

THE NORTH CAROLINA CHEROKEES

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BY

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Bachelor of Science

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1934

Submitted to the Department of History
Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

1940

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express my deepest appreciation to Professor G. C. Anderson, History Department, for his timely suggestions and advice in this study, and to Dr. T. H. Reynolds for his help on form and technique.

Also I wish to express my thanks to Mr. Clyde M. Blair, Superintendent of Indian Agency, Cherokee, North Carolina, and Mr. Sam H. Gilliam, Principal of Government School, Cherokee, North Carolina, for the information both in letters, periodicals and booklets sent me for this study.

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CHAPTER ONE

LOCATION

In the Mountain Valleys of Soco and Oconalufty, in the shadow of the great Smoky Mountains, live the North Carolina Cherokees. Their land owned in common is found in the counties of Cherokee, Jackson, Swain, Macon and Graham.¹

"Qualla Boundary," the original land bought and the principal home of these Indians, lies in Swain and Jackson Counties.² This original land contained 50,000 acres and to that was added from time to time other tracts until an additional 50,000 acres was added, lying in Cherokee, Graham and Macon Counties.³

The capitol of the nation is maintained at "Stonery" on the Oconalufty River in the present Swain County in the extreme west part of North Carolina near the Tennessee line.⁴

The five counties containing the Cherokee lands in North Carolina are in the extreme southwest part of the state.⁵ Beginning on the Georgia boundary line and going northward along the Tennessee line are Cherokee, Graham, and Swain Counties. South of Swain County lies Macon

¹ H. S. Canby, "Top O' Smoky," Harpers, CXXXII, pp. 573-583.

² W. R. L. Smith, The Story of the Cherokees, p. 225.

³ House Executive Documents, Vol. XII, (1890-1891), 51st Cong.

⁴ W. R. L. Smith, The Story of the Cherokees, p. 229.

⁵ Cram, International Atlas, Map of North Carolina, p. 34

on the Georgia boundary and east of Swain and Macon lies Jackson County.

"Qualla Boundary" is in Swain County but extends over into Jackson.⁶ It begins on the Tennessee line well up in the Smoky Mountains and reaches a short way into Jackson beyond Cherokee where the Government Training School is located.

All the other counties in this southwest corner of the state have some of the outlying territory of the Cherokees except Clay, a small county between Cherokee and Macon on the Georgia Boundary.⁷

⁶ House Executive Documents, No. XII, 1890-1891, 51st Cong. 2nd Session.

⁷ Cram, International Atlas, Map of North Carolina, p. 34.

CHAPTER TWO

ORIGIN

The Cherokees of North Carolina were originally a part of the Cherokee Nation. Prior to their removal there were two distinct divisions of the Cherokees, the "Hill Cherokee" and the "Valley Cherokees."¹ The former of these divisions was also divided, and one finds a part of them living in the extreme highland differing from the main group of "Hill Cherokees." Of this part of the tribe there was some 3,000 living in the mountainous southwest North Carolina.²

The original nucleus of the North Carolina Cherokees was the Kitawba settlement on the Tuckaseegee River, near the mouth of the Oconalufty, in the present Swain County. The Indians of this and the neighboring settlement on Lufty and Soco were the purest blooded and most conservative of the Cherokee Nation. They were under the leadership of their Chief Yonaguska (Drowning Bear), a fine man six feet three inches high and of powerful build.³

Yonaguska counseled peace and friendship with the whites but was opposed to westward migration. He contended that his people would be better off in the mountains of North Carolina than in a fertile country that would soon be claimed by the Westward-moving whites.⁴

He upheld ancient customs and the aboriginal religion of the tribe

1

Dale and J. L. Rader, Readings--Oklahoma History, p. 174.

2

Horace Kephart, "Outing," (May 1919), LXXIV, p. 90.

3

Ibid.

4

Ibid.

and was very suspicious of the white missionaries.

When General Scott's soldiers began gathering the Cherokees for removal, a great number of Chief Yonaguska's band fled to the wilds of the mountains in advance, and they secreted themselves there.⁵ They were joined by others who escaped from the stockade at Calhoun. About one half of these fugitives from removal were under the leadership of Utsala (Lichen) who settled them at the head waters between Clingman Dome and Mount Guyot of the great "Smoky Range."⁶

While General Scott's soldiers were gathering the Cherokees and placing them in the stockades, they came upon the family of Tsali (Charley). Charley, his wife, three sons, and brother were on their way to the stockade. He, not being able to see his wife brutally punished with a bayonet because she could not travel faster, gave a command in Cherokee to fall upon the guards and escape. This they did, killing one of the soldiers. They then fled into the mountains and joined their kinsmen.⁷

There being a great number of these fugitives in the almost inaccessible recesses of these great mountains, and General Scott's forces being reduced, owing to the threat of trouble with England and the "Seminole War," it was next to impossible to get them out. This gave General Scott a chance for a compromise. He agreed to allow these Indians to remain in their old country and asked leniency of the government if they would surrender Tsala and his group to be put to

5

Ibid.

6

Ibid.

7

John P. Brown, Old Frontiers, p. 52.

death for the murder of the soldier.⁸

William H. Thomas, a white trader, and the adopted son of Yonaguska, was chosen to carry the message to Utsala.⁹ The chief was bitter against the whites because his wife and son had died of starvation since they had been fugitives in the mountains.¹⁰ However, when Tsali was told of the plan, he agreed to give up and save his people. He, his two sons, and his brother were shot and his youngest son was moved west but later returned to live with his kinsmen. He took the name of "Wasitumi" meaning Washington.¹¹

The 1,046 upland Cherokees were left in North Carolina. They chose William H. Thomas as agent, and after three years of struggle in Washington got the promise of General Scott ratified in 1843.¹² Succeeding in this first task, he bought land in Swain and Jackson Counties as a home for this band of Cherokees that refused to move west of the Mississippi River.¹³ Thus, from these fugitives from removal, originated the Cherokees of North Carolina, commonly called the Eastern Band of Cherokees. They still live on "Qualla Boundary" and surrounding country in southwest North Carolina.

8

W. R. L. Smith, Story of the Cherokees, p. 166.

9

John P. Brown, op. cit., p. 521.

10

Ibid.

11

Ibid.

12

Laws and Treaties, Indian Affairs, II, p. 564.

13

Horace Kephart, "Outing" (May 1919), LXXIV, p. 90.

CHAPTER THREE

TRIBAL DIFFERENCES AND LEADERS

This group of the Cherokee Nation that lived in the Mountain sections were a little different from the remainder of the tribe. They were the most primitive and superstitious of the tribe and trusted the whites least of all, especially concerning any kind of promise.

These Mountain factions of the Cherokee had less contact with the whites and were less educated than the lowland sections. They also expected the white man to keep his word. Their attitude toward the whites who failed to keep their promise or return a favor was expressed by the old Chief, Junaluska, when he said:

"If I had known that Jackson would have driven us from our homes I would have killed him that day at Horse Shoe. "¹

The Cherokees were the Mountaineers of the South. And like all highlanders they were passionately attached to the rugged and picturesque land that gave them birth. This promise of a far away home in the wilderness, filled with savages, held no allurements for a people prosperous in the arts of peace and asked nothing better than to be let alone.²

According to history, there are many leaders of the Cherokees, but three names are written above all others.

Junaluska, warrior and states man, fought their battles and helped make their later history. Sequoyah gave them a written language and Tsali, in one act of deathless splendor, gave back to them the mountains

¹

Horace Kephart, "Outing", (May 1919), LXXIV, p. 31.

²

Horace Kephart, The Cherokees of the Smoky Mountains, p. 25.

and valleys they had lost.³

John Ross was the principal chief of all the tribes and spent a life time and a fortune in the service of his people, but on the reservation in North Carolina he is held to have betrayed their cause.⁴

Junaluska came to Andrew Jackson's aid at Horse Shoe Bend in 1814. Because he saved the day, Jackson swore an everlasting friendship to Junaluska, and said:

"As long as the sun shines, and the grass grows, there shall be friendship between us, and the feet of the Cherokees shall be toward the east."

Junaluska believed this, and when westward movement was being urged he alone remained serene. Was not Jackson in the White House and had he not sworn they should not move west?

When the truth was forced upon him he pleaded with the president to remember his oath, but his arguments failed, and when General Scott's troops came to the Cherokee country, Junaluska stood on the mountains and cursed the day he saved Jackson's life.⁵

He went west with his people, but came back to die among his hills. He was said to have lived to be more than one hundred. Long after his death, the D. A. R.'s unveiled a monument to him at Robbinsville.

Reverend Cornsilk delivered an oration and some quotation of it follows:

"We have met here today to honor Junaluska. We appreciate that he went to war and gained this big victory for Jackson. I knew Juna at that time; knew him well. I recollect how he looked. He wore his hair cut off at back of head, and he would plait his hair on top of his head, so as to make it stick up like horns.

³ J. L. Caton, The Eastern Cherokees, p. 24.

⁴ Mary Newman Fitzgerald, The Cherokees, p. 30.

⁵ Ibid.

He was a good man. He believed in God and Jesus as one. He depended on Jesus for way to heaven. He was a good friend. He was good friend in home and everywhere. He would ask hungry man to eat; he would ask cold man to warm at fireside. He would ask tired man to rest. He was smart. He made his mind to think. He was very brave. He was not afraid. Juna's home was a good home for others. I am glad he is about. (pointing up).⁶

Sequoyah was remembered not for his bravery or heroic deeds in battle, but for his giving his people a written language. Soon after his invention, the upper and lower Cherokees carried on correspondence. For this great benefit the general council voted him an annual pension of \$300.00, the first pension to be granted to any author. They also gave him \$500.00 for the invention.⁷

There was a tradition that a band of Cherokees had been lost in the western mountains and Sequoyah spent much time and money searching for them, that he might work out a common language for all the Indians.⁸

The long trips through the western mountains, taxed his strength, and finally, in the fall of 1848, he stopped his ox cart to rest, near San Bernardino, New Mexico. He still rests there, not far from the Rio Grande, the greatest of his race.⁹

Tsali lived up in the Smoky Mountains too remote to hear what was happening to his brothers in the lower towns.

When the soldiers came and Tsali and his family escaped, killing a soldier, General Scott agreed to let the remnant of Cherokees in the mountains remain if he would surrender. Tsali came in and was executed

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

to save his people--the land they loved. The old people remember him to this day, and it so said:

Greater love hath no man, than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend.¹⁰

From this foregoing account, it is easy to see why the Cherokees of North Carolina revere and cherish memories of these three men.

¹⁰

Ibid.

CHAPTER FOUR

GOVERNMENT, PATRIOTISM, CUSTOMS, AND HABITS

The government of the Eastern Cherokees was patterned after the government of the entire band or tribe. The tribes first effort to win recognition as a civilized nation came early in the nineteenth century.¹

In 1820, at the suggestion of Thomas Jefferson, they formed a republican form of government modeled after that of the United States, and in 1828 they adopted a constitution.²

This was an assumption of distinct nationality, and their sovereignty was recognized by the United States. They passed laws for the collection of taxes, for repair of roads, for the support of schools, for the suppression of intemperance and polygamy, and preventing the sale of land to whites without the consent of the National Council.³

In 1827, John Ross was president of the Convention that formed and adopted a constitution of the Cherokee Nation, "the first effort at a regular government, with distinct branches and powers defined, ever made and carried into effect by any of the Indians of North America." In the following year, 1828, he was elected principal chief and held this office continuously until his death.⁴ This government existed until removal and was carried on to Oklahoma. The little band remaining in North Carolina was left without any form of government.

1 Horace Kephart, The Cherokees of the Smoky Mountains, p. 9.

2 Buchanan and Dale, American History.

3 Horace Kephart, The Cherokees of the Smoky Mountains, p. 11.

4 Ibid.

After the small band found themselves scattered among the North Carolina mountains and at the mercy of the white people, the headman turned to the one man they thought could help them--Wm. Henry Thomas, an Indian trader.⁵ Thomas went to Washington in 1840 and worked for three years to get the government to allow these Indians to remain in the old home. In 1843, Thomas was authorized as their agent by the government. In 1846 the Eastern Cherokees were admitted to participate in the benefits of the treaty of 1835, and Thomas was authorized at various times to buy back from the whites enough land in western North Carolina as a permanent home for the band.⁶

This he did, and since the State of North Carolina would not allow Indians to own land--Thomas held the deed in his own name until after the Civil War. His personal affairs became involved in 1869, and the land was sold and bought by T. Johnston to satisfy a \$30,000 judgment against Thomas.⁷

Then a suit was begun in the Circuit Court of the United States for the western district of North Carolina to establish title and ownership to the land which was held in the name of Thomas for the Cherokees. The Court appointed a board of arbitrators to determine the interest of the Cherokees in the lands involved, which board awarded most of the land in question to the Indians.⁸

5

Ibid.

6

Ibid.

7

Report of Commissioners of Indian Affairs, 1874.

8

Ibid.

The Indian affairs were adjusted at this time. From 1874 to 1894 the title to the reservation of the Eastern Band of Cherokees was held in trust by the government, and the supervision of the land and some of the affairs of the Cherokees are under the administration of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Washington, D. C.⁹

In 1870 the Eastern Band of the Cherokees changed their form of government and began electing a Principal Chief and Vice Chief to serve for a term of four years, and the Councilmen were elected to serve for a term of two years. They also elect a secretary, treasurer, and a Marshall.¹⁰

A unique feature of the situation of the Cherokee Indian Reservation is the fact that a charter was granted the people by the state of North Carolina in 1889. On March 11 of that year, the state legislature passed a bill containing certain benefits to the tribes, including a charter and the machinery for the organization of a tribal Council.¹¹ The present tribal Council consists of twelve members, two elected from each of the six districts. These districts are: Yellowhill, Big Cove, Painttown, Wolfetown, Birdtown, and Snowbird.¹²

The Qualla Boundary consists of only five districts or townships and that of Snowbird is in Graham County, North Carolina, but is under the tribal jurisdiction and has its two representatives on the tribal

9

C. W. Blair, Cherokee Indian, Ashville Citizens.

10

Ibid.

11

Ibid.

12

Ibid.

council.¹³

The tribal council holds one regular session each year and attends to matters pertaining to land and makes request to the government in matters of public improvements. The Council also apportions money and other aids to the aged and needy members of the tribe.¹⁴

The present Chief of the Eastern Band of Cherokees is Jarret Blythe and the Vice Chief is Fred Bauer.¹⁵

These Indians have always cooperated with the state and National Government as far as it was possible. Some four hundred of them joined a regiment under Colonel William H. Thomas in the Civil War and a large number enlisted during the late World War. The Cherokees have organized a legion post on "Qualla Boundary" for Indians exclusively.

The prompt and generous response of the Eastern Cherokees to our government's call for subscriptions to liberty bonds and War saving stamps was surprising and delightful.

In proportion to their ability they more than equalled the whites.¹⁶ Their young men went into the war willingly and fought gallantly. Only one slacker was reported in the whole tribe, and he was immediately brought in by his own people.¹⁷

The Indian children in the Cherokee school are supporting a war

13

J. L. Caton, The Cherokee Indians, p. 13.

14

Ibid.

15

C. M. Blair, Personal letter. July 19, 1939.

16

Horace Kephart, The Cherokees of the Smoky Mountains, p. 35.

17

Ibid.

orphan in France.¹⁸

The Eastern Cherokees are also a group that honors their white brothers and kinsman when such an occasion arises.

Will Rogers visited "Qualla Boundary" and looked up his kinsfolk a few years ago and these people fell in love with him. The night after the news of his tragic death came they held the first memorial service for him. Reverend William Fitzgerald read the following poem which he had composed that day.¹⁹

THE CHEROKEES' FAREWELL TO WILL ROGERS

A dust cloud fogs on the Western plain,
Bathed in the yellow gloam,
And pony hoofs clatter a wild refrain
As they all come galloping home.
The cowboys yell with a hunger cry,
But one shouts louder than all,
"I've roped my last old horns" came his sigh,
As the night gust swept with a squall.

"Fellers I love to ride the range
From morn till the sun drops down
And this bunch of fun I would not exchange
For a kingdom and its crown,
But I must leave you, Old Sport, adieu,
I'll travel this way again
In a better day I'll come to you,
So long, But I can't tell when."

Then drawling away with a merry song,
And the Cherokee glint in his eyes,
With his rope in his hand, he went along
Where his path of glory lies.
With untried powers and a laugh in his throat,
He steps on a lighted stage,
A man, measured not by the cut of his coat
Or the changing size of his wage.

All the world was an audience hall for Will,
Whether moved by tear or smile,
All human differences were as nil,

18

Ibid.

19

Mary Newman Fitzgerald, The Cherokees, p. 6

Mankind was a mixed up pile.
 "I'll rule it with humor" he said with a pat,
 "Chase the mourners out of the way,"
 And he swathed himself in his lariat,
 To make all classes his prey.

Now up where the stage is raised a bit,
 And the whole world's ears could hear,
 He rode to fame on his mother wit,
 As he travelled far and near.
 He dashed o'er the waves-he dived through the sea,
 New pathes in the air he beat,
 In the North, in the South, where great men be,
 East or West, they sat at his feet.

From his finger tips, with a mike at his lips
 He followed the human play,
 And leaped from stage to printed page,
 To toy with the grave or gay.
 He sought not for gold, but for joy untold
 That stirred in his dauntless breast,
 He must see each side of the fight, worldwide
 And ply each one with his jest.

He held in his hands a cord of lines,
 He swept all hearts to a goal,
 He opened for all new laughter mines,
 And cheered Humanity's soul.
 He girdled the world with his lasso strong,
 His tent-pins widened each day,
 And just when the world seemed to wait for his song,
 He left us and went away.

Oh, the last round-up in Alaska's chill!
 Oh, the sunshine loat in a fog!
 There's a tear in all hearts for big hearted Will
 As the world still keeps on its jog.
 For he blew Love's light to a brighter flame,
 And he healed pain's sigh with a deed,
 As he wrote on the scroll of the years his name.
 And "Friendliness" left as his creed.

They also honored the president of the United States, Franklin D.
 Roosevelt.

In 1937 when President Roosevelt made his first official visit to
 the Smoky Mountain National Park he went down the south slope of the
 mountains into a Cherokee village on Qualla Boundary. There he was met
 by all the oldest chiefs and ex-chiefs of the tribe as well as by
 hundreds of young Indians.

In token of friendship and appreciation of what the government is doing to improve conditions of the Indian reservation, the President was crowned with the ancient feathered headdress of a Cherokee Chief and dubbed "Chief White Eagle."²⁰

²⁰

J. L. Caton, The Cherokee Indians, p. 12.

CHAPTER FIVE

EDUCATION

Education among the Cherokees began before removal, with the invention of the Cherokee alphabet by Sequoyah. Of course this was all interrupted by removal and the small band that remained in North Carolina had very little left of their literary inheritance. Yet here and there a volume had been saved out of the wreck and ruins of removal. Parts of the Old Testament and all of the New Testament and a hymn book and a few copies of other collections are still extant.¹ They had no schools.

The Quakers learning of the plight of the Cherokees in North Carolina resolved to establish schools for them and give them moral and religious training.² For ten years these were carried on under contract with the government cooperating. These schools established by the Society of Friends immediately after the Civil War were under contract to B. C. Bobbs, Bloomington, Indiana.³ In January 1876, the Society of Friends attempted to establish a central Boarding School at Cherokee, but the expense was so heavy it had to be abandoned, however, the United States government took this school over the next year and it became an industrial school under the support of the Federal Government.⁴

For several years after this school was established, it also was conducted under contract to B. C. Bobbs.

¹ Mary Newman Fitzgerald, The Cherokees, p. 23.

² Ibid.

³ Robert Leatherwood--Report of Commissioners of Indian Affairs, 1886, p. 208-9.

⁴ Report of Commissioners of Indian Affairs, 1776.

In 1886 there were five schools in this agency, including the central school at Cherokee, and four days schools in various parts of Qualla Boundary. The central school was open ten months in the year and the others were open seven months during the year.⁵

After 1886 the Eastern Cherokees severed all relations with the Cherokees west and their systems of Education took on a permanent aspect and continued to improve until their schools became modern.⁶

Figures given in the school budget for the Central school at Cherokee for a few selected years will serve to show the rapid growth of the educational program in Qualla Boundary after the affairs of the Eastern Cherokees were finally adjudicated, 1874-1894. In 1905 there was an appropriation of \$29,050, and an attendance of 150 students. In 1914 their appropriation was \$36,000 and the attendance 180. In 1926 the appropriation \$77,500 and the attendance 300. In 1937 there was an appropriation of \$117,491 and enrollment of 401 students.⁷

The four days schools in 1937 were Big Cove Township, enrollment of 41; Birdtown, 57; Snowbird, 29; and Soco, 111.

The school are financed by direct aid from the federal government. They all run a period of nine months. The day schools carry the children through the first six grades. The children all return to their homes at night. Those in grades, seven to twelve, attend the Central Boarding school at Cherokee. There were 466 attending this school in 1938. All of these children eat their lunch at the school dining room.⁸

⁵ Robert Leatherwood -- Report of Commissioners of Indian Affairs, 1886, pp. 208-9.

⁶ J. L. Caton, The Cherokee Indians p. 16.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

There are five buses that carry the children to and from their homes.⁹

These schools are strictly modern in physical equipment, and in methods of instruction.

The government has spent a sum of \$229,333.60 in the last few years for repair and construction of a new building on Qualla Boundary. They also maintain a modernly equipped hospital where the Indian children get free medical care. They have a staff of good doctors, dentists, and nurses.

A nursery school and adult classes are sustained at the Central school at Cherokee. Those who attend the adult classes are mostly women and are taking basketry or pottery making.¹⁰

In addition to the regular academic courses, the Indian children get instructions in the Vocational subjects that include dairying, farming, mechanics, woodwork and other practical subjects.¹¹

In 1937, the present program was established. In determining what the schools should do, there were three ways these Indians needed help. 1. Improve their health; 2. Make them more economically secure; 3. Establish for them a respected place in society. Of course, the science program is only a small part of the general educational program, but the science class studies along three definite lines; 1. The class studied sanitation, tested milk and water, brought out the need of modern latrines and general cleanliness in their homes. 2. They studied forestry, set out 500 pine trees in one year and stopped erosion in many places. 3.

9

Robert Young Deer, *The Cherokee Indians*, written and published by ninth grade Cherokee schools.

10

J. L. Caton, *The Cherokees*, p. 16.

11

Ibid.

They studied photography and basket making. The girls also studied plant life. They have a book on the flora of the country.¹²

On the following pages is given an exact copy of the report sent to the parents of the Indian children furnished by S. H. Gilliam, Principal of Cherokee School.

¹²

Carson V. Ryan, *Progressive Education*, February 1938. Vol. 15, pp. 143-6.

Cherokee Central School
Cherokee, N. C.
April 21, 1939

Report to Parents

Dear Friends:

The first three quarters of the school year, on the whole, have been quite satisfactory. The attendance of the children with certain exceptions, has been good. Your cooperation and friendship have been very helpful.

The majority of students has been quite willing to help do the work that must be done at the school. Day pupils of junior-senior high school age who wish more time for study and training can make special arrangements in regard to the requirement that all older pupils in good health and physically able must do some work.

During the school year the teachers have sent you several reports telling what groups and individuals have been doing in school. In case you have not understood or wish additional reports giving specific information about your child, we will be glad to send you the kind of report you wish upon request.

At this time we would like to add to the teachers' reports an outline of the whole school program so that you may be properly informed. Grades pre-first, 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5: the usual classroom work as language, English, reading, writing, history, geography, civics and arithmetic; music; health; play and games; physical education; gardening; fruit raising; outdoor science. High school, grades 7 and 8: social studies (local problems, civics, geography, history, guidance); English; arithmetic; science; health; physical education; vocations listed below.

High School, Grades 9, 10, 11, and 12, and
Vocational

<u>English</u>	4 units	<u>Science</u>	4 units
<u>Social Science</u>	4 units	General Science	
Indian and local history		Botany	
World History		Biology	
American History		Physics	
Economics		Forestry (applied)	
		Chemistry	
<u>Arithmetic</u>	1 unit	1 to 4 years	
<u>Special Electives</u>	(for students with definite objectives)		
Foreign Languages		Music	
Physics		Camp course	
Chemistry		Physical and Health Education	
Algebra		First Aid	
Geometry			

<u>Vacations, Girls</u>	4 units	<u>Vocations, Boys</u>	4 units
Clothing		General agriculture, gardening, dairying, fruit raising	
Foods		Farm & Home Mechanics & Construction	
Weaving		General Mechanics	
Pottery		Auto Mechanics, repair, service driving	
Basketry		Crafts; metal work, wood work	
Child Development		Homemaking for boys; baking, cooking	
Child Care		Painting, Carpentry	
Poultry		Practical engineering	
Gardening		Home projects	
Food Conservation			

The older students, under guidance, elect a full program from the above list of vocational and classroom courses.

Character development is emphasized in all the school activities. The students are encouraged to attend the local churches near their homes or the schools to receive religious instruction and to participate in worthwhile Christian work under the direction of local religious leaders.

Day pupils should not attend evening parties, ball games, picture shows, and other activities at the school without the permission of parents. Parents, if they wish, may ask the school or teachers in charge of activities for full information concerning any particular affairs ahead of time, and such request will be given full attention.

If you wish further information we will be glad to give it to you. We will be pleased to have you visit the school and discuss with you your children's problems and school progress.

Sincerely yours,

S. H. Gilliam
Principal

Approved by C. M. Blair, Superintendent

CHAPTER SIX

AUG 6 1940

SUMMARY

This is only a small part of the fascinating history of the Cherokee Indians whose dwindling remanent is living peacefully on Qualla Boundary in the shadow of the great Smoky Mountains.

These Cherokees were the original owners of all this land in southern Appalachian Mountains until DeSota came to their country in 1540. From that time on they were struggling to hold their land.¹ When the Cherokee boy picked up a shining pebble in a stream and carried it home he began a rush that was the end for the once powerful Cherokees.²

From this point on Cherokee history as far as the eastern band is concerned, becomes a vivid example of the old Biblical them of, "And there was a Remnant Left."³

Back in the Mountains there was a remnant left. A few of the more determined and fighting Cherokees fled into the rugged mountains and others escaped from pens where they were held by General Scott's soldiers. One of these was Tsali and his family. Through William H. Thomas, a friend of the Cherokees, word was carried to him that if he would surrender his people would be left in the old home, the land they loved so well. He at first hesitated, but gazing over the vast mountain area and visualizing a remnant of his people left there, he gave himself

1 J. L. Caton, The Cherokee Indians, p. 24.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

up and they were all shot except his 12 year old son.⁴

Tsali's sacrifice explains the presence today of the small band, 3430 living on Qualla Boundary in western North Carolina.⁵

The Cherokee Indian reservation, as it is sometimes referred to, is located in five counties of western North Carolina; Swain, Jackson, Haywood, Graham and Cherokee. The title to Qualla Boundary is held in trust for the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians by the United States Government, and the supervision of this land and some of the affairs of the Cherokees are under the Office of Indian Affairs, which is a bureau under the Department of Interior, Washington, D. C.⁶

Many people seem to believe that the Cherokees are given an allowance for their living expenses, but this is not true. The Cherokees find that they are under the same necessity for earning a livelihood as the white people in any part of the country.⁷

There has been much discussion on the present status of the Eastern Cherokees, but a unique feature of the situation on Qualla Boundary is that a Charter was granted to these people by the State of North Carolina in 1889.

On March 11, of that year, the State Legislature passed a bill containing certain benefits to the tribe, including a charter and machinery for organizing a tribal council. The present tribal council consists of twelve members, two from each of the six districts. These are: Yellow-

⁴
Ibid.

⁵
Ibid.

⁶
C. M. Blair, Cherokee Indians (Ashville Citizens Times) June 1939, p. 8.

⁷
Ibid.

hill, Big Cove, Painttown, Wolfetown, Birdtown and Snowbird. In addition, the tribe elects a chief, a vice-chief, and a marshall. The council passes on land matters, inheritance, and many other human problems, as help for the needy and aged. Most all of these problems have to be reviewed and approved by the office of Indian Affairs at Washington.⁸

The direct aid from the federal government to the Cherokees is no different from that claimed by any other citizen. The Government furnishes a complete medical service with a modern hospital staffed with nurses and doctors. The State of North Carolina furnishes a field nurse.⁹

A large central school is maintained at Cherokee headquarters and four day schools are on the reservation. Day schools are near the homes of the Indians and have the small children in the elementary grades. The upper grades, including a four year high school, going through the twelve grades, make up the central school. About 140 of the children live at the central school on a boarding basis and 260 are brought in by bus each day.

The curriculum of the central school and day schools is a very practical one, attempting to fit the children for better living in their home environment. A feature is a strong vocational program offered both to boys and girls, together with emphasis upon the arts and crafts of the Cherokee. Woodworking, pottery making, basket making, and weaving are among the crafts of the Cherokee, especially emphasized, and splendidly

8

Ibid.

9

Ibid.

trained native teachers are used as instructors in these various crafts.¹⁰

The Civilian Conservation corps has a branch for the Indian department at Cherokee whereby 150 Indians are given employment, 50 in each of 10-day shifts. This group works on truck trails and in other roads on the reservation. This employment is of great benefit to the families of these employees, furnishing them some cash income and leaving them plenty of time to work their small farms and gardens, and to devote some time to the craft work, which also brings in some cash for living expenses.¹¹

The federal government makes a small allotment each year for the care and maintenance of roads on the reservation, and individual Indians are given three days' employment per month for work they do in this division. The roads on the reservation are graded, surfaced and maintained by this department.¹²

The government maintains a farm agent for the reservation whose work corresponds very closely to that of the farm extension agents in the counties in North Carolina. The work of this department is correlated with that of the schools in encouraging and developing better farm and garden methods, together with the improvement of livestock on the reservation.¹³

The Cherokees are very industrious people, and while they have all

10

Ibid.

11

Ibid.

12

Ibid.

13

Ibid.

the problems in their community life that are found in the life of any people, yet in the main, they are law abiding and willing to contribute to the life of their state and country. A large number volunteered for action during the late World war, and the veterans of that war have organized themselves into a legion post for Indians exclusively. It is hoped in the future that they will merge more and more their interests with those of other citizens of the State of North Carolina, and be able to take their place as useful and respected citizens of this country.¹⁴

¹⁴

Ibid.

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