinage and Enslaved Women and Girls in the Antebellum South,," 175; Snyder, *Great Crossings*, 41-69.

<sup>534</sup> The conditions on which the Board of School Trustees Choctaw Nation will work with Armstrong Academy with the Domestic Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. The seven conditions are: 1) the absorption of any debts, to furnish a Superintendent, two male and one female teacher, \$1,000 annually to the school, and support forty five students. 2) The Choctaw will give \$2,900 annually. 3) "No manual labor to be performed by the scholars except by the special written consent of the party of the first part, and in case such consent is given the Superintendent and the Board of Trustees to determine the nature and extent of such labor." 4) No stock animals except for the school property. 5) No school property could be sold or disposed of without Trustee permission. 6) Contract termination required six months advance notice. 7) The agreement is effective immediately upon signing. PPP, Noel Gardner, Robert W. Nail, and Dickson W. Lewis, "Articles of agreement between the Board of School Trustees for the Choctaw Nation

request to leave if his conditions were unmet and appointed Choctaw Reverend Allen Wright to that position instead.<sup>535</sup> A final 1855 BIA Annual Report suggested all was well as Moffat and his wife taught at the school, but there was a sudden absence of Armstrong Academy reports in 1856. Resuming in 1857, Superintendent W. R. Baker noted, “It became necessary during the last session to make a change in teachers.” Moffat gone, the school transitioned to the care of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign and Domestic Missions, starting their contract February 2, 1857.<sup>536</sup> The release of Moffat with minimal consequences is evidence of a devaluation of enslaved women in the Nation. While there were religious qualms about his actions, the Nation did nothing more than remove him from the school. Though the rest of this woman’s story is unknown, she represents a population exposed to danger even at places such as churches and schools.

## **Labor**

In the Nation, the mutually agreed-upon status of Blacks at the bottom of the racial hierarchy put many women in precarious social positions. Historian Deborah G. White writes, “Black in a white society, slave in a free society, woman in a society ruled by men, female slaves had the least formal power and were perhaps the most vulnerable group of antebellum Americans.”<sup>537</sup> While white and Choctaw women found themselves fairly equal in many respects, Black women certainly were not. The majority of slaveholding Choctaw men who wrote the Nation’s constitution ensured that laws

---

of the first part and the Domestic Board of the Southern Baptist Convention at Marion Alabama,” November 15, 1855, PPPC, Box 7, folder 4, WHC.

<sup>535</sup> Unknown to Robert Nail, November 20, 1855, PPPC, Box 7, folder 4, WHC.

<sup>536</sup> W.R. Baker to D. H. Cooper, undated, *BIA Report 1857*, 250.

<sup>537</sup> Deborah Gray White, *Ar’n’t I A Woman: Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1990), 15.

enforced their control of Black individuals as property.<sup>538</sup> A Nation so focused on lifting up their women through education kept so many trapped because of their race.

Sometimes labor was designated for a specific person. At other locations, a single person would be in charge of multiple tasks. The trend in evidence shows that girls' schools used less outside labor, sometimes just one worker, while male schools employed multiple laborers. While white women living at the missions did a considerable amount of work, they did not complete the hard labor and had the choice to not work, unlike their Black counterparts. Throughout this chapter, the concept of "choice" is discussed. It is important to remember not only did enslaved women not have the choice to say no to work as free women of other races did, but they also worked under a constant threat of physical abuse or sale separating them from their family and community. While white and Choctaw women had the choice to say no, enslaved Black women had none when reduced to a person's property. This is an important factor to distinguish as women's completion of labor had drastically different outcomes between races.

A challenge to understanding how enslaved people labored in schools is due to lack of documentation, but also explicit attempts to hide mission slave labor that grew more taboo to New England based ABCFM headquarters. School reports often referenced Black individuals as simply employed labor. At Wheelock, one Black and one white woman served as "assistants" to the missionaries.<sup>539</sup> Hetty was the only enslaved worker at New Hope Academy.<sup>540</sup> However, having Black female help was not the case at all sites. Cyrus Kingsbury claimed in 1851, for instance, that Chuwala operated all its

---

<sup>538</sup> Krauthamer, *Black Slaves, Indian Masters*, 37, 45.

<sup>539</sup> Joseph Dukes to D.H. Cooper, August 21, 1860, in *BIA Report 1860*, 146-7.

<sup>540</sup> Graham, *Frontier Sketches: New Hope*, 24, 412.

domestic duties purely “by the Choctaw girls and ladies of the mission.”<sup>541</sup> Yet, Kingsbury had utilized slaves in the past: he had purchased people in order to emancipate them once they had worked off their debt to the mission. When the ABCFM learned of this, they issued a mandate in February of 1838 to discontinue the practice.<sup>542</sup> While it is unknown how many people he owned over the years, the 1860 Slave Schedule Census listed him as the guardian for a “Bartley,” who owned a “nominal” enslaved one-hundred year old Black man.<sup>543</sup> He was not the only missionary involved in slave owning in the same census. Alexander Reid at Spencer Academy owned a sixty year old Black woman and Ebenezer Hotchkin, from Koonsha Female Seminary, owned a thirty-five year old Black man. These men show the blasé attitude toward as well as the active participation of the missionaries in concerns of slavery up to 1860. By the end of the 1831-61 school period, it became evident that a large majority of schools had, at one point or another, used slave labor to function.

Patterns of labor division between Black workers, white women, and Choctaw students seem to follow trends of work division in the American South. Fox-Genovese explains, domestic labors “bound them [women] in the explosive intimacy of a shared world but not in a woman’s sphere.”<sup>544</sup> When doling out specific tasks, it is clear that a woman’s race defined her work. Trapped in the labor class, enslaved women were always relegated the heavier jobs, deemed too strenuous for white women. While there is not extensive documentation of Choctaw women interacting with enslaved women, the only

---

<sup>541</sup> Cyrus Kingsbury to William Wilson, August 27, 1851, in *BIA Report, 1851*, 117.

<sup>542</sup> *Annual report - American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions*, 109.

<sup>543</sup> "United States Census (Slave Schedule), 1860," *FamilySearch* ; citing NARA microfilm publication M653 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.).

<sup>544</sup> Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household*, 98.

documented labor of theirs under white control was as students obeying white teachers. At the mission schools, girls completed much of the work but nothing completely outside of projecta deemed acceptable for a white woman. A frustrated missionary reported to the ABCFM that they required slaves because no local Choctaw women wanted to complete the day-to-day work deemed to intensive for white ladies.<sup>545</sup> There is too little information to surmise exactly where Choctaw women fit in the labor hierarchy, but there is plenty of evidence that white-Black female divisions reflected United States patterns.

Looking at the schools, the greatest divisions of labor between women were the matter of choice and the level of physical strain. Without Choctaw women's assistance, the missionaries claimed they must utilize slaves "*for the preservation of life and health.*"<sup>546</sup> Southern womanhood did not protect enslaved women from hard labor and that remained true at the academies of the Choctaw Nation.<sup>547</sup> Returning to Hattie, her work patterns illustrate some of the labor expectations of Black women. There are few direct statements about Hattie's work, but Elizabeth Lee's harsh criticisms suggest various jobs expected for her to complete at just thirteen. The report of being "good for nothing in the house" suggests the expectation Hattie complete chores such as laundry, cleaning, and maybe even some cooking.<sup>548</sup> While these chores seem generalized, women typically developed a special skill or craft that they worked the most with when possible.<sup>549</sup> At thirteen, Hattie was just past the common six to twelve age range in which

---

<sup>545</sup> S.B. Treat to Reverend S.L. Pomroy, March 8, 1853 in "Correspondence on Slavery," PPPP, folder 693, GMA, 1.

<sup>546</sup> S.B. Treat to Reverend S.L. Pomroy, March 8, 1853 in "Correspondence on Slavery," PPPP, folder 693, GMA, 1.

<sup>547</sup> Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household*, 296.

<sup>548</sup> Elizabeth Lee to Mother, June 16, 1860, CDC, box 2, folder 30, WHC.

<sup>549</sup> Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household*, 158.

enslaved girls typically began work in Southern households.<sup>550</sup> Still learning, older women would teach Hattie the many tasks needed to keep a household and an institution running.

Kitchens seem to have typically been under the direction of a white woman with enslaved or student help. As a feeble seventy-five year old, Electa May Kingsbury utilized students trying to pay off their schooling at Chuwala Female Seminary to run her dining room and the kitchen of the school.<sup>551</sup> Rising before dawn, the girls prepared food before the six am meal in addition to the dinner, a snack, and supper.<sup>552</sup> When there were not enough Choctaw girls or at male schools, Black women took these roles.

While a white woman in charge was the norm at schools, it seems largely Black women had control of the day-to-day details. At New Hope Female Academy, enslaved Hetty was under the occasional inspection of the matron, but described as largely in control of the space, just instructing the students how to help.<sup>553</sup> At the male Spencer Academy, Mrs. Wiggins hobbled around on her crutches directing six hired enslaved women.<sup>554</sup> The enslaved workers completed regular labor in the kitchen, white women worked for special occasions. Mrs. Wiggins baked extra pies or Elizabeth Lee would occasionally assist, at Christmas, cooking the squirrels caught by the students.<sup>555</sup> Black women operated almost autonomously as Mrs. Wiggin's frequent bouts of illness meant

---

<sup>550</sup> Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household*, 152.

<sup>551</sup> Cyrus Kingsbury to Douglas H. Cooper, September 13, 1858, in *BIA Report, 1858*, 164.

<sup>552</sup> Cyrus Byington to William Armstrong, September 3, 1846, in *BIA Reports, 1846-50*, 145.

<sup>553</sup> Graham, *Frontier Sketches: New Hope*, 24, 412. At Fort Coffee, Academy the Reverend's wife, Mrs. Goode, kept the store-room keys and a careful eye on supplies (Goode, *Outposts of Zion*, 128.)

<sup>554</sup> Elizabeth Lee to Mother, October 9, 1859, CDC, box 2, folder 7, WHC.

<sup>555</sup> Elizabeth Lee to Mother, October 20, 1859, CDC, box 2, folder 9, WHC; Elizabeth Lee to Mother, December 23, 1860, box 2, folder 53, WHC.

direction of kitchen and dining room workers fell to Rev. Reid.<sup>556</sup> An extension of their food preparation, the kitchen garden likely fell under enslaved care. Just like her mother, white Sarah Wiggins found herself regularly ill. Thus instead of managing kitchen gardens as charged, enslaved women likely took leadership in that arena.<sup>557</sup> A pattern emerged: white women took the managerial role while Indigenous or Black females completed the labor, as dictated by the gender of the school.

The care of laundry was a momentous task at the schools that all women participated in. While Choctaw girls' domestic education included washing their laundry, there was often some assistance by Black women and the teachers. However, at the male academies, keeping the students dressed came down to the labor of the wives and enslaved women living at the school. Though all a part of the laundry system, there was a clear division in their work. In what Fox-Genovese described as "a microcosm of relations...in their shared sphere of women's labor," white women did the finer sewing details when they had the time and the more general washing was always relegated to the enslaved.<sup>558</sup> Elizabeth Lee recorded many laundry based interactions while counting pieces of "Institution clothes" needing to be laundered by the approximately three Black women employed, such as Pattie, for the purpose at Spencer Academy.<sup>559</sup> While Pattie washed hundreds of garments a week, Elizabeth took on work as she pleased. Mr. Reid informed Elizabeth that when she felt overwhelmed they could get another woman, likely

---

<sup>556</sup> Elizabeth Lee to Mother Spencer November 5, 1860, CDC box 2, folder 48, WHC; Elizabeth Lee to Mother, June 29, 1860, CDC, box 2, folder 32, CDC.

<sup>557</sup> Elizabeth Lee to Mother, November 11, 1859, CDC, box 2, folder 12, WHC.

<sup>558</sup> Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household*, 184.

<sup>559</sup> Elizabeth Lee to Mother, October 20, 1859, CDC, box 2, folder 9, WHC; Elizabeth Lee to Mother, December 25, 1859, CDC, box 2, folder 16, WHC; Alexander Reid to Douglas H. Cooper, August 22, 1853, in *BIA Report, 1853*, 175.

one of the laundresses, to do the work for her.<sup>560</sup> Elizabeth definitely took advantage of this after the birth of her first baby, George, but before did considerable work. Her labor tended to be sewing in various manners. A letter suggested her mother imagine Elizabeth living in a pile of shirts, dedicating Fridays to mending the thirty-eight shirts regularly in need of repair.<sup>561</sup> When finishing her students' clothes early, she would assist Sarah Wiggins in patching pants or some other article.<sup>562</sup>

The biggest difference then was Elizabeth ability to choose the work she participated in. She certainly took time off to invest in her own projects, sewing a new white bonnet for Mrs. Wiggins and washing specific clothes herself, not trusting the laundresses to keep her whites bright enough.<sup>563</sup> Even within domestic chores, there were levels of difficulty. While sewing was time consuming, cleaning the laundry required enslaved women to labor over boiling pots on summer days, dry their skin with harsh soaps, and scrub each piece.<sup>564</sup> Elizabeth's opportunity to take on less work because of her new baby was not a reality for enslaved mothers either.<sup>565</sup> While Elizabeth's male school experiences meant no girls to participate in the laundering process, girls' schools seemed to divide work similarly.

---

<sup>560</sup> Elizabeth Lee to Mother Spencer, March 9, 1860, CDC, box 2, folder 20, WHC.

<sup>561</sup> Elizabeth Lee to Mother, November 13, 1859, CDC, box 2, folder 13, WHC.

<sup>562</sup> Elizabeth Lee to Mother, November 11, 1859, CDC, box 2, folder 12, WHC.

<sup>563</sup> Elizabeth Lee to Mother, November 13, 1859, CDC, box 2, folder 13, WHC; Elizabeth Lee to Mother, October 20, 1859, CDC, box 2, folder 9, WHC.

<sup>564</sup> Women sharing experiences of food preparation, spinning, weaving, sewing, washing, and producing other household goods. "Washing, a central feature of household life, could be done in a wash house or at a creek or stream...but, in the case of smaller holdings, outside. Soap and candles were made on the place, as were dyes and lye. Slave women sewed in the big house under the direction of their mistresses or a slave seamstress. They sewed in their own cabins with the assistance of their daughters, and they sewed and quilted with the other women of the quarters." Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household*, 178.

<sup>565</sup> Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household*, 322.



At girls' schools, female teachers also participated in never ending laundry. Mary C. Greenleaf recalled that until the girls were actually adequate seamstresses, she was tasked with much of the mending and sewing of her pupils. While students studied academic subjects, Greenleaf frantically fitted garments, finished edges, and mended items piling in her sitting-room.<sup>566</sup> In her state of constant sewing for thirty pupils, Greenleaf sewed through one hundred and eighty-six yards of Kentucky jean, ninety-three yards of chambray, sixty-two yards of cotton flannel, forty-nine yards of unbleached cotton, and just shy of sixty-two yards of calico. And this was just the new clothing she helped students produce.<sup>567</sup> While this is an extraordinary amount, Greenleaf likely had help in the actual laundering process. At Wapanucka, the five Black "servants" were there to do the hard work "which it would be impossible for us to do in this warm climate."<sup>568</sup> Greenleaf had less of a choice in the work than Elizabeth, but the hardest of tasks were still completed by Black women who could not refuse labor. While laundry took up women's days at all locations, greater racial power imbalances occurred elsewhere.

This extended to keeping spaces clean as well. Little detail is known about women's roles in cleaning, but it seems to be a regular part of Black women's jobs. As detailed in previous chapters, Choctaw girls were responsible for keeping their school clean as a part of their domestic training. At New Hope, the students worked with Hetty

---

<sup>566</sup> MCG to Miss S.T., October 30, 1856, in Greenleaf, *Life and Letters of Mary C. Greenleaf*, 323.; MCG to Mrs. J.B., October 7, 1856, in Greenleaf, *Life and Letters of Mary C. Greenleaf*, 315-6.

<sup>567</sup> MCG to Miss M.S., May 11, 1857, in Greenleaf, *Life and Letters of Mary C. Greenleaf*, 372.

<sup>568</sup> MCG to Mrs. J.B., July 23, 1856, in Greenleaf, *Life and Letters of Mary C. Greenleaf*, 270-1.

to prepare for special occasions such as visits from the boys at Fort Coffee Academy. The scene of morning preparations is preserved:

The girls work on that morning with a will, and the shrewd aunt Hetty availed herself of the opportunity to get an extra amount to labor from them, greatly to her relief the remainder of the week. Such scrubbing of floors and scouring of pots, kettles, and tin-ware, would have delighted the housewives of the Holland Dutch.<sup>569</sup>

In this case, Hetty found herself in a place of leadership while directing the girls in cleaning. While female students assisted in the cleaning of their facilities, male schools lacked this domestic labor source.

Male schools typically relied on Black female labor. While students and white women did routine cleaning of their personal spaces, Black women at places like Spencer did the deep “spring cleans” throughout the campus, including private homes.<sup>570</sup> This division of work again emphasizes the division between enslaved and free women within the Choctaw Nation. While Louisa’s and Ellen’s work at Fort Coffee Academy are not detailed, a description of their lack of labor shows a bit more about their place at the schools and punishment for a lack of work. When complaints came that chambers were dirty and laundry undone, Louisa’s husband told Reverend Graham she was unwell and his daughter Ellen could not keep up with everything on her own. Graham, suspecting Louisa was faking her illness, went into their home to try to catch her by surprise. He recorded the incident of finding her “the picture of health, entirely free from fever, with not the slightest indication of sickness.”<sup>571</sup> Instead of a general admonition, Graham

---

<sup>569</sup> Graham, *Frontier Sketches: New Hope*, 24, 413.

<sup>570</sup> Elizabeth Lee to Mother, July 22, 1860, CDC, box 2, folder 34, WHC.

<sup>571</sup> Benson, *Life Among the Choctaw* 298.

decided to agree Louisa must be ill and bleed her until “she was depleted to the amount of fourteen ounces of blood” if she was still unwell. After the bleeding, Graham mentioned he would return in the morning to “apply a large blistering plaster, and administer liberal doses of tartarized antimony”<sup>572</sup> Rather than a humane discussion, Graham chose his own forms of physical punishment should she not be healed. While bleeding was common during the 1840s, his acknowledgment in his writing shows a certain bent of cruelty.<sup>573</sup> Additionally, even if she really was sick, he was willing to add blisters to her skin and cause her to vomit the following day just to make a point. While this is the only documented case of such brutality, it shows that some missionaries participated in inhumane treatment of enslaved people.

In addition to housework, women played an important part in nursing the sick and raising children at the schools. Harriet experienced much of this. Maria and Sarah Wiggins were unwell frequently, so Harriet served as their caregiver and assistant during bouts of illness.<sup>574</sup> Out of the women’s plethora of extra jobs, nursing and childcare was racially divided not by ability as much as it was choice to participate. White and Choctaw women might care for others out of their desire to do so. Despite their differences, all women in the mission system served as nurses in various capacities. A major difference was that white and Choctaw women often had the choice to care for others while female students and enslaved women were required.

---

<sup>572</sup> Benson, *Life Among the Choctaw* 299.; Tartarized antimony is also known as a tartar emetic, used to cause vomiting. “Antimony poisoning,” December 7, 2018, Encyclopædia Britannica.

<sup>573</sup> Leon S. Bryan, “Blood-Letting In American Medicine, 1830–1892,” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 38, no. 6 (1964): 518-20.

<sup>574</sup> Elizabeth Lee to Mother, June 29, 1860, CDC, box 2, folder 32, WHC.

At girls' schools such as Wapanucka, women took turns caring for each other. On many occasions, schools were afflicted with various diseases. At Wapanucka, Mary C. Greenleaf and older students cared for her pupils through their bouts of chill and dysentery. When she became infected with dysentery, her older pupils, Cornelia Cavender and Amy cared for her the final days of her illness with the help of the teacher Miss Lee.<sup>575</sup> While the girls were instructed to assist with the other students' illness, it seems there was a genuine desire to assist Greenleaf during her final days. The girls' attachment to Greenleaf seems genuine, and according to sentimental missionaries they seemed, "to feel her death very much."<sup>576</sup> Greenleaf's connection to the local community was evident in her funeral too. A number of girls, "gave tokens of true sorrow" and "quite a number" local Choctaw attended her funeral service.<sup>577</sup> Male schools, with their lack of women available, tended to require outside assistance for care.<sup>578</sup>

There is evidence of white and Choctaw women helping each other when their time allowed. When these resources of assistance were unavailable, at least at Spencer Academy, extra enslaved women assisted. When Elizabeth Lee injured her arm while preventing a wardrobe from crushing her baby, George, Rev. Alexander Reid sent an enslaved woman to come and help her for a week. Feeling that she could make do with

---

<sup>575</sup> Unknown to Mrs. J.B., November 16, 1857, in Greenleaf, *Life and Letters of Mary C. Greenleaf*, 417.

<sup>576</sup> Revered C.H. Wilson to Reverend Dr. Dana, July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1857, in Greenleaf, *Life and Letters of Mary C. Greenleaf*, 407.

<sup>577</sup> Revered C.H. Wilson to Reverend Dr. Dana, July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1857, in Greenleaf, *Life and Letters of Mary C. Greenleaf*, 409, 19. There are other mention's of Greenleaf's visits to community members during her lifetime. One example are visits with an older Chickasaw woman named Nancy who lived four miles from the school. MCG to Mrs. J.B., September 17, 1856, in Greenleaf, *Life and Letters of Mary C. Greenleaf*, 300.

<sup>578</sup> The next year, Lizzie went to visit Misses Downing and Culbertson at Iyannubie school. Miss Downing wrote of Lizzie's visit, "moreover you will have the satisfaction of giving dignity to an "Old Maids" household and your baby will add his mite of sunshine." Elizabeth Lee to Mother, March 24, 1861, CDC, box 2, folder 65, WHC.

her husband's help, the woman then went to nurse Mrs. Reid.<sup>579</sup> While general care occurred, it took the community of women to help in childbirth and its aftermath.

White women's birthing and childcare experiences speak to the necessity of relying on all women in the area for assistance and also how women in each culture participated in the process. While enslaved women were readily hired to assist for nursing and childcare, white women also tried to help care for each other at the schools. A few months after Elizabeth gave birth, another teacher's wife, Mrs. Margaret Young, struggled to recover from her own birthing experience. Elizabeth stepped up to nurse both babies while Young dealt with what was likely mastitis and other ailments.<sup>580</sup> Whenever possible, white women tried to help each other, but especially with less women to rely upon and a clear inexperience with childbirth, they sought help from Choctaw and enslaved women.

Enslaved women's skills with childbirth and childcare became a necessity at some of the missions, as white missionary wives frequently gave birth. When Elizabeth Lee went into labor, the initial mid-wife, a Choctaw woman referenced as Mrs. McKenny, could not come to assist because her own baby was ill.<sup>581</sup> Instead, she sent her slave who "was no good at the time but she is first rate to take care of me & the baby." Instead, Mr. Reid and one of the Black kitchen workers, Sally, helped Elizabeth through the birth.<sup>582</sup> Falling ill after the birth, Mrs. McKenny's woman was engaged to stay with Elizabeth

---

<sup>579</sup> Elizabeth Lee to Mother, February 28, 1861, CDC, box 2, folder 62, WHC.

<sup>580</sup> Elizabeth Lee to Mother, February 10, 1861, CDC, box 2, folder 59, WHC.

<sup>581</sup> There is a Rebecca McKinney listed as owning a 40 year old Black male, a 23 year old Black female, and a 60 year old Mulatto female a few lines before Alexander Reid in Wade County. While the woman could also belong to Jess McKinney, listed on the same page as Rebecca and Alexander Reid, who owned 20 slaves—half of which were women. "United States Census (Slave Schedule), 1860."

<sup>582</sup> Elizabeth Lee to Mother, April 7, 1860, CDC, box 2, folder 23, WHC.

until better. After the birth, Elizabeth considered her a “first rate colored woman,” whose assistance watching baby George allowed Elizabeth the liberty to gradually heal and begin her work at the school site.<sup>583</sup>

Elizabeth’s birthing experience sheds light on women’s reliance on the larger community, skills, and choice in helping one another. While the Antebellum Era saw white male obstetricians and gynecological practices slowly beginning to grow, access to a doctor in the Choctaw Nation would have been unlikely due to its rural nature and many women of the middle- and upper-classes preferred midwives for some time.<sup>584</sup> While at least four other white women lived at the mission school, none mentioned assisting Elizabeth until after the birth. This suggests they was not an expectation for them to attend the birth and left Elizabeth to plan on outside help—from her Choctaw neighbors.

Traditionally, Choctaw women often gave birth alone, though when it was necessary relied on the assistance of senior women. Male physicians were not used until well into the twentieth century, so Mrs. McKenny, a recent mother herself might have been the most experienced local option, even a practicing midwife.<sup>585</sup> Elizabeth’s

---

<sup>583</sup> Elizabeth Lee to Mother, April 7, 1860, CDC, box 2, folder 23, WHC. Lizzie Lee was particularly candid in the letters she wrote to her mother about her loneliness at various stages. Giving birth to her first child a few months after her arrival in the Choctaw Nation, Lizzie wrote to her mother often missing her and the mothering wisdom she craved. She wrote, “I don’t know is the matter with me now but at times I am so low spirited, yes so homesick, I hardly know what to do & when I think of you I cannot help crying.” Elizabeth Lee to Mother, April 23, 1860, CDC, box 2, folder 26, WHC.

<sup>584</sup> Tanfer Emin Tunc, “The Mistress, the Midwife, and the Medical Doctor: pregnancy and childbirth on the plantations of the antebellum American South, 1800-1860,” *Women’s History Review* 19, no. 3 (2010): 396; Nancy Schrom Dye, “History of Childbirth in America,” *Signs* 6, no. 1 (1980): 100-2; Deirdre Cooper Owens, *Medical Bondage: Race, Gender, and the Origins of American Gynecology* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2017), 78. By 1860, only 40-50% of plantations mistresses deliver via physician. Tunc, “The Mistress, the Midwife, and the Medical Doctor,” 412.

<sup>585</sup> Akers, *Culture and Customs of the Choctaw Indians*, 84.

expectation of local Choctaw woman Mrs. McKenny coming to assist highlights that mission women were connecting with local people. They relied on larger community skills and knowledge, especially when it did not exist amongst their fellow mission workers. The back-up plan Elizabeth resorted to using also sheds light on important roles of Black women in childbirth.

In lieu of the presumed birthing knowledge of Mrs. McKenny, enslaved women and Rev. Reid became the next option. To what degree Rev. Reid was useful is unknown, but Elizabeth relied on enslaved labor for her birth and aftercare. The medical knowledge of any of these women is unknown, though it might be supposed Mrs. McKenny had some experience in assisting in births since she was intended to come help. Though Mrs. McKenny's woman may have participated in her mistress's recent delivery or given birth herself, it is equally likely she had no training. There are also cases of Native American medicine being shared with enslaved midwives and used to much success.<sup>586</sup> Little is known about enslaved midwifery, but there are instances in the South documenting that women who had given birth were selected to serve as midwives and nurses of plantations by masters.<sup>587</sup> Enslaved midwives regularly serviced local white communities around their plantations as well, only earning a small portion, if anything, of the fee paid to their masters.<sup>588</sup> Nursing and understanding remedies was certainly a skill many enslaved women learned in their range of experiences. Some enslaved people with knowledge of natural remedies were known as "root doctors" and their skills were highly valued in the

---

<sup>586</sup> Tunc, "The Mistress, the Midwife, and the Medical Doctor," 409.

<sup>587</sup> Owens, *Medical Bondage*, 59-66.

<sup>588</sup> Owens, *Medical Bondage*, 71-2, 80; Tunc, "The Mistress, the Midwife, and the Medical Doctor," 399-400.

Southern United States.<sup>589</sup> While Mrs. McKenny's enslaved woman was not particularly helpful in Elizabeth's eyes, the kitchen-slave Sally played a key part in helping Elizabeth through the birthing process with whatever experience she had.

No matter how these two enslaved women performed, it is important to emphasize that the biggest difference between them and women of other races attending birth was a matter of their ability to choose. It was acceptable for Mrs. McKenny to stay home with her baby and Elizabeth could resume day-to-day mission work because the unnamed nurse and Sally were commanded to help. Enslaved women were not afforded the same luxuries.<sup>590</sup> Women such as Louisa, who are mentioned to have born children while working at Fort Coffee Academy, could expect little time off especially considering Reverend Graham's record of punishing her.<sup>591</sup> While these divisions are clear, the process of birth and childrearing could bring women together.

Childbirth was a terrifying and dangerous event in which women relied on members of their sex for support. Historian Tanfer Emin Tunc argues that the reality of death during reproduction created a space for women of different social, racial, and class positions to bond in solidarity.<sup>592</sup> These relationships were perhaps more endearing for white women, who received the majority of assistance, but Tunc is correct in that women formed bonds over birth and childrearing. Elizabeth utilized the assistance of Mrs.

---

<sup>589</sup> Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household*, 169; Owens, *Medical Bondage*, 51-2, 54; Tunc, "The Mistress, the Midwife, and the Medical Doctor," 401. Cooper Owens also describes valuable family cures that Black midwives passed down generationally and were at time exploited by white men entering the field of obstetrics and gynecology. Owens, *Medical Bondage*, 50-1.

<sup>590</sup> Tunc, "The Mistress, the Midwife, and the Medical Doctor," 404.

<sup>591</sup> Reverend Goode records a payment made on behalf of Louisa and Charles, "I have even paid for him, out of his own hard earnings, a bill of some magnitude for medical attendance upon his wife at the birth of a child born into slavery." Goode, *Outposts of Zion, with Linnings of Mission Life*, 150.

<sup>592</sup> Tunc, "The Mistress, the Midwife, and the Medical Doctor," 396.



McKenny's woman for multiple weeks after giving birth. After assistance was no longer needed, the woman still regularly came to visit until she was sold. Elizabeth recorded the day the woman bid them goodbye, "The woman that took care of me when I was sick has been sold & taken away. [I]t made us feel pretty bad to have her go, she used to come here every chance she could get to see us & she almost worshipped Georgie, when she came in the last time to bid us good bye the poor creature cried & we could not keep from crying with her."<sup>593</sup> While Elizabeth's sadness could not possibly match the grief this woman felt, this scene shows the types of relationships women built across status over childrearing experiences. Having constantly spent time together, they clearly formed an attachment that was severed when the McKennys sold this nurse.

The woman nursing Elizabeth and George is one of many Black women whose documented work was largely influenced by the "mammy" stereotype. Historian Deborah Gray White explained, "Mammy was the woman who could do anything, and do it better than anyone else. Because of her expertise in all domestic matters, she was the premier house servant and all others were her subordinates." White additionally points out that "mammy" figures were specifically noted for their adoration of white the children for which they cared.<sup>594</sup> Hetty, working at the female New Hope Academy, was another enslaved woman documented within this stereotype. Graham described the girls' excitement for visiting boys and noted, "No one was in greater glee than aunt Hetty. She could not have taken a greater interest in her own children than she seemed to have in the

---

<sup>593</sup> Elizabeth Lee to Mother, September 16, 1860, CDC, box 2, folder 42, WHC. Historian Fox-Genovese comments on the high value of a woman talented at caring for children, "Nursing...ran a gamut from the least to the most specialized form of slave women's work and, at its most specialized, resulted in high status as a house servant." Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household*, 161.

<sup>594</sup> White, *Ar'n't I A Woman: Female Slaves in the Plantation South*, 47; Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household*, 291-2.

welfare of the Indian lasses of the school, and any thing which gave them pleasure intoxicated her with delight.”<sup>595</sup> While Hetty was also described as assisting in the girls’ chicanery or celebrating their joys, her documentation falls into the “mammy” stereotype, in this case adoring Choctaw charges. While women like Hetty were often understood Choctaw girls’ lives like no missionary could, her described love for the girls she managed is tainted by this stereotype.<sup>596</sup> Their shared language and in some cases domestic labor may have endeared them, but it is important to remember that as an enslaved woman Hetty was also not there by choice and had to care for the children or likely face punishment. Looking through this stereotype, Hetty did play an important role at the school in unexpected ways, primarily for her language skills.

Having grown up as a slave to Choctaws, Hetty fluently spoke Choctaw and became incredibly important to work with students and locals.<sup>597</sup> Richardson reported to his readers a scene of an enslaved man and Indian master in Fort Smith, “He [the enslaved man] came as interpreter; the negroes all spoke English while many of their Indian masters did not.”<sup>598</sup> A common practice, Graham was surprised how important Hetty’s language skills were, “Being the only servant at the place she became our factotum, and we had to depend on her even for interpreter, in which position she appeared to a surprisingly good advantage.”<sup>599</sup> Hetty’s skill would be of use on a daily basis, especially when students arrived not knowing any English. She was valuable in a case when Graham returned to the school to find an intoxicated Choctaw man “chasing a

---

<sup>595</sup> Graham, *Frontier Sketches: New Hope*, 24, 413.

<sup>596</sup> Graham, *Frontier Sketches: New Hope*, 24, 413.

<sup>597</sup> Graham, *Frontier Sketches: New Hope*, 24, 412-3.

<sup>598</sup> Richardson, *Beyond the Mississippi*, 215.

<sup>599</sup> Graham, *Frontier Sketches: New Hope*, 24, 413.

bevy of girls with their matron from room to room.” When Graham tried to reason with the man, the language barrier made a conversation impossible, so Hetty was summoned. She quickly explained the school and that he was trespassing, resolving the issue.<sup>600</sup> While ministers tried to learn Choctaw, to various levels of success, a fluent speaker living at the schools was indispensable.

Knowing Choctaw and standing as a sort of cultural mediator, Hetty was important to student management. Hetty oriented student lives. It was her bell the girls woke to each morning and they spent their day around her as they assisted her labors.<sup>601</sup> According to Graham, she was an informal manager of the girls at the school:

The younger girls seemed to think that she had charge of the institution, and made all their requests to her, while all the students employed her as their messenger and mediator with the missionaries. She could reconcile all difficulties and manage all cases of insubordination, either by prevailing on the unruly pupil to conform to the required rules, or by making us believe so, and she appeared to regard either achievement as equally meritorious.<sup>602</sup>

While, of course, Hetty was not the perfect “mammy” figure Graham described, she was certainly a central part to the school’s daily life as much as any other woman working at the school. Women like Hetty, therefore, had powerful impressions on pupils. She became fundamental to their lives and in many ways troubleshoot issues for the missionaries. Mediation may not have been an explicit skill Black women were hired for, but their place between two cultures made them ideal for the job.

---

<sup>600</sup> Graham, *Frontier Sketches: Indian Camps*, 24, 201.

<sup>601</sup> Graham, *Frontier Sketches: Indian Camps*, 24, 202.

<sup>602</sup> Graham, *Frontier Sketches: New Hope*, 24, 413.

As important as many Black women became to schools, there were always limits because of their race. At Spencer Academy, a couple named Wallace and Minerva Willis lived near the school and periodically throughout the 1850s, they worked there. The couple were known for composing and singing “spirituals,” their skills highly regarded by the Superintendent Reverend Alexander Reid.<sup>603</sup> These included: “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot,” “Roll, Jordan, Roll,” “Steal Away to Jesus,” “I’m A-Rollin’, I’m A-Rollin’,” and “The Angels Are A-Comin’.”<sup>604</sup> In 1860, it was discovered they needed a chorister in the school. However, a white wife of the mission, Elizabeth Lee, was given the position.

While an opportunity for her, it highlights how race at a certain point was insurmountable. The couple were known for their talent and even admired by Superintendent Reid, but as Black slaves, racial hierarchies in the Nation meant them teaching Choctaw slave-owner’s sons was not an option. While Elizabeth likely was skilled, her race gave her privilege in potential situations such as these. White women certainly faced challenges in accessing some jobs at the schools, but their struggle is nothing compared to the complete bar on Black individuals to hold official positions of power and influence. Even though admiration for enslaved individuals was often expressed, white missionaries routinely benefitted from the limitations of the region’s racial hierarchy.

Ultimately, Black women were an important part to the academy system as they provided the necessary day-to-day labor needed to run facilities. While some missionaries

---

<sup>603</sup> Flickinger, *The Choctaw Freedmen and the Story of Oak Hill Industrial Academy*, 25.

<sup>604</sup> Judith Michener, "Graham, Frontier Sketches: New Hope, 24, 413.," in *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture* (Oklahoma Historical Society).  
<https://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry.php?entry=WI018>; Flickinger, *The Choctaw Freedmen and the Story of Oak Hill Industrial Academy*, 25-6.

had complicated relationships with these women, often trying to hide their work to protect their “abolitionist” reputations, the missionaries did admit to the breadth of impact they made. William Graham remembered Hetty:

In truth, she was the most important personage at the mission, and did more to govern the school than either teacher or matron. Having the confidence of the young ladies it was easy for her to imagine that she had ours also, and she was the happiest soul on the premises. Withal, her whimsical good-humor made her the admiration of many, and the study of all.<sup>605</sup>

These women became the core laborers of school facilities, yet are largely ignored for their important contributions to the Choctaw school system. It is important they are brought back into the narrative surrounding Choctaw education to fully understand these institutions and all women’s experiences in the Nation at this time.

Of course, the Civil War brought an end to the schools but, more importantly, to slavery. Though little is known about many of these peoples’ later life, the Willis couple’s music lived on. Wallace and Minerva Willis moved to Boggy Depot during the Civil War and remained there in freedom. Reverend Alexander Reid later shared their spirituals with the Fisk Jubilee Singers. On tour, Queen Victoria requested an encore of “Steal Away to Jesus.”<sup>606</sup> In part thanks to a Choctaw school, their music lives on. Perhaps their greatest fan was their surviving granddaughter, Frances Banks, thankful for the preservation of her grandparents’ music: “I loves to hear ‘em.”<sup>607</sup>

---

<sup>605</sup> Graham, *Frontier Sketches: New Hope*, 24, 413.

<sup>606</sup> Wright, *Oklahoma, a History of the State and its People*, 826.

<sup>607</sup> Frances Banks, "Narrative," in *The WPA Oklahoma Slave Narratives*, ed. T. Lindsay Baker and Julie P. Baker (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), 28.

## CHAPTER IX

### CONCLUSION

Women from a variety of backgrounds played crucial and controversial roles in the Choctaw education system. Despite the momentum they gained over the three decades post-removal, schools ultimately closed under the increasing challenges brought from slavery and the Civil War. A pivotal event in the closing of schools was the murder of Lavinia Pitchlynn's husband, Richard Harkins, on December 28, 1858 by Prince, a man enslaved to them. This began a series of events that led the ABCFM to question its support of schools in the Choctaw Nation. After Prince named a fellow enslaved woman, Lucy, as a co-conspirator in the murder, Lavinia Pitchlynn had Lucy immediately burned alive.<sup>608</sup> The sensationalism of these events forced the ABCFM to address the slaveholding that was prevalent among Choctaw elites. As Clara Sue Kidwell explained the predicament, "The Nation depended on missionaries to provide education for their children, something that they valued highly, and the issues of slavery and education became intertwined."<sup>609</sup> Choosing to continue allowing slavery, the Choctaw lost the support of the ABCFM resulting in financially weakened schools. The ensuing violence of the Civil War caused them to close for the duration of the war. While some schools

---

<sup>608</sup> Kidwell, *The Choctaws in Oklahoma*, 30.

<sup>609</sup> Kidwell, *The Choctaws in Oklahoma*, 32.

re-opened post-war, their formation and goals changed until the Atoka Agreement of 1898 gave control to the United State Government, leading to the dismissal of all Choctaw teachers and superintendents.<sup>610</sup> Looking at these thirty experimental years of female education raises the question of its level of success. Were they successful? Yes and no. While female education did not stop the ever encroaching powers of the United States, the academies yielded a number of future educators in the Nation. The success of these schools is evident in girl's attendance of college or seminaries in the United States, their return to the Choctaw Nation, and the continuance of schools post-Civil War.

The attendance of college and seminaries by Choctaw women was extremely limited, but the early groups of young women seeking higher education on National funds resulted in the first waves of Choctaw college educated women returning to teach future generations. Rhoda Mary Pitchlynn and Jane Austin McCurtain are two of the best documented women to seek higher education on National funds.<sup>611</sup>

One of the best documented success stories was Peter Pitchlynn's own daughter, Rhoda Mary. Following the example of her two older sisters, Lavinia and Malvina, Rhoda attended Choctaw schools.<sup>612</sup> She differentiated herself with her academic skill. Certainly advantaged by her father's position, Rhoda excelled beyond other students, including her own brother. Peter Pitchlynn had high expectations for his youngest daughter as early as the age of five. An ornery child from Pitchlynn's descriptions, he

---

<sup>610</sup> Lewis, "Jane McCurtain," 1031.

<sup>611</sup> The college funds were created in the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek. While set to educate forty Choctaw youths, sent in groups of ten to each college, the numbers were sometimes cut to twenty when the U.S. government restricted funds. Methvin, "About Some of Our First Schools," 359.

<sup>612</sup> Malvina was certainly under a lot of pressure, attending some of the earliest schools post removal. Her father wrote to his mother, "Tell Malvina I expect she will learn more than any of the girls...." PPP to Rhoda Folsom Pitchlynn, September 10, 1837, PPPC, box 1, folder 54, WHC.

knew Rhoda had great potential. He wrote to his son Lycurgus, “But Rhoda is better than all of you [Peter and Lycurgus], and smarter too. I know she is. She is not yet six years old, and can read her book—none of you were this smart at that age.”<sup>613</sup> A local Choctaw plantation owner attended one of the public examinations and wrote to Peter Pitchlynn about Rhoda’s skills, “Our school examinations have just closed....Peter you have one little girl at Mr. Wrights, 7 or 8 years old, who I think is the smartest child I ever saw. She stood up and recited a Philosophy lesson all a lone, [sic] for half an hour, without missing a word.”<sup>614</sup> Malvina also warned Lycurgus as well of Rhoda’s mounting self-confidence. Describing a visit home from Wheelock for a few days, “you don’t know how big she can talk she thinks that she can do as she pleases she is very smart little girl.”<sup>615</sup> Rhoda continued to excel until she became one of the highest achieving of Choctaw scholars.

Within the The Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek, an allotment of money was set aside for forty Choctaw students to attend college outside of the Nation. Rhoda was one of these students, though certainly not the only female.<sup>616</sup> By the age of fourteen, Rhoda was studying at the Southern Masonic Female College in Covington, Georgia.<sup>617</sup> In 1854, her studies included moral philosophy, chemistry, rhetoric, & music. Her report card noted her application was “improving,” punctuality “not strict,” and deportment

---

<sup>613</sup> PPP to Lycurgus Pitchlynn, August 31, 1846, PPPC, box 1, folder 108, WHC.

<sup>614</sup> Robert M. Jones to PPP, Pitchlynn July 13, 1848, PPPC, box 2, folder 5, WHC.

<sup>615</sup> Malvina Pitchlynn Folsom to Lycurgus Pitchlynn, May 20, 1849, PPPC, box 2, folder 11, WHC.

<sup>616</sup> A number of girls took advantage of this opportunity for a sort of state-funded study abroad experience. Dixon W. Lewis wrote to Peter Pitchlynn in 1856 requesting funds to pay for the return trip of two girls studying at a regular college in Mississippi. Dixon W. Lewis to PPP, June 3, 1856, PPPC, box 2, folder 83, WHC.

<sup>617</sup> Lycurgus Pitchlynn to PPP, August 25, 1856, PPPC, box 2, folder 49, WHC; “Masonic Female College,” *The Atlanta Weekly Intelligencer and Cherokee Advocate* (Atlanta and Marietta), July 6, 1855.



“improving.”<sup>618</sup> There, she worked on compositions, such as “My Wild Western Home” and begged her father to send money to let her visit Oxford or Madison.<sup>619</sup> The newspaper praised Rhoda’s work as “fully up to the average of such productions heard in our male colleges.”<sup>620</sup> By 1857, Rhoda studied writing, chemistry, evidences of Christianity, political economy, intellectual philosophy, composition, Biblical literature, Latin, and piano at the Virginia Female Institute.<sup>621</sup> Rhoda is representative of the high level of studies women attending higher education attained.

While many women such as Lavinia Pitchlynn and Emily Dwight turned to teaching after their educations, Rhoda quickly followed the marriage route. An Abe Harwell began asking Peter Pitchlynn’s permission to court Rhoda before she turned fifteen.<sup>622</sup> Rhoda, still at school, wrote to her father a few months later pleading with him to tell local men to stop threatening Harwell, as she had no intention to run away with him.<sup>623</sup> While Rhoda would not marry until 1861, to John Arnold, she represents what was seen as the ideal student’s progress from the 1842 Choctaw Academies.<sup>624</sup>

While some women returned as mothers, others committed their lives to the education of future generations. Jane Austin McCurtain, around the same time as Rhoda

---

<sup>618</sup> C. Fulton, “Report of Mary Pitchlynn at Southern Methodist Female College,” November 29, 1854, PPPP, folder 898, GMA.

<sup>619</sup> Rhoda Mary Pitchlynn to PPP, July 1854, PPPC, box 2, folder 43, GMA.

<sup>620</sup> “Masonic Female College.”

<sup>621</sup> Other courses offered included Orthography, Elocution, Rhetoric, Geology, Book-Keeping, and Trigonometry. Under “Extra Studies” they had French courses and skills. In French they could learn arithmetic, colloquial exercises, “geographie,” History of France, and more. Also Latin, Spanish, Italian, Drawing and Painting, Needle Work, Piano, Guitar, Organ, and Vocal Music. R.H. Phillips, “Mary Pitchlynn’s Report from the Virginia Female Institute,” February 1857, PPPP, folder 1295, GMA.

<sup>622</sup> R.P. Harwell to PPP, October 23, 1855, PPPC, box 2, folder 64, WHC.

<sup>623</sup> Rhoda Mary Pitchlynn to PPP, May 4, 1856, PPPC, box 2, folder 79, WHC.

<sup>624</sup> Mary Rhoda files for divorce within four months of marrying John Arnold, claiming that she quickly discovered he was already married. Mary Rhoda Pitchlynn to George Durant, March 4, 1862, PPPC, box 3, folder 101, WHC.

Mary Pitchlynn, attended seminary on the East Coast. At eleven, McCurtain started at Wheelock Academy and attended there for five years. She was selected to continue her education in the United States on National funding.<sup>625</sup> She attended Edgeworth Seminary in Pittsburgh, PA with fellow Choctaw students Sophia Wood and Mary Dukes. While she had her differences with Dukes, she was close with Woods and after three years returned to the Nation in 1860.<sup>626</sup> While McCurtain combatted what were described as inoperable cataracts, she “suffers no pain of any consequence and attends regularly to all her studies & recitations and is making good progress.”<sup>627</sup> The girls returned to the Nation on the brink of the Civil War. Israel Folsom escorted the girls as they took a steamboat to New Orleans and then trains to Washington, D.C.<sup>628</sup> Now home, McCurtain began a career in service to her people.

The world to which the girls returned was much different from that of the Choctaw in the 1830s. Throughout the 1840s, the elite Choctaw planters ensured the Nation was looped into the global cotton market with their plantations, though the average citizen just got by economically. Towns, businesses, and, of course, schools spread throughout the Nation as uprooted citizens settled.<sup>629</sup> In 1857, the Chickasaw Nation officially separated onto their own land and launched their own government, becoming a completely independent Nation from the Choctaw in the eyes of the United States Government.<sup>630</sup> There were certainly still challenges, but the Choctaw Nation on

---

<sup>625</sup> Lewis, "Jane McCurtain," 1026.

<sup>626</sup> H.R. Wilson to PPP, August 30, 1858, PPPP, folder 1575, GMA; A. Williams to PPP, June 5, 1860, PPPP, folder 1766, GMA.

<sup>627</sup> H.R. Wilson to PPP, August 30, 1858, PPPP, folder 1575, GMA.

<sup>628</sup> Lewis, "Jane McCurtain," 1026.

<sup>629</sup> Akers, *Culture and Customs of the Choctaw Indians*, 35.

<sup>630</sup> Akers, *Living in the Land of Death*, 134.

the eve of the Civil War was largely recovered economically from the trauma of removal and settled in their new space.

While Rhoda Mary Pitchlynn married and focused on her family and plantation, Jane Austin McCurtain played an instrumental role in continuing Choctaw led education until the seizure of schools by the United States Government. In fall of 1861, McCurtain taught near her home in Doaksville. She married Jackson McCurtain in 1865.<sup>631</sup> After the temporary closure of schools during the Civil War, Jane McCurtain helped them relaunch afterwards. Among her many achievements, she superintended Jones Academy 1894, when the Atoka Agreement of 1898 gave control to the United States, leading to the dismissal of all Choctaw teachers and superintendents.<sup>632</sup> Even after the Atoka Agreement, she kept close with the schools—Jones Academy (male) and Tuskahoma Academy (female) “It was a great privilege and so considered by the girls in that school, to be invited to spend a week-end at her home. Her slogan was ‘educate the boys and girls for leadership. The time is fast coming when we shall need them.’”<sup>633</sup> McCurtain was fondly known as “Miss Jane” in her early teaching, but became “Aunt Jane” in her later years.<sup>634</sup> She overlooked the closed council house until her death in 1924.<sup>635</sup>

Pitchlynn and McCurtain are just two examples of the many women who achieved the General Council of 1842’s dream for their own teachers in Choctaw run schools. While the school system changed over the years from their initial form, women continued to play crucial roles in their progress. While white and Choctaw women

---

<sup>631</sup> Lewis, "Jane McCurtain," 1028.

<sup>632</sup> Lewis, "Jane McCurtain," 1031.

<sup>633</sup> Lewis, "Jane McCurtain," 1032.

<sup>634</sup> Lewis, "Jane McCurtain."

<sup>635</sup> Lewis, "Jane McCurtain."

continued to teach and after the Civil War, Black girls also began to study at their own schools rather than just serve them.

Overall, these schools were largely a success for the Choctaw. Sadly, the positive intentions of this school model were lost when schools closed during the Civil War. Siding with the Confederacy, the Choctaw lost considerable territory and independence following the war.<sup>636</sup> When schools reopened post-war, the United States government quickly turned schools into a method of control, increasingly growing in white influence though there was some continuing Choctaw influence through women such as Jane Austin McCurtain. While the Choctaw Nation endured a few decades, white United States citizens began to flood the area on the new railroads and claim land that was not theirs as their government sought to turn the Nations into an Indian Territory primed for statehood.<sup>637</sup> It was not until after the Civil War and the 1898 Curtis Act (part of the ongoing Dawes Allotment Act), that the Indigenous Nations in Oklahoma lost most of their control over their schools and lands to the United States for a period of time.<sup>638</sup> They did, however, leave an important legacy of female leadership and service that continues today in their communities. Many of these schools continued and became the framework off which Oklahoma built its schools after statehood. Though most original school buildings burned, their 1880's reconstructions served Oklahoma for many decades. After the closing of Wheelock Academy in 1955, the school returned to the

---

<sup>636</sup> Akers, *Culture and Customs of the Choctaw Indians*, xxvi; Kidwell, *The Choctaws in Oklahoma*, 72, 88-9.

<sup>637</sup> Akers, *Culture and Customs of the Choctaw Indians*, xxvii.

<sup>638</sup> Mihesuah, *Cultivating the Rosebuds*, 63-4.

Choctaw Nation and remains as a historic site teaching the legacy of girls' education in the Nation.<sup>639</sup>

During a period crucial to establishing sovereignty as a Nation on new land, Choctaw women played important roles as pupils and teachers. Having largely been ignored in past settler encounters, they worked as cultural mediators for the converging Choctaw and white cultures within schools. They were the ideal mediators because of their culture's emphasis on their roles as caretakers and authorities in matters of childrearing. Girls attending the schools also shaped the Nation's future as they blended the old and new as the first generation of Choctaw born in the new lands.

As the field stands, few historians have explored the history of education between removal and the Civil War, particularly the efforts of women. While sources are minimal, women played important roles within the schools and deserve further attention. The story of female Choctaw education is not a simple one, illustrating the diverse and complicated world in which they lived. Enslaved Black women provided essential labor no one else was willing to do. White women brought the western education skills Choctaw leaders felt their daughters needed to know. There was no single motive, but Choctaw women serving as teachers and as students allowed them to assist in the effort to assert sovereignty in their new lands. It is time historians move women into the narrative as active participants in their Nation's survivance. It took women from all walks of life, but they were certainly instrumental in creating the legacy of education in the Choctaw

---

<sup>639</sup> Coleman, *The Wheelock Story*, 76.

Nation. As a Choctaw agent noted, “The academies are justly the pride of this nation....”<sup>640</sup>

---

<sup>640</sup> Douglas H. Cooper to Thomas S. Drew, September 3, 1853, in *BIA Report, 1853*, 166.

## REFERENCES

### Abbreviations:

BIA=Bureau of Indian Affairs Annual Report  
CDC=Colonial Dames Collection  
CGC=Choctaw General Council  
GMA=Gilcrease Museum Archives  
IPP=Indian Pioneer Papers  
MCG=Mary Coombs Greenleaf  
OHS=Oklahoma Historical Society  
PPP=Peter Perkins Pitchlynn  
PPPC=Peter Perkins Pitchlynn Collection  
PPPP=Peter Perkins Pitchlynn Papers  
SLMC=Sue L. McBeth Collection  
WHC=Western History Collections

### Archives:

Annual Reports of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, The History Collection, University of Wisconsin-Madison Libraries, <https://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/History/History-idx?type=browse&scope=History.CommRep>.

Colonial Dames Collection. Western History Collections. The University of Oklahoma Libraries, Norman, Oklahoma.

Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, Virginia.  
<https://emuseum.history.org/objects/91718/sampler-by-christeen-baker-at-choctow-mission-school>

Indian Pioneer Papers Collection, Western History Digital Collections, The University of Oklahoma Libraries. <https://digital.libraries.ou.edu/whc/>

Mary Lyon Collection, Mount Holyoke College Collections, Mount Holyoke College Archives and Special Collections,  
<https://aspace.fivecolleges.edu/repositories/2/resources/512>.

Peter Perkins Pitchlynn Collection, Western History Digital Collections, The University of Oklahoma Libraries, <https://digital.libraries.ou.edu/whc/>

Peter Perkins Pitchlynn Papers, Helmerich Research Center, Gilcrease Museum Archives, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Sue L. McBeth Papers, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

## Primary Sources

- Annual Report - American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.* Boston: American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, 1848.
- Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Accompanying the Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior, for the Year 1859.* Washington, D.C.: George W. Bowman, 1860.
- Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, for the Years 1840-1845.* Government Printing Office (Washington, D.C.).
- Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, for the Years 1846-1850.* Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1850.
- Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Transmitted with the Message of the President at the Opening of the First Session of the Thirty-Fourth Congress, 1855.* Washington, D.C.: A.O.P. Nicholson, 1856.
- Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Transmitted with the Message of the President at the Opening of the First Session of the Thirty-Second Congress, 1851.* Gibson & Co., 1851.
- Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Transmitted with the Message of the President at the Opening of the First Session of the Thirty-Third Congress, 1853.* Washington, D.C.: Robert Armstrong, 1853.
- Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Transmitted with the Message of the President at the Opening of the Second Session of the Thirty-Third Congress, 1854.* Washington, D.C.: A.O.P. Nicholson, 1855.
- Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Transmitted with the Message of the President at the Opening of the Second Session of the Thirty-Second Congress, 1852.* Washington: Robert Armstrong, 1852.
- Bache, Alexander D. *Report on the Organization of a High School for Girls, and Seminary for Female Teachers.* Philadelphia: J. Crissy, 1840.
- Baird, Robert. *Religion in America, or, an Account of the Origin, Progress, Relation to the State and Present Condition of the Evangelical Churches in the United States: With Notices of the Unevangelical Denominations.* New York: Harper & Bros., 1844.
- Baker, Christeen. "Sampler by Christeen Baker at Choctaw Mission School." silk embroidery on linen Colonial Williamsburg Foundation., June 9, 1830 June 9, 1830.
- Benson, Henry C. *Life among the Choctaw Indians, and Sketches of the South-West.* Cincinnati: L. Swormstedt & A. Poe, 1860.
- Bureau, U.S. Census. *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970.* Washington, 1975.
- Commonwealth, Secretary of the. *Acts and Resolves Passed by the Legislature of Massachusetts in the Years 1839, 1840, 1841, 1842. Together with the Rolls and Messages.* Boston: Dutton and Wentworth, Printers to the State, 1842.
- Goode, William H. *Outposts of Zion, with Limnings of Mission Life.* Cincinnati: Poe & Hitchcock, 1863.
- Graham, William. *Frontier Sketches: Fort Coffee.* The Ladies' Repository: A Monthly Periodical, Devoted to Literature and Religion. Edited by Rev. I.W. Wiley. Vol. 24, Cincinnati: Poe & Hitchcock, 1864.



- . *Frontier Sketches: Indian Camps*. The Ladies' Repository: A Monthly Periodical, Devoted to Literature and Religion. Edited by Rev. I.W. Wiley. Vol. 24, Cincinnati: Poe & Hitchcock, 1864.
- . *Frontier Sketches: Mission School at Fort Coffee*. The Ladies' Repository: A Monthly Periodical, Devoted to Literature and Religion. Edited by Rev. I.W. Wiley. Vol. 24, Cincinnati: Poe & Hitchcock, 1864.
- . *Frontier Sketches: New Hope*. The Ladies' Repository: A Monthly Periodical, Devoted to Literature and Religion. Edited by Rev. I.W. Wiley. Vol. 24, Cincinnati, 1864.
- Greenleaf, Mary C. *Life and Letters of Miss Mary C. Greenleaf, Missionary to the Chickasaw Indians*. Boston: Massachusetts Sabbath School Society, 1858.
- Hale, Sarah Josepha. *Woman's Record; or, Sketches of All Distinguished Women from "the Beginning" until A.D. 1850*. London: Sampson Low, Son, and Co., 1853.
- Lancaster, Joseph. *Lancasterian System of Education, with Improvements*. Baltimore: William Ogden Niles, 1821.
- Madame Tussaud's Memoirs and Reminiscences of France: Forming an Abridged History of the French Revolution*. London: Saunders and Otle, 1838.
- "Masonic Female College." *The Atlanta Weekly Intelligencer and Cherokee Advocate* (Atlanta and Marietta), July 6, 1855.
- McBeth, Susan L. "Diary of a Missionary to the Choctaws." *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 17, no. 4 (1939): 428-47.
- "Meeting of the American Board." *Frederick Douglass' Paper* September 29, 1854, 2.
- Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs Accompanying the Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior for the Year 1858*. Washington, D.C.: William A. Harris, Printer, 1858.
- Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Accompanying the Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior for the Year 1857*. Washington, D.C.: William A. Harris, 1858.
- Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Accompanying the Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior, for the Year 1856*. Washington, D.C.: A.O.P. Nicholson, 1857.
- Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Accompanying the Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior, for the Year 1860*. Washington, D.C.: George W. Bowman, 1860.
- Richardson, Albert D. *Beyond the Mississippi: From the Great River to the Great Ocean. Life and Adventure on the Prairies, Mountains, and Pacific Coast*. Hartford: American Publishing Company, 1869.
- Sedgwick, Catharine Maria. *Means and Ends, or, Self-Training*. Boston: Marsh, Capen, Lyon, & Webb, 1840.
- Tappan, Lewis. "The American Board." *The Independent*, September 2, 1858, 8.
- . "The American Board of Foreign Missions and Slavery." *Frederick Douglass' Newspaper* (Rochester, N.Y.), February 16, 1858, 4.
- University, Jubilee Singers of Fisk. "Steal Away." In *Jubilee Songs: As Sung by the Jubilee Singers, of Fisk University, Under the Auspices of the American Missionary Association*, 28. New York: Biglow & Main, 1872.

- Whaley, Mrs. C.M. "Elizabeth Jacobs Quinton, Centarian." *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 29, no. 2 (1951): 126-36.
- Williams, Loring S. "Domestick: Arrival at the New Choctaw Country Extracts from a Letter of Mr. Williams, Dated August 21, 1832." *The Christian Advocate* 1, no. 11 (1833): 42.

### Articles

- "Ancient Choctaw Burial Practice." *Biskinik*, 2012.
- Beadie, Kim Tolley and Nancy. "Socioeconomic Incentives to Teach in New York and North Carolina: Toward a More Complex Model of Teacher Labor Markets, 1800-1850." *History of Education Quarterly* 46, no. 1 (2006): 36-72.
- Block, Sharon and David Newman. "What, Where, When, and Sometimes Why: Data Mining Two Decades of Women's History Abstracts." *Journal of Women's History* 23, no. 1 (2011).
- Brekus, Catherine A. "Contested Words: History, America, Religion." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 75, no. 1 (2018): 3-36.
- Bruce, Michael L. "Jones, Robert M." In *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, Oklahoma Historical Society.  
<https://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry.php?entry=JO022>.
- Bryan, Leon S. "Blood-Letting in American Medicine, 1830-1892." *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 38, no. 6 (1964): 516-29.
- Byram, Jennifer. "Reawakening Chahta Nan Tvnna (Choctaw Textiles)." Paper presented at the Textile Society of America, 2018.
- "The Choctaw Hymns." *Biskinik*, 2014.
- Crawford, Michael J. "The Spiritual Travels of Nathan Cole." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 33, no. 1 (1976): 89-126.
- Crum, Steven. "The Choctaw Nation: Changing the Appearance of American Higher Education, 1830, 1907." *History of Education Quarterly* 47, no. 1 (2007).
- Devons, Carol. "If We Get the Girls, We Get the Race': Missionary Education of Native American Girls." *Journal of World History* 3, no. 2 (1992): 219-37.
- Doran, Michael F. "Population Statistics of Nineteenth Century Indian Territory." *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 53, no. 4 (1975): 492-515.
- Dye, Nancy Schrom. "History of Childbirth in America." *Signs* 6, no. 1 (1980): 97-108.
- Efland, Arthur D. "Art and Education for Women in 19th Century Boston." *Studies in Art Education* 26, no. 3 (1985): 133-40.
- Flickinger, Robert Elliott. *The Choctaw Freedmen and the Story of Oak Hill Industrial Academy*. Pittsburgh: Presbyterian Board of Missions for Freedmen, 1914.
- Foreman, Carolyn Thomas. "The Foreign Mission School at Cornwall, Connecticut." *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 7, no. 3 (1929): 242-59.
- . "New Hope Seminary." *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 22, no. 3 (1944): 271-99.
- "Gilbert Wesley Dukes." The Choctaw Nation: Chiefs, Choctaw Nation,  
<https://www.choctawnation.com/chief/1900-gilbert-wesley-dukes>.
- Howe, LeAnne. "Tribalography: The Power of Native Stories." *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism* 14, no. 1 (1999): 117-25.
- Hudson, Peter. "Recollections of Peter Hudson." *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 10, no. 4 (1932): 501-19.

- Hunt, Elizabeth H. "Two Letters from Pine Ridge Mission." *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 50, no. 2 (1972): 219-25.
- Jacobs, Margaret D. "Maternal Colonialism: White Women and Indigenous Child Removal in the American West and Australia, 1880–1940." *Western Historical Quarterly* 36 (2005): 453-76.
- Jeffrey, Julie Roy. "Narcissa Whitman the Significance of a Missionary's Life." *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 41, no. 2 (1991): 2-15.
- Jeffrey Lee Fortney, Jr. "Robert M. Jones and the Choctaw Nation: Indigenous Nationalism in the American South, 1820-1877." Doctorate, University of Oklahoma, 2014.
- Jeltz, Wyatt F. "The Relations of Negroes and Choctaw and Chickasaw Indians." *The Journal of Negro History* 33, no. 1 (1948): 24-37.
- Kerber, Linda K. "The Republican Mother: Women and the Enlightenment—an Historical Perspective." *American Quarterly* 28 (1976): 187-205.
- Kidwell, Clara Sue. "Choctaw (Tribe)." In *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, Oklahoma Historical Society.  
<https://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry.php?entry=CH047>.
- . "What Would Pocahontas Think Now?: Women and Cultural Persistence." *Callaloo* 17, no. 1 (1994): 149-59.
- Kirk, Sylvia Van. "From "Marrying-in" to "Marrying-out"" Changing Patterns of Aboriginal/Non-Aboriginal Marriage in Colonial Canada." *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 22, no. 3 (2002).
- Lewis, Anna. "Jane Mc Curtain." *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 11, no. 4 (1933): 1025-33.
- Lewis, Jan. "The Republican Wife: Virtue and Seduction in the Early Republic." *The William & Mary Quarterly* 44 (1987): 697-721.
- Lindert, Sun Go and Peter. "The Uneven Rise of American Public Schools to 1850." *The Journal of Economic History* 70, no. 1 (2010): 1-26.
- McMillan, Ethel. "Women Teachers in Oklahoma 1820-1860." *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 27, no. 1 (1949): 2-32.
- Methvin, J.J. "About Some of Our First Schools in Choctaw Nation." *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 6, no. 3 (1928): 354-94.
- Michener, Judith. "Graham, Frontier Sketches: New Hope, 24, 413." In *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, Oklahoma Historical Society.  
<https://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry.php?entry=WI018>.
- . "Willis, Uncle Wallace and Aunt Minerva." In *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, Oklahoma Historical Society.
- Miles, Dennis B. "Choctaw Schools." In *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, Oklahoma Historical Society.  
<https://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry.php?entry=CH049>.
- Miller, Lona Eaton. "Wheelock Mission." *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 29, no. 3 (1951): 314-23.
- Pate, James P. "Pitchlynn, Peter Perkins." In *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, Oklahoma Historical Society.  
<https://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry.php?entry=PI013>.

- Pesantubbee, Michelene E. "Beyond Domesticity: Choctaw Women Negotiating the Tension between Choctaw Culture and Protestantism." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 67, no. 2 (1999): 387-409.
- Reed, Ora Eddleman. "The Robe Family—Missionaries ". *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 26, no. 3 (1932): 301-12.
- Romero, Chanette. "Expanding Tribal Identities and Sovereignty through Leanne Howe's 'Tribalography'." *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 26, no. 2 (2014).
- Schweiger, Beth Barton. "The Literate South: Reading before Emancipation." *Journal of the Civil War Era* 13, no. 3 (2013): 331-59.
- Soltow, Lee. "Economic Inequality in the United States in the Period from 1790 to 1860." *The Journal of Economic History* 31, no. 4 (1971): 822-39.
- Stark, Roger Finke and Rodney. "Turning Pews into People: Estimated 19th Century Church Membership." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 25, no. 2 (1986): 180-92.
- Tunc, Tanfer Emin. "The Mistress, the Midwife, and the Medical Doctor: Pregnancy and Childbirth on the Plantations of the Antebellum American South, 1800-1860." *Women's History Review* 19, no. 3 (2010): 395-419.
- . 1828.
- Weiler, Kathleen. "Women's History and the History of Women Teachers." *The Journal of Education* 171, no. 3 (1989): 9-30.
- Williams, R.L. "Peter James Hudson." *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 17, no. 1 (1939): 3-6.
- "Seven Ways to Compute the Relative Value of a U.S. Dollar Amount, 1790 to Present." MeasuringWorth, 2020.
- Zagarri, Rosemary. "Morals, Manners, and the Republican Mother." *American Quarterly* 44, no. 2 (1992): 192-215.

## **Books**

- Adams, David Wallace. *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995.
- Ahlstrom, Sydney E. *A Religious History of the American People*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972.
- Akers, Donna. *Culture and Customs of the Choctaw Indians*. Santa Barbara: Greenwood, 2013.
- . *Living in the Land of Death: The Choctaw Nation, 1830-1860*. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2004.
- Andrews, Edward. *Native Apostles: Black and Indian Missionaries in the British Atlantic World*. Cumberland: Harvard University Press, 2013.
- Banks, Frances. "Narrative." In *The Wpa Oklahoma Slave Narratives*, edited by T. Lindsay Baker and Julie P. Baker. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996.
- Barbara Reeves-Ellington, Kathryn Kish Sklar, and Connie Anne Shemo. *Competing Kingdoms: Women, Mission, Nation, and the American Protestant Empire, 1812-1960*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.
- Barman, Jan Hare and Jean. *Good Intentions Gone Awry: Emma Crosby and the Methodist Mission on the Northwest Coast*. Vancouver: The University of British Columbia Press, 2006.

- Boles, Richard J. *Dividing the Faith: The Rise of Segregated Church in the Early American North*. New York: New York University Press, 2020.
- Boydston, Jeanne. *Home and Work: Housework, Wages, and the Ideology of Labor in the Early Republic*. New York City: Oxford University Press, 1990.
- Boylan, Anne M. *Sunday School: The Formation of an American Institution, 1790-1880*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988.
- Brekus, Catherine A. *Sarah Osborne's World: The Rise of Evangelical Christianity in Early America*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013.
- Brown, Catharine. "Editor's Introduction." In *Cherokee Sister: The Collected Writings of Catharine Brown, 1818-1823*, edited by Theresa Strouth Gaul. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014.
- Carwardine, Richard J. *Evangelicals and Politics in Antebellum America*. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1997.
- Chang, David A. *The Color of the Land: Race, Nation, and the Politics of Landownership in Oklahoma, 1832-1929*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010.
- Child, Brenda J. *Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families, 1900-1940*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998.
- Cobb, Amanda J. *Listening to Our Grandmothers' Stories: The Bloomfield Academy for Chickasaw Females, 1852-1949*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000.
- Coleman, Louis and Barbara Asbill Grant. *The Wheelock Story*. Durant: Texoma Print Service, 2011.
- Conroy-Krutz, Emily. *Christian Imperialism: Converting the World in the Early American Republic*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015.
- Cott, Nancy F. *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977.
- Cushman, Horatio Bardwell. *History of the Choctaw, Chickasaw and Natchez Indians*. 3 ed. Edited by Angie Debo and Clara Sue Kidwell. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999, 1899.
- Debo, Angie. *The Rise and Fall of the Choctaw Republic*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1934.
- Demos, John. *The Heathen School: A Story of Hope and Betrayal in the Age of the Early Republic*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014.
- Dorchester, Daniel. *Christianity in the United States from the First Settlement Down to the Present Time*. New York: Hunt & Eaton, 1895.
- Farnham, Christie Anne. *The Education of the Southern Belle: Higher Education and Student Socialization in the Antebellum South*. New York: New York University Press, 1994.
- Foreman, Grant. *The Five Civilized Tribes*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1934.
- Fox-Genovese, Elizabeth. *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988.
- Froide, Amy M. "The Religious Lives of Singlewomen in the Anglo-Atlantic World: Quaker Missionaries, Protestant Nuns, and Covert Catholics." In *Daniella and Lisa Vollendorf Kostroun, Women, Religion, and the Atlantic World (1600-1800)*,

- edited by Daniella Kostroun and Lisa Vollendorf, 60-78. Toronto: University of California, 2009.
- Glasson, Travis. *Mastering Christianity: Missionary Anglicanism and Slavery in the Atlantic World*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Goble, Michael Cassity and Danney. *Divided Hearts: The Presbyterian Journey through Oklahoma History*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2009.
- Goetz, Rebecca Anne. *The Baptism of Early Virginia: How Christianity Created Race*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2012.
- Gordon, Linda. *The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999.
- Graber, Jennifer. *The Gods of Indian Country: Religion and the Struggle for the American West*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2019.
- Grimshaw, Patricia. *Paths of Duty: American Missionary Wives in Nineteenth-Century Hawaii*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989.
- Harmon, Alexandra. *Rich Indians: Native People and the Problem of Wealth in American History*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010.
- Howe, LeAnne. *Miko Kings: An Indian Baseball Story*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 2007.
- . *Shell Shaker*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 2001.
- Juster, Susan. *Disorderly Women: Sexual Politics and Evangelicalism in Revolutionary New England*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994.
- Katz, William Loren. *Black Indians: A Hidden Heritage*. New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 1986.
- Kerber, Linda K. *Women of the Republic: Intellect & Ideology in Revolutionary America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980.
- Kidwell, Clara Sue. "Choctaw Women and Cultural Persistence in Mississippi." In *Negotiators of Change: Historical Perspectives on Native American Women*, edited by Nancy Shoemaker. New York: Routledge, 1995.
- . *Choctaws and Missionaries in Mississippi, 1818-1918*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995.
- . *The Choctaws in Oklahoma: From Tribe to Nation, 1855-1970*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007.
- Krauthamer, Barbara. *Black Slaves, Indian Masters: Slavery, Emancipation, and Citizenship in the Native American South*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013.
- Lambert, Valerie. *Choctaw Nation: A Story of American Indian Resurgence*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007.
- Levine, James H. Howard and Victoria Lindsay. *Choctaw Music and Dance*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990.
- "Map No. 34." In *Historical Atlas of Oklahoma*, edited by Charles R. Goins John W. Morris, and Edwin C. McReynolds, 1965.
- Mihesuah, Devon A. *Cultivating the Rosebuds: The Education of Women at the Cherokee Female Seminary, 1851-1909*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993.
- Miles, Tiya. *Ties That Bind: The Story of an Afro-Cherokee Family in Slavery and Freedom*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005.

- Moody, Joycelyn. *Sentimental Confessions: Spiritual Narratives of Nineteenth-Century African American Women*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001.
- Morrison, James D. *Schools for the Choctaws*. 2 ed. Edited by Joy Culbreath and Kathy Carpenter. Durant: Ameba Publishing, 2016, 1978.
- Owens, Deirdre Cooper. *Medical Bondage: Race, Gender, and the Origins of American Gynecology*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2017.
- Pascoe, Peggy. *Relations of Rescue: The Search for Female Moral Authority in the American West, 1874-1939*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.
- Perdue, Theda. *"Mixed Blood" Indians: Racial Construction in the Early South*. Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2003.
- Pesantubbee, Michelene E. *Choctaw Women in a Chaotic World: The Clash of Cultures in the Colonial Southeast*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005.
- Renda, Mary A. "Doing Everything: Religion, Race, and Empire in the U.S. Protestant Women's Missionary Enterprise, 1812–1960." In *Competing Kingdoms: Women, Mission, Nation, and the American Protestant Empire, 1812-1960*, edited by Kathryn Kish Sklar Barbara Reeves-Ellington, and Connie Anne Shemo, 367-89. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.
- Robert, Dana L. *American Women in Mission: A Social History of Their Thought and Practice*. Macon: Mercer University Press, 1996.
- Saunt, Claudio. *Black, White, and Indian: Race and the Unmaking of an American Family*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Sensbach, Jon F. *Rebecca's Revival: Creating Black Christianity in the Atlantic World*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005.
- Snyder, Christina. *Great Crossings : Indians, Settlers, and Slaves in the Age of Jackson*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017.
- . *Slavery in Indian Country: The Changing Face of Captivity in Early America*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010.
- Stevenson, Brenda E. "What's Love Got to Do with It?: Concubinage and Enslaved Women and Girls in the Antebellum South," In *Sexuality and Slavery: Reclaiming Intimate Histories in the Americas*, edited by Daina Ramey Berry and Leslie M. Harris, 159-88. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2018.
- Sturm, Circe. *Blood Politics: Race, Culture, and Identity in the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma*. Berkley: University of California Press, 2002.
- Thigpen, Jennifer. *Island Queens and Mission Wives : How Gender and Empire Remade Hawai'i's Pacific World*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014.
- . *Island Queens and Mission Wives: How Gender and Empire Remade Hawai'i's Pacific World*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014.
- Townsend, Camilla. *Malintzin's Choices: An Indian Woman in the Conquest of Mexico*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006.
- Ulrich, Laurel Thatcher. *Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650–1750*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982.
- Vollendorf, Daniella Kostroun and Lisa. *Women, Religion, and the Atlantic World (1600-1800)*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009.
- Wheeler, Rachel. *To Live Upon Hope: Mohicans and Missionaries in the Eighteenth-Century Northeast*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008.

- White, Deborah Gray. *Ar'n't I a Woman: Female Slaves in the Plantation South*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1990.
- White, Richard. *The Roots of Dependency: Subsistence, Environment, and Social Change among the Choctaws, Pawnees, and Navajos*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983.
- Wright, Joseph B. Thoburn and Muriel H. *Oklahoma, a History of the State and Its People*. New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, Inc., 1929.
- Zwiep, Mary. *Pilgrim Path: The First Company of Women Missionaries to Hawaii*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991.



VITA

Emily Alysa Duncan

Candidate for the Degree of History

Master of Arts

Thesis: “WHY HAVE WE NEGLECTED THE GIRLS”: WOMEN’S ROLES IN INDIAN TERRITORY CHOCTAW EDUCATION, 1831-1861

Major Field: History

Biographical:

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Master of Arts in History at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May, 2021.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Arts in History at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in 2018.

Experience:

Historic Site Intern, Barrington Plantation (May-July 2019)

Professional Memberships:

National Council on Public History, Western Association of Women Historians, Phi Alpha Theta, Phi Beta Kappa Society, and Oklahoma Museum Association.