

GROWTH OF EDUCATION IN MUSKOGEE COUNTY

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GROWTH OF EDUCATION IN MUSKOGEE COUNTY

By

EDGAR V. DAWSON

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APPROVAL:

Haskell Prueett  
In Charge of Thesis

J. C. Conner  
Dean of School of Education

J. C. McIntosh  
Dean of Graduate School

118379

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## INTRODUCTION

It has been my purpose in this paper to trace the progress of education in what is now Muskogee County, Oklahoma, from the early territorial schools down to those of the present time. It has not been my intention, however, to make the work so exhaustive as to be a detailed history of education as that term implies, but rather a somewhat detailed survey of several of the institutions herein discussed. To that end of it the treatment has been general enough to be at once comprehensive, with only enough detail to give the reader a clear picture of how the early schools have grown into the present system.

Much of the research material for this work has been taken from the files of old newspapers, periodicals, college year books, and collections of photographs. Informal conversations and interviews with pioneer citizens and educators who have contributed to the development of the schools have made it possible to preserve much of the historical tradition, which with the passing of these pioneers will soon be inaccessible. It is a safe assumption that the end of another decade will find this avenue of research forever closed.

Graphs, charts, and other statistical tabulations have been omitted from this work in the belief that such devices are of little value in the treatment of a simple, historical narrative, such as this.

It will be observed that the material in this paper has been treated as nearly in chronological order as the approach will permit. The missions and boarding schools having been the forerunners of our present system, are included in the second chapter. Each of these is discussed from the date of its establishment, or to the date of abandonment. Hence no further consideration is given these institutions following their treatment in the second chapter.

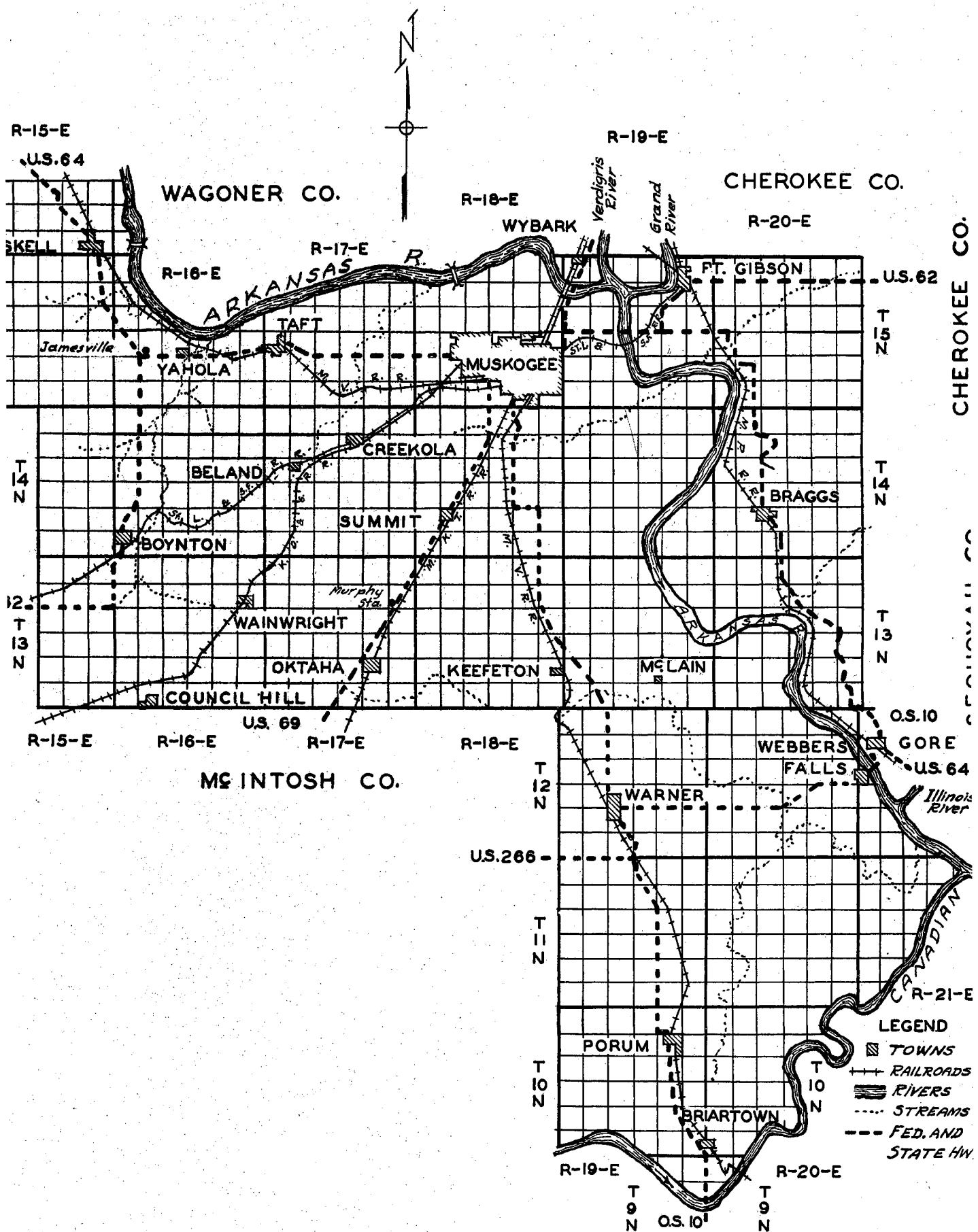
The public district schools are treated in the chapter on Schools Since Statehood, following which the schools supported by the state are discussed. Chapter III follows with a brief outline of the recent developments and improvements made in both the administrative and physical aspects of the schools.

Although there are several negro schools in the county, they are not included here as a separate unit of education. Since these schools owe their development as well as their present management to the white race, little is said about them apart from other schools.

An outline map of the county showing its irregular shape, the position of rivers and streams, and other geographical features is included in this paper for the reader's convenience and reference. Although the county was first organized in 1898, the present boundaries shown

on the map are those fixed by the Constitutional Convention in 1907. Its present area is eight hundred and <sup>1/2</sup> fourteen square miles.

✓ Oklahoma Almanac, 1930



## MUSKOGEE COUNTY

OKLAHOMA

Clonts-Morgan Engineering Co.

## CHAPTER I

## EARLY TERRITORIAL SCHOOLS

The first school established in what is now Muskogee County was Muskogee Mission at Creek Agency about one-half mile north of the present site of the United States Veterans Hospital. It was opened in 1845 under the supervision of Mrs. W. D. Collins, who was the only teacher. The attendance was small, and very little interest was manifest by either the parents or the pupils. The pupils came only at intervals; they chose to remain at home and attend the small farms and hunt game on the neighboring prairies rather than be confined in the school room. The attendance was never over twenty-five during the first years of the existence of the <sup>1/</sup> school.

Books were scarce and it was necessary to do much of the teaching orally, especially in arithmetic and <sup>2/</sup> geography. This pioneer school continued in operation for the Creek Indians until the Civil War when it was, as other schools, discontinued until the War closed. When it again opened, about 1880, it became a Colored Orphan Home for Creek Freedman. A two-story stone structure was erected as the main building, on the top of Honor Heights Hill. This served as a residence for

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1/ Report of Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1848.

2/ Ibid.

the Superintendent, besides containing a kitchen, a dining-room, class-rooms, and sleeping rooms for girls. Besides this main building there was a small frame building which was used for a dormitory for boys, and quarters for the teachers.

The Home closed in 1908, and the children were transferred to the Pecan Creek Mission, three miles west of Muskogee. The property was sold to the City of Muskogee on October 2, 1909, for the sum of \$4,500. From that time on it has been included in the city park, known as Honor Heights Park.

The first superintendent of the Home was George E. Taylor, and the last man to serve in this capacity was Alex Mike.<sup>4</sup>

#### WEBBERS FALLS SCHOOL

One of the very early schools was that of Webbers Falls, established in 1853. Mrs. Ella Coodey who was a student in the school gives the following detailed account of its early history:

In 1855, I began attending the Webbers Falls School which was then two years old. I was eight years of age at this time. My parents did not believe in sending children to school younger than that. However, I had been instructed at home and was allowed to enter as

<sup>3/</sup> George Hillman, in the Oklahoma Indian School Magazine, May, 1933.

<sup>4/</sup> Ibid

a second year student. The Cherokee School System was under the authority of a Board of Education appointed by the Cherokee National Council. Each school was supervised by a board of directors.

At the time I entered school the board was composed of my step-father, Judge John S. Vann, John McDaniel, and William Thompson.

Though the system was thoroughly organized at that time, adequate buildings had not been erected. At the beginning of that year classes were held at a private residence, known as the Jennings Home. This was a mile west from the little village of Webbers Falls, and almost two miles from my home. We sat on benches which had no backs. I had to walk to school, and in bad weather the mud was deep, however there were always some big boys along the way to carry the little girls across the mud-holes.

My first teacher was Mr. William Fields, my mother's brother, a young man just out of the Arkansas University, where he was graduated. The next year the school was moved to the village where the Board secured a room at the home of Mr. John McDaniel, a member of the school board, who ran a dry goods store in the little town.

This year Miss Eliza Holt was the teacher and was the first women teacher in this part of the country. The next year Miss Holt married Mr. Joseph McGorlie, and was succeeded by Mr. Jacob Scales, who, like Mr. Fields, was also a recent graduate of the Arkansas University.

Mr. Scales' career as a teacher was only of one year duration, as he went into the mercantile business with Mr. John Drew at the Salt Works on Dirdy Creek.

In 1858, a Court House was erected in the little town and was secured as a school house. When court was in session we had to vacate and move to the yard. As court always convened in the spring and in the fall, it worked no hardship because it was always pleasant to persue our studies under the magnificent oak trees.

We had our first benches with backs to them while we occupied the Court House, perhaps, about the year 1859. The benches were much too high for the little folks and their short legs swung in mid-air.

All the children took their lunches in little buckets, since ventilated lunch baskets were unheard of. I have a distinct recollection of biscuits and sausage as a principal feature of the lunches.

Some of the children lived as much as five miles from the school, and the greater part of the day was consumed in the round trip.

My first studies were of the McGuffey's series, reader, speller, geography, and arithmetic. The first book we studied was McGuffey's Mental Arithmetic. The problems were solved mentally without the aid of slates and pencils; paper for school use was unknown. Our written work was done either on a slate or on the blackboard. As our studies progressed we were promoted to Ray's and Davies' books. Davies' were the hardest.

There was an enrollment of about forty during the year, although the average was somewhat less due to weather conditions.

Miss Rose Talley, a beautiful Cherokee girl, taught the first year school was held in the Court House. At the end of the year she married Mr. Joab Scales and went to live at the Salt Works where Mr. Scales was engaged in business.

Miss Delia Noseday was the next teacher, and boarded at the home of Mr. John McDaniel, a merchant and a relative of hers.

The school year was divided into two terms of four and one half months each, giving a mid-year vacation. The salary of teachers ranged from forty to fifty dollars. The books were furnished by the Cherokee government. Besides our regular daily schedule we had spelling matches every Friday afternoon, and the contests were too lively at times.

Miss Delilah Vann, mother of Judge O. H. P. Brewer of Muskogee, present District Judge, taught the Webbers Falls School one year and then accepted a school on Greenleaf Mountain, and took me with her. However, I stayed only one term.

In 1859, a new school building had been erected one-half mile from the town of Webbers Falls in the most central spot of the inhabitants. A young man by the name of Sam Adair, a university graduate, became the teacher, and boarded with the family of Major I. G. Vore. He was very much impressed with his learning and thought the more severe methods he employed the more successful he would be. He attempted to teach, literally, "to the tune of a hickory stick," but in the presence of a dozen or more boys six feet tall he was not able to carry out his ideas; however, he whipped my little brother one day when he saw the child looking out the window. I went home that night and staged a riot, and informed my family that if they didn't settle matters, I would. As the little boy's father was a member of the school board something evidently took place, for it never happened again.

The school continued until the beginning of the Civil War in 1861, when it closed. The Cherokees began to grow restless and leave for the South in an attempt to save what they could from the ravages of the invading army. I never attended school at Webbers Falls again, for I left with my family for the South to avoid trouble with the enemy.

Webbers Falls School was discontinued during the Civil War, but was reopened about 1878. While the school never grew as rapidly as some of the other schools in this section of the state, it is a representative type of the early schools and has always been the pride of the community.

The old Brewer Academy, now the high school of Webbers Falls, was one of the first schools of the county to attempt any kind of high school work. However, this was not accredited until after statehood.

#### VANN SCHOOL.

In 1845 soon after the organization of the Creek Agency School, Edwin Francis Arches, a young man thirty years of age and a native of the state of New York, began a school in the southern part of what is now Muskogee County for the children of the surrounding neighborhood. He made his home with Joseph Vann, a very prominent citizen of the community, from whom the school named. The country was sparsely settled and the school was not very large. During the first year Mr. Archer enrolled <sup>5/</sup> only nineteen students, thirteen boys and six girls.

Since all the teachers of this early period were A. B. C. Darians these children learned the alphabet before beginning to read. Books were very scarce and <sup>6/</sup> for that reason much of the teaching was done orally. Similar to the curricula of the other schools in the country, the course contained reading, writing, spelling, grammar, geography, and mental arithmetic.

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5/ Report of Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1845.

6/ Ibid.

The school continued in operation until the Civil War when it closed, not to be opened again until shortly before Statehood, perhaps about 1903, at a place near the original school site.<sup>7/</sup> Soon after Statehood, a new building was erected, which is still used to house the children of Vann community.

#### BRIARTOWN SCHOOL

The original school was organized at Briartown in 1856, with Miss Victoria Hicks as the teacher, and a small number of children.<sup>8/</sup> Much of the surrounding country was unsettled, and there were not many pupils to attend, and those who did attend were very irregular. The building was small, but served the purpose very well. The school was supported by the Cherokee Nation, but the Superintendent, H. D. Reece, was unable to visit the community often.<sup>9/</sup> There was a compulsory attendance law, but because the children lived, in many cases, four or five miles from school the law was not enforced very rigidly.<sup>10/</sup>

The school has been considered a land mark of this part of the country for years. It was closed during the

<sup>7/</sup> Frank Vann, a great, great grandson of Joseph Vann.

<sup>8/</sup> Report of Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1860.

<sup>9/</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10/</sup> Ibid.

War, but was reopened soon after the Reconstruction period, about 1880,<sup>11/</sup> with Miss Capitola Wily as teacher.

Miss Wily was a sister of A. S. Wily, formerly Supervisor of Indian Schools.<sup>12/</sup> The school has been in session for some months each year since that time. Some times, however,<sup>13/</sup> three months would constitute the term for the year.

The building has burned three times since the institution was founded, but each time was replaced by one more adequate than the one before.<sup>14/</sup>

#### BRAGGS SCHOOL

In 1856 a school was established on Greenleaf Mountain, and was called Greenleaf School at that time. John Schrimsher was appointed the first teacher, a Cherokee Indian, who at that time was about thirty years of age.<sup>15/</sup>

The school was supported by investments belonging to the Cherokee Nation, and was supervised by H. D. Reece who was Superintendent of Schools for the Cherokee Nation for several years immediately preceding the Civil War. He was a very able school man, and did a great work among the Cherokee schools, but his work was discontinued during the war.<sup>16/</sup>

11/ W. B. Wily, Postmaster at Tahlequah.

12/ Ibid.

13/ Ibid.

14/ Frank Vann, Pioneer Citizen.

15/ Report of Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1880.

16/ Ibid.

About the year 1889 the school was reopened in a little log house one-half mile west of the Braggs Store, for which the town was named, and the school was renamed <sup>17/</sup> Braggs School.

The log house was replaced by a one-room frame structure about 1895. It housed the school until 1909, <sup>18/</sup> when a four-room, two-story brick building was erected.

#### WHITE CHURCH SCHOOL

One of the outstanding rural schools immediately before Statehood was that of White Church, six miles southeast of the present city of Tuskegee.

In the summer of 1884, McCoy (Junie) Smith, a pioneer citizen of the neighborhood, became interested in the establishment of a school for the children of the community. Since there was no building in which to hold classes, he went to Dutch Mills, Arkansas, a distance of seventy-five miles, and purchased lumber and materials with which to erect a building which was to be used both as a church and a school house. He solicited the assistance of the neighbors who showed an interest in transporting the materials over the long rough road. They set out with teams and wagons, and after several days the materials were delivered, and the actual work was begun.

17/ Loonie Hammer, a pioneer citizen.

18/ Ibid.

within the course of four or five weeks the building was ready for the organization of the first school. The location was on top of a high bald hill with open fields and prairies to the west; the building was painted white and for miles to the west it was to be seen glistening in the sun, and since it was to be used also as a church the people began calling it "White Church," and it has since been known as White Church School House.<sup>19/</sup>

When the building was completed Miss Jennie Vann, mother of J. D. Harnage, was engaged to teach the first school. The enrollment was not very large at first, perhaps fifteen students, the most of whom were in the lower grades.

Mr. Wilson Smith, who is at present Clerk of the School Board, and son of McCoy Smith tells of the lawlessness of the cowboys when he was a student in school here. He says the cowboys used to come to the school house in the summer, rest in the shade of the house while their horses leisurely nibbled at the grass in the yard, and tell stories to each other which kept the classroom in a state of disturbance for a whole afternoon at a time. The teacher was too timid or afraid to request the intruders to leave the premises.

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19/ Wilson Smith, son of McCoy Smith.

He relates an instance when a man passed the school riding his horse as fast as it could run, while being followed by three men who were also spurring their horses in an effort to overtake the fleeing horseman. When directly in front of the school house they began shooting at their intended victim, who was firing back at his pursuers. They passed over the hill and out of sight in the valley below, and the children never knew the cause nor the outcome of the battle.

While the school was prominent in the early days, it never grew in enrollment to the extent that it was necessary to employ more than one teacher.

The average length of term was about six months. The curriculum was limited to the three R's. There was no uniformity in text books; but for the most part McGuffey's readers, and Ray's Arithmetic were brought to school and used by the children. There were no tablets and pencils, nor pen and ink in the school. Instead the children used slates and pencils.

The building continued to be used as a combination church and school until the next year after Statehood, when it was torn down and replaced by a building newer, but not unlike the original one, which was thirty feet wide and forty feet long, with windows on each side, and a bell in the belfry on the top of the roof.

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20/ Wilson Smith, son of McCoy Smith

21/ Walter (Bud) Smith, son of McCoy Smith.

22/ Wilson Smith, son of McCoy Smith

### BROWN SCHOOL

The Brown School three miles east of Fort Gibson was organized in 1904, on the Billy Brown place, in the old ranch kitchen, and was known as the "Kitchen School" until 1908 when a one room brick building was erected on top of the hill not far from the place of the old <sup>23/</sup> ranch kitchen.

The name of Brown was given the new school because William Brown donated the land on which to build a permanent school. While it was founded only a few years prior to Statehood it served well the neighborhood. The teacher was paid by subscription, and the fuel and supplies donated by the patrons. Wood from the adjoining woodland was cut and hauled to the school to furnish heat for the winter days. Crayon and erasers were about <sup>24/</sup> the only supplies furnished to the teacher.

Besides other children from the community, each one of the children of William Brown graduated there.

Miss Mary Dean Brown, (later Watkins) taught there for <sup>25/</sup> several years.

### HASKELL SCHOOL

About two miles southeast of the present site of Haskell, at a place called Sawokla, the first school

23/ Mrs. Mary Dean Watkins, daughter of William Brown.

24/ Ibid.

25/ Ibid.

was started in 1899. This was fostered by Mr. T. J. Way,  
a prominent rancher, a pioneer citizen, and a guiding  
spirit in the development of the town which was later  
named in honor of C. N. Haskell, who later became the  
<sup>26/</sup> first governor of Oklahoma.

Miss Susie Combs, a young lady from Springfield,  
Arkansas, came west to visit her brothers, Eli and John  
Combs one summer. While here she became the first  
teacher of the school which was organized in a building  
which had been used for a church building in the  
community.

The salary of the teacher was paid by donations  
from Mr. Way and other public spirited men, and supple-  
mented by subscription from the parents of the pupils  
who attended school. The books were of various kinds,  
such as the children found at home or what the parents  
saw fit to buy from the store. The enrollment was about  
twenty-five boys and girls of various ages and grades.

After teaching two terms at the Sawokla school Miss  
Combs became the wife of Mr. Way and the school was left  
<sup>27/</sup> for other teachers.

Mr. John D. Benedict in his History of Muskogee  
and Northeast Oklahoma says:

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26/ W. E. Combs, a pioneer citizen.

27/ Ibid.

In 1901 the Midland Valley Railroad was built and Mr. Way purchased the site of the present town of Haskell from the Haskell Real Estate Company, and the town was named for the manager of the company, C. N. Haskell, who was later Oklahoma's first governor. The school grew as the town grew and today the school is one of the finest high schools in the county, with an enrollment of about seven hundred and a faculty of twenty-two.

#### BOYNTON SCHOOL

The Boynton School was organized in 1903 in a small one-room building with Mr. J. L. Wineland as the <sup>28/</sup> first teacher. A few years after the school was organized, oil was discovered in the vicinity and the town became a thriving community and people began to flock to it. As the town grew so did the school, and soon it was necessary to construct a more spacious building for the white population, and to arrange a place for the <sup>29/</sup> negro children to attend school.

In 1904, the citizens built a two-story brick building which contained seven rooms and an auditorium. At this time the first high school was organized. The school has grown from its founding, and now it is one of the leading high schools of the county, with twelve <sup>30/</sup> teachers in the system.

28/ History of Muskogee and Northeast Oklahoma, by John D. Benedict.

29/ Ibid.

30/ Fred Ogle, Superintendent, Boynton Schools.

### MUSKOGEE CITY SCHOOLS

A city of homes and schools, Muskogee has always been controlled by education, culture, and refinement. This is not entirely an accident, since the first white settlers were educated missionaries and teachers of the Indians. So inherent was the spirit of education that one of the first acts of the inhabitants as soon as there was a provision made for education by Congress was to establish a school. In 1893, a bill was introduced by Senator Charles Curtis making the first public school in Muskogee possible by the appropriation of funds for the establishing of public schools in all incorporated towns of the Indian Territory.<sup>31/</sup>

In July, 1893, two months after the passage of the bill a public school district was organized in Muskogee. The first Board of Education was composed of W. C. Trent, President; T. A. Sanson, Secretary; W. H. Martin,<sup>32/</sup> W. T. Hutchens, J. B. Torrans, and G. F. Beebe. Thus the little Indian town of four thousand inhabitants began to assert itself in such a progressive manner that some of the more optimistic had visions of a real city of as much as ten thousand people in the dim uncertain future. (Today the city has thirty-two thousand.)

31/ Muskogee Daily Phoenix, September 4, 1893.

32/ Ibid.

As is often the circumstances in a new community, the newly organized school system was conducted under many inconveniences for a time. Store rooms, church buildings, and any kind of quarters that could be leased became classrooms where the first public schools of Muskogee were taught. In September, 1898, school opened in an old frame building on Second Street, in the block south of Okmulgee Avenue where Number One Fire Station is now located.

The following statement appeared in the Muskogee Daily Phoenix on September 4, 1898:

Next Monday morning the Public Schools of Muskogee will open with four highly recommended and efficient teachers who will enter four of the finest public school rooms in either this, or Oklahoma Territory, with a capacity to accomodate four or five hundred pupils. The Public School will be furnished with the most complete and durable set of school furniture that can be secured.

In the next issue of the paper appeared the following account of the opening:

For the first time in the history of the Indian Territory was witnessed the opening of the public schools when the doors of the large school building were thrown open to welcome the many little ones and not a few large scholars. The 250 scholars that filed into the doors of the public school rooms last Monday fully realized the privileges the hundreds of parents of Muskogee provided for them through the efforts of an untiring set of city officials and members of the school board.

This is the first city in the Territory that has furnished its own school building for a public school. The school opened in a flattering condition.

The first superintendent was H. M. Butler, who also taught the sixth and seventh grades, the highest grades taught in the school. His salary was one hundred dollars per month, for both superintending and teaching. The remainder of the faculty was composed of Miss Isadore Andrews, teacher of the fourth and fifth grades; Miss Edna Allen, teacher of the second and third grades; and Miss Betty Hardin who taught the first grade.<sup>33/</sup>

The City Board made a levy of 8.905 mills in the summer of 1901 for the support of the schools of the city. The following fall six hundred forty-six students entered the rapidly growing institution. Since the number of school children increased so rapidly, it was necessary to find additional space. The old W.C.T.U. building at G and Omulgee Streets was leased and named the East Side School.<sup>34/</sup>

The removal of restrictions on land (1904) and the discovery of oil south of the city resulted in such an increase in population that it was hardly possible for the schools to keep pace with the needs of the city. Various places were rented, private schools were crowded, yet many were debarred from attendance on account of the congested condition prevailing.

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33/ "Three Decades in Muskogee City Schools."

34/ Ibid.

This year, however, will relieve the present condition greatly with the addition of two commodious school buildings which will cost in the neighborhood of from \$60,000 to \$75,000. From our public school system to our colleges the best methods are everywhere apparent. Our Superintendent, our board of directors, teachers, parents, and pupils have worked together intelligently and harmoniously and their efforts have resulted in a system which any city might be proud to claim. 35/

The two buildings referred to were Washington on the east side and Jefferson on the west side of the city.

The names of these buildings established the precedent 36/ of naming Muskogee schools for famous men.

Although there were several denominational colleges in Muskogee the required tuition barred many students from obtaining more than an eight grade education; consequently, in response to the demand for higher education, the school board in 1905 established a high school in two rooms of the Jefferson School. Sixteen pupils composed the high school at its opening. Mr. D. Frank Redd, later president of the Northeastern State Normal School at Tahlequah, was made principal of both Jefferson and the high school department. Mr. Charles W. Briles was 37/ the superintendent of the city.

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35/ Muskogee Daily Phoenix, September 4, 1898.

36/ "Three Decades in Muskogee City Schools."

37/ Ibid.

### OKTAKA SCHOOL

The first school to be opened in Oktaka was in 1891. Mr. W. A. Battles, later County Superintendent of Muskogee County, was the first teacher.<sup>37/</sup>

The people of the community built a small one-room building about two miles northeast of the present site of Oktaka, and were in search of a teacher when Mr. Battles, a young man from Indiana happened into the Indian settlement, and offered his services as teacher. He was required to go to Okmulgee to take the teachers examination, which he did. After making a satisfactory grade he was employed by the Creek Council Board of Education.<sup>38/</sup>

The school was opened in the fall with about twenty-five pupils who were all Indians. The teacher selected the books to be purchased by the parents of the pupils.

Mr. Battles tells of being frightened when he would go to the railroad station. He relates how the long horned cattle would sometimes stampede, and run over almost anything which chanced to be in their path. There was no depot at the station then; there was only a switch track on which trains could pass.<sup>39/</sup>

37/ "Three Decades in Muskogee City Schools."

38/ W. A. Battles

39/ Ibid.

After teaching two terms here, Mr. Battles went back to Indiana, and left the school in other hands and for other teachers. In about ten years the railroad (KATY) company built a station, and a town began to grow, and the school was removed to its present  
40/ location.

40/ W. A. Battles

## CHAPTER II

## MISSION AND BOARDING SCHOOLS

## INDIAN UNIVERSITY (BACOME COLLEGE)

The Indian University was established at Tahlequah, Indian Territory, on the ninth day of February, 1850. During the first week of its existence there were only three students present, and at no time during the first term could the institution boast of more than thirteen <sup>1/</sup> students. At this time Professor A. C. Bacone, who was the efficient president of the university, was the only teacher. The founders of the school were thoroughly convinced that there was need of a university whose principal work should be to prepare native preachers and teachers for a more effective Christian work, and with this end in view the small institution which had such a meager beginning soon grew into a school of quite some prominence, with its influence felt in the surrounding country.

Because of the crowded condition at the Cherokee Seminaries, Professor Bacone petitioned the Creek Council for permission to construct a college in the Creek Nation, <sup>2/</sup> and in 1881 his request was granted by the Council.

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1/ Muskogee Daily Phoenix, February 16, 1888.

2/ Ibid.

Early in 1885, the University was removed to its present site, which is one mile northeast of the City of Muskogee. It was at first housed in the commodious building known as the Rockefeller Hall. This new location was centrally located, convenient of access, free from malaria, and commanded a beautiful perspective of the surrounding country. There were few schools in the Indian Territory at this time which offered the advantages for Christian education to the young as did this university, and consequently the attendance increased rapidly from year to year, which necessitated an increase in the faculty members. At first the number was increased to seven.

This was soon after the removal to the new location.

The faculty was composed of A. C. Bacon, President; Reverend D. Crosby, Mrs. S. F. Crosby, Miss Alida Baker, Miss Anne L. Moore, Miss Adda J. Bonham, and Miss Sadie Bonham, who were Christian teachers of experience and excellent qualifications.<sup>4</sup>

The corps of efficient teachers and the large number of students who attended spoke well for the work which was done in the institution. It was evident now that the work of Professor Bacon was to become a permanent establishment.<sup>5</sup>

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3/ L. C. Gentry, a pioneer citizen.

4/ Oklahoma Imprints, by Grant Foreman.

5/ Ibid.

The Bible occupied a prominent place in the course of study, and as a result many native preachers and Christian teachers went out as graduates from the university to evangelize and to educate the inhabitants of the, then pioneer, country.<sup>6/</sup>

Today the institution stands as a memorial to those pioneer educators whose conviction it was that this area should become a national center of endeavor in the field of Indian education. It has grown to represent an investment of approximately seven hundred fifty thousand dollars, in which more than three hundred students are being educated for various lines of endeavor. Some of the former students have become illustrious. Among them are Patrick J. Hurley, Secretary of War under Herbert Hoover; Alexander Posey,<sup>7/</sup> the Indian Poet; and Acee Blue Eagle, an Indian painter.

The outstanding departments in Bacone College are the music and art departments. The first was developed under the guidance of Gordon Berger, and now embraces a complete course in musical training for all divisions of the school.<sup>8/</sup> The second for the past several years has been under the supervision of Acee Blue Eagle, a young Indian of Muskogee and a graduate of the school, whose work has been displayed throughout the nation and

6/ Oklahoma Imprints, by Grant Foreman.

7/ Muskogee Daily Phoenix, February 16, 1938

8/ Ibid.

foreign countries. His paintings are of interest because of the beauty and uniqueness. He portrays primitive Indian life by means of what might be termed modern hieroglyphics.

Bacone, originally one of many Indian educational institutions in the Indian Territory, was supported by various churches and it is perhaps the only one which has continued to grow from the time it was founded. Many others have been discontinued. Among the other Indian institutions functioning at the time Bacone was founded were: Ashbury Mission at North Fork Town; Tallahassee Mission, six miles northwest of Muskogee; the Male and Female Seminaries at Tahlequah; the Congregational Worcester Academy at Vinita; and Dwight's Mission, at Marble City. While the last named is still in operation, the others have been discontinued, or have been transformed into other institutions.

Those who were named in 1881 to serve on the original board of trustees of Bacone were: Reverend H. L. Morehouse, Secretary of the American Baptist Home Mission Society; Reverend J. S. Murrow, Reverend Daniel Rogers, a missionary; Professor A. C. Bacone, founder of the school; Reverend Charles Journeyake, Chief of the Delaware tribe; Reverend James Williams, a former chief of the Choctaw Nation,

9/ Muskogee Daily Phoenix, February 16, 1938.

10/ Ibid.

Reverend A. L. Lacy, of the Cherokee Nation; and Reverend John McIntosh, Superintendent of Public Instruction of the Creek Nation.  
<sup>11/</sup>

#### HARRELL INSTITUTE

One of the outstanding attractions to visitors of Muskogee in the 80's was the Harrell Institute, a boarding school for girls, supported by the Methodist Church.  
<sup>12/</sup>

It was located at about the present intersection of Twelfth and Okmulgee streets in the city of Muskogee.

It was conceived in August, 1881, when the trustees of the Methodist Episcopal Church South passed a resolution declaring that in their opinion a Methodist high school offering "first class privileges" ought to be opened in Muskogee. Reverend T. F. Brewer, A.M., who was for several years president of the school, appointed to make all necessary arrangements for the opening of the school.

The rights and privileges for the opening were obtained from the Creek Council, November 2, 1881. By a resolution of the Creek District Conference the new school was named Harrell International Institute. Since there was no building in which to house the students, temporary quarters were established in the First Methodist Church building which was used until a more suitable building could be erected.  
<sup>13/</sup> Like other similar undertakings the institution

11/ Oklahoma Imprints, by Grant Foreman

12/ Ibid.

13/ Miss Ella Robinson

started with very little financial backing, but by the vigorous efforts of the founders it grew into a very important factor among the educational institutions of <sup>14/</sup> the Indian Territory.

The new permanent home of the organization was not completed until 1884. This was on a prominent site on what was then the west side of Muskogee. The building was admirably adapted to the purpose of the boarding school. The rooms were large, well ventilated, and well furnished for the time. <sup>15/</sup> Everything in the way of equipment was of the latest type. Muskogee citizens were <sup>16/</sup> justly proud of the new educational unit.

Much credit should be given Reverend Brewer and his wife for the growth and development of this college or academy. The efficient organization reflected credit upon the faculty and student body. The attendance was <sup>17/</sup> very good, and the building was always filled to capacity.

The first faculty was composed of: Reverend Brewer, President and teacher; Mrs. Brewer, his wife, who was teacher and superintendent; Misses A. V. Wilson; Bessie

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14/ Miss Ella Robinson.

15/ Muskogee Daily Phoenix, February 16, 1938.

16/ Miss Ella Robinson.

17/ Itid.

Hobson; Mae Duncan; Laura E. Simson; and Kate Warren.

The original designs, to form a female educational institution were carried out during the life of the school. Christian teaching was prominent in the curriculum, and the ladies who went out from the school always lived up to the precepts of that teaching. <sup>19/</sup>

The building was destroyed by fire in 1897, and the school of which Muskogee citizens were so proud was discontinued. <sup>20/</sup>

#### MINERVA HOME

A few Muskogee private schools which had been maintained by parents who disliked to send their children away from home to school, merged in 1883 and formed a mission school and was opened by the Presbyterian Home Mission Board, and used the Presbyterian Church for a school room. The school had a most auspicious opening <sup>21/</sup> with Misses Fulton and Steed as teachers. In the fall of the same year it was further enlarged by a boarding department for Indian girls. This was an addition to the

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18/ Muskogee Daily Phoenix, February 16, 1900.

19/ Miss Ella Robinson.

20/ Ibid.

21/ Muskogee Daily Phoenix, February 16, 1900.

parsonage which was built for the purpose. The boarding department was under the supervision of Mrs. T. A. Sanson, wife of Reverend T. A. Sanson, who had been made principal of the school. Mrs. Sanson entered upon the work with <sup>22/</sup> great zeal and energy.

The following year, 1884, Mrs. Sanson and her husband were compelled to relinquish the work they had started because of the failure of her health. They were advised <sup>23/</sup> to move to a milder climate.

In September, 1885, the school was placed in charge of Miss Alice Robertson, later Congresswoman from the second Congressional District of Oklahoma. Miss Agnes McCormick became assistant principal to Miss Robertson. It was decided to discontinue the day department of the school, and make it a strictly boarding school. With this change in effect the school opened with nine boarding students, but the number soon increased to sixteen, <sup>24/</sup> which filled the building to capacity.

Some changes in the building, which were made in the summer of 1886, increased the accommodations until there was room now to care for twenty-two students, but

22/ Muskogee Daily Phoenix, February 16, 1900.

23/ Miss Ella Robinson.

24/ Ibid.

still applications for admittance came. A new dormitory, which was called Minerva Home, was built in 1887. This made room for sixteen more students, and the enrollment <sup>25/</sup> was then increased to thirty-eight.

The new dormitory was named in honor of Miss Minerva Robertson, a deceased sister of Mr. L. A. Robertson of New York City, who had been generous in his donations to the school, and who donated the money to build the <sup>26/</sup> home for the girls.

The entire building was destroyed by fire in 1899, <sup>27/</sup> and the institution disbanded and was never reopened.

#### ST. JOSEPH COLLEGE

St. Joseph's Preparatory School, in east Muskogee, is the immediate successor of Nazareth College, which had been established as a parochial adjunct to the Catholic Church of the Assumption, in South Second Street, Muskogee.

This latter foundation was made by the Vicar Apostolic of the Indian Territory, Rt. Reverend Theophile Heerschaert,

25/ Muskogee Daily Phoenix, February 16, 1900.

26/ Ibid.

27/ Miss Milla Robinson.

OKLAHOMA  
AGRICULTURAL & MECHANICAL COLLEGE  
LIBRARY

28/ SEP 25 1939

later, first Catholic Bishop of Oklahoma. With the support, partly of the Catholic Indian Bureau, in Washington, D. C. it began in a modest way to furnish religious training to both white and Indian students of the parish and of the Eastern Territory, generally.  
29/

For several years it was conducted directly by the Clergy of the Diocese, but the scarcity of priests, greatly needed for the outlying missions, proved a handicap to the work and the hard pressed Bishop made an offer to the teaching order of the Brothers of the Sacred Heart  
30/ to undertake the management of the school.

In 1903, this teaching Congregation of men assumed charge, and ever since, the school direction and ownership has been in their keeping.  
31/

As time advanced, the popularity of the school became so extended as to necessitate greater buildings and equipment, but lack of ground and space at the original site caused the authorities to seek a suitable location for an expanded institution. After much search and speculation, a choice was made of lots on Alamo Heights,

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28/ Annuaire De L'Institut Des Frères Du Sacré-Coeur.

29/ Ibid.

30/ Ibid.

31/ Ibid.

a most beautiful stretch of high ground in the eastern extremity of Broadway Street.

Ground was broken for the new structure on May 2, 1909, and in December of that year the main building was completed and opened its doors to the youth of the Southwest.<sup>32/</sup> The main building of brick and stone combines all modern conveniences for the well-being and improvements of students. Thirteen years later two additional buildings were erected, which, with the expansive campus playgrounds make the educational unit complete.<sup>33/</sup>

In regard to instruction the school offers a thorough course both in grades and high school work. There is a well equipped laboratory and a well balanced library maintained in the school. The faculty is composed of men of the Catholic faith, and all save one have bachelor degrees or above.<sup>34/</sup> The requirements are the same as those of the Public School system of the State, and the text-books are identical with the state adoption.<sup>35/</sup>

Religion being an integral part of life, the Catholic Faith is taught to Catholic students,

32/ Brother William, President of St. Joseph's College.

33/ Ibid.

34/ Ibid.

35/ Ibid.

36/ Ibid.

both by precept and practice. While other students are welcome, their religious creed is not interfered with, nor is proselytizing practiced. The formation of right principled Christian gentlemen is the primary object of the school. The discipline employed is that of a well-ordered family, where conviction and love of order rather than coercion, is the incentive of proper conduct.<sup>37</sup>

In the department of athletics the school offers the best facilities. Regularly organized teams of various sports have enlivened campus life for many years and the present standing of St. "Joe" in athletics, is envied by less fortunate institutions.<sup>38/</sup>

The school has progressed year by year since its founding, and has turned out men who have attained distinction in business and professions.

During the present year, 1939, the school has been accredited by the State Department of Education, and the graduates in the future will be admitted into the various state colleges without examination.<sup>39/</sup>

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37/ Brother William, President of St. Joseph's College.

38/ Ibid.

39/ Ibid.

## CHAPTER III

## STATE SUPPORTED SCHOOLS

## OKLAHOMA SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND

In the year 1897, Miss Laura A. Rowland, a young woman totally blind, came to the Indian Territory from Arkansas where she had graduated and taught at the Arkansas State School For The Blind at Little Rock.<sup>1/</sup> She, being deprived of eyesight, was by no means lacking in spiritual and intellectual vision. Naturally her interest and sympathy were with those who, like herself, lived under this terrible handicap.

There was no institution of learning for the blind in the Indian Territory and no provisions made by any of the tribal governments for them due to the fact that there were practically no blind people among the Indians. Seeing the need of an institution of learning for the blind in the Territory, Miss Rowland took upon herself the task of soliciting funds with which to establish such an institution in the Indian country.

She not only had the endorsement of the teachers of

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<sup>1/</sup> Mrs. Oscar Stewart, Superintendent, State School For the Blind.

the Little Rock school but also that of Governor Daniel W. Jones of Arkansas as well as the educators of the Indian Territory.<sup>2/</sup>

The encouragement with which this benevolent woman met justified her in her undertaking, and on January 3, 1898 she opened the school for the whites and Indians alike, in one of the old dilapidated federal buildings on Garrison Hill in Ft. Gibson.<sup>3/</sup> She had very little money, and that came from subscriptions from friend in Arkansas and the Indian Territory. The school was supported in this way for the first years of its existence.<sup>4/</sup>

Soon after the beginning of the institution the enrollment was about fifty students.<sup>5/</sup> This number was too great for Miss Rowland to handle alone, and she secured the assistance of a small group of instructors who volunteered their time. During this time William Lowery, a young Cherokee, entered the school as a student. Since he and Miss Rowland were of like minds and both interested in the educational work for the blind, they decided they

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2/ Mrs. Oscar Stewart, Superintendent, State School for the Blind.

3/ Ibid.

4/ Ibid.

5/ Ibid.

could work more effectively together, therefore they married, and he assumed the responsibility of business manager and co-worker in the institution.<sup>6/</sup>

In 1900 the Choctaw and Chickasaw Governments made appropriations for the education of the blind of their respective tribes.<sup>7/</sup> This appropriation was added to the fund of the new institution, and new life began.

Through the Commissioner of Indian Affairs repeated efforts were made to secure an appropriation from Congress, but without success. A continued correspondence was carried on between Mr. and Mrs. Lowery and the representatives in Congress from this section, which included Honorable Charles Curtis of Kansas, later Vice President of the United States, but still no assistance came.<sup>8/</sup>

However, Mr. and Mrs. Lowery were persistent in their efforts, and continued to operate the growing institution with what funds they received from various sources. In 1907 it was moved to Wagoner, but after a short time it was relocated at Ft. Gibson. The first state legislature appropriated \$5,000 for the maintenance of the "Laura A.

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6/ Mrs. Oscar Stewart, Superintendent, State School for the Blind.

7/ Ibid.

8/ Ibid.

Lowery School For The Blind"; and each succeeding legislature has made liberal appropriations for its support.<sup>9/</sup>

By an act of the legislature, approved May 29, 1908 the school was placed under the control of the State Board <sup>10/</sup> of Education.

Upon the retirement of Mr. and Mrs. Lowery in 1911 Mr. Oscar Stewart, a minister of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South was appointed Superintendent. Although partially blind, Mr. Stewart was a young man of unusual education and ability. He was a hard worker and an excellent manager, and put his whole soul in his work. He was an orator of ability, and was able to arouse the interest <sup>11/</sup> of those who heard him from the platform.

Legislative appropriations ranging from \$20,000 to \$50,000 supported the institution, which remained at Ft. Gibson until June, 1913. In this year by an act of the State Legislature it was moved to Muskogee, over the protest of the leading citizens of Ft. Gibson, who were very anxious to have the school remain in the town where it <sup>12/</sup> was organized. The State Board of Education carefully

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<sup>9/</sup> Mrs. Oscar Stewart, op. cit.

<sup>10/</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11/</sup> Miss Ella Robinson.

<sup>12/</sup> Ibid.

considered the welfare and development of the school when it recommended that it be moved to Muskogee. The new location had railroad facilities which were more convenient than that of Ft. Gibson, and too there were the advantages of a rapidly growing city.

When first moved to Muskogee the school was housed in a three-story brick building which had formerly been occupied by Spaulding College, a Methodist school for girls, but now the Muskogee General Hospital. This building was adequate for the accomodation of the organization, notwithstanding the rapid increase in attendance each year.

In 1913 the present site of the school, one mile northeast of Muskogee was secured. Governor Charles N. Haskell donated a twenty-five acre tract on which to locate the buildings and on October 17 of that year a contract was let for the erection of four buildings.

In the selection of Mr. Stewart, as a man to carry on the educational work for the blind, no mistake was

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13/ Mrs. Oscar Stewart, Superintendent, State School for the Blind.

14/ Ibid.

15/ Ibid.

made. He, like Mrs. Lowery, had been educated in an institution for the blind, although he had partial eyesight. Being a man of high intellectual attainments, and having the interest of the blind at heart, as no person with perfect vision could have, he set about to get the best for the school. He was constantly striving to improve this already great institution. He was careful in the selection of his faculty, as well as careful in the selection and arrangement of the equipment.

At each session of the legislature he went before the Committee on Appropriations and pleaded for his institution. They trusted his judgment and integrity, and granted his requests as far as it was possible for them to do. One of his ambitions was to install a pipe organ in the music department, for he realized the importance of music in the lives of the students who were to attend there. In 1921 this ambition was fulfilled, and he had the satisfaction of seeing one of the finest organs in the state placed at the disposal of the students of the music faculty. A class in pipe organ was organized at once and from that time until the present this work has

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16/ Mrs. Oscar Stewart, Superintendent State School for the Blind.

<sup>17/</sup>  
occupied a prominent place in the school.

After the death of Mr. Stewart in September, 1925, Mrs. Stewart was appointed without opposition to the position held by her husband, and has held this position continuously since that time. She carried on the work along the same high plane very much as her husband did. She <sup>18/</sup> has gained the approbation of those who know her work.

From a small beginning at Ft. Gibson in 1897, by the efforts of one frail little woman, handicapped by total blindness, the school has developed into one of the strongest institutions of its kind in the country. Land has been acquired from time to time and added to that donated by Governor Haskell, until now the entire tract included <sup>19/</sup> ninety-nine acres. The student body at the present time numbers one-hundred fifty; while the normal capacity <sup>20/</sup> is one-hundred forty-four. Four cottages provide living quarters for thirty-six children each. The cottage system is carried out in living quarters, but the congregate system is followed for the kitchen and dining-room.

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17/ Miss Ella Robinson.

18/ Ibid.

19/ Ibid.

20/ State Superintendent's Seventh Biennial Report.

service, making for economy, efficiency, and general helpfulness to the pupils.  
21/

In many cases the years spent at the Oklahoma School for The Blind, are all the pupils ever get of special training. It is therefore necessary to send these young people out into the world of the seeing physically strong, cultured, and with a practical knowledge of their vocational ability. Finally, and most important, they must have an enlightened and dominant will to succeed.

The departments the school are academic, Music, Home Economics, Industrial, and Health and Physical Education. The academic work embraces everything from first year through high school, using the State's adopted course of study. Credits are accepted by the state universities and colleges. Spelling, typewriting, and spoken English through junior and senior high schools are stressed. All graduates must finish in typewriting, and all must be able to write script. The thorough course given in Dictaphone and Braille Shorthand is a vocational asset as an aid in higher education. In Spoken English, Choric Speaking is stressed. Plays are most popular from grades to graduation.  
22/

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21/ State Superintendent's Seventh Biennial Report.

22/ Ibid.

The school is operated on the six-three-three plan and the grades cover most completely the State Course of Study. If a normal, visually handicapped child enters the school at six he will graduate at eighteen. Those who desire higher education easily enter the colleges or universities, and with the aid of a reader, capably and creditably handle all work given there.<sup>13</sup>

The music department has been deemed an important phase in the education of the blind ever since the inception of formal education for the blind more than a hundred years ago.<sup>24/</sup> This department is outstanding, and is second to none in the state. One of the most attractive features of the school is the orchestra, organized by Miss Davenport, daughter of Hon. James S. Davenport, Judge <sup>25/</sup> of the Criminal Court of Appeals of Oklahoma.

The school is so thorough in its work that the graduates who go out from there seldom fail in their after school endeavors. After leaving school, they either make themselves decided assets in the home or decide on a program of further study in preparation for teaching, osteopathic and chiropractic work; or they make a success in

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23/ State Superintendent's Seventeenth Biennial Report.

24/ Mrs. Oscar Stewart, Superintendent, State School for the Blind.

25/ Miss Ella Robinson.

various lines, such as stands, insurance, embossing, weaving, piano tuning, farming and dairying, orchestra work,  
26/ telephone exchange, typing and the like.

#### CONNERS STATE AGRICULTURE COLLEGE

After thirty years of slow and continued growth under the guidance of eleven presidents, Muskogee County has a State agriculture junior college which annually furnishes a senior college foundation to an average of three hundred eastern Oklahoma students.

The Conners State School of Agriculture was located and established in accordance with an act of the first state legislature, approved May 20, 1908 which provided for

the establishment and maintenance of agriculture schools of secondary grade in each supreme court judicial district, with branch agricultural experiment stations and short courses in connection therewith.<sup>27/</sup>

After the school was authorized by the legislature it was finally located at its present site one mile west of Warner, in 1911. The citizens of Warner gave one-hundred sixty acres of land for the permanent location

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26/ State Superintendent's Seventeenth Biennial Report.

27/ Oklahoma Statutes, 1908.

28/  
of the school.

It was the second of the agriculture schools of secondary grade to be established. It opened its first session on February 1, 1909 under the presidency of J. A. Liner, with four faculty members. The first session was opened in Warner public school building with only fifteen students enrolled in grades from the sixth through the eleventh, but within three weeks this enrollment had increased to thirty-five, in the various courses offered; which included a three-year course in agriculture and domestic economy; a three year preparatory course; an elective course special character; and short courses for 29/ farmers.

Because of the smallness of the enrollment, the State planned to move the school to some town with a larger population. But due to the interest in education shown by the citizens of Warner, who went to the surrounding towns and encouraged parents to send their children to the new school, the State withdrew the plans for changing the location. 30/

The opening of the second division of school in March,

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28/ George Coffey, Former President of Conners College.

29/ W. H. Culwell.

30/ Ibid.

1910 showed the enrollment increased to seventy-five students from eight counties. In the fall the school was moved from the public school building to the second story of the Finklea Brothers Building, with Walter Van Allen as president. The mechanical shops building was located in an old hotel building which is now used as a residence.<sup>31/</sup> It was this year that W. H. Culwell, now known on the campus as the "Grand Old Man of Conners" was employed as a member of the faculty. He is the only instructor now on the staff who was on the faculty during that time.<sup>32/</sup>

At the end of the 1911-12 session the first graduation exercises were held for seven students who had finished the eleventh grade. They were: May Pannel, Troy Arrington, Effie Hardcastle, Maggie Overstreet, Carl Russell, Harry Sapper, and Webster Van Allen.<sup>33/</sup>

The first graduation at the new administration building was under Acting President J. S. Murray. The following term J. V. Faulkner and W. S. Jackson both served as presidents of the institution. J. S. Malone became president in 1914 and served until 1917 being the first presi-

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31/ W. H. Culwell.

32/ Jacob Johnson, President of Conners Agricultural College.

33/ W. H. Culwell.

dent of the institution to continue in this position for  
34/ more than two years. During his term of office great interest was aroused in the farming industry throughout the community, and various clubs were organized to further  
35/ the development of agriculture.

In 1915 bunk houses were erected on the farm to care for boys who had been staying in town and the school became a boarding school.  
36/

President Malone resigned in 1917 and George A. Coffey from Haskell State School of Agriculture, was transferred to Conners as President. Coffey withdrew in 1918 and was replaced by H. C. King. King took a great interest in the further development of the school, and  
37/ held the position of president for fifteen years.

During the second year of his administration, Mr. King made great improvements in the boarding comforts. In addition to the bunk houses scattered over the farm, two new buildings were constructed in 1919. The larger one was used for a girls dormitory, while the present West Cottage, which was finished the same year, was

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34/ W. H. Culwell.

35/ Ibid.

36/ Ibid.

37/ Ibid.

occupied by the boys. Both buildings are now used for  
38/ girls.

A complete heating and water system was installed with the new buildings. Other buildings constructed during Mr. King's administration were the Boys Dormitory, Dining Hall, the President's Home, Manual Training Shop, 39/ the Gymnasium and several small farm buildings.

The name "Conners State Agriculture College" was given to the school was changed to a junior college by the State Legislature. It was named in honor of J. P. Conners, President of the State Board of Agriculture when the school was established. During the first year as a college one-hundred eighty-one students enrolled, fifty-nine in the college, while the others did work of high 40/ level.

Twelve faculty members were employed to serve the students of the eleven departments - agriculture, history, and social science, home economics, foreign language, literature, English, industrial art, mathematics, music, 41/ physical education, and science.

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38/ W. H. Culwell.

39/ Ibid.

40/ Ibid.

41/ Ibid.

Mr. Antone Goetz, who has gained an outstanding reputation throughout Oklahoma as Muskogee Central High School's band director, was in charge of the band at Conners when it was made a school of college rating. He aroused an interest in his department while here, and <sup>42/</sup> had a splendid organization for a small college.

The first college graduates were recorded in 1929 when eight students completed the course offered by the institution. The class was composed of: Elbert Beach, Jack Davis, Bess Elder, Mary Hampton, Ruel Pittman, Jessie Powell, <sup>43/</sup> Jewel Shelton, and Myrtle Thomas.

A new Boys Dormitory was constructed in 1929 to make room for a larger number of boarding students, and in the following fall this was filled with students from the <sup>44/</sup> surrounding counties.

Jacob Johnson was appointed in 1933 to succeed Mr. H. C. King, as president. Mr. King accepted the position of superintendent of the high school at Tahlequah. The administration of Mr. Johnson has been a success, and the school has continued to grow and expand. At the present time there are four-hundred students in attendance. The

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42/ George A. Coffey, Former President of Conners.

43/ Records in Conners Agriculture College.

44/ W. H. Culwell.

curriculum has been expanded until the students have an opportunity to select courses to suit their needs in the preparation for many various professions, although agriculture is the outstanding course.<sup>45/</sup>

The Agriculture Department is headed by Professor W. A. Owsley, and supplies the college with milk, eggs, and a great deal of the vegetables and meat consumed by the dining rooms. In addition to the regular course in agriculture 4-H Club work is encouraged by the faculty, and the boys and girls have achieved state recognition. In the fall of 1937 three boys, Harry Synar, Steve Synar, and Charles Adair won in the National Livestock Judging Contest in Chicago.<sup>46/</sup>

Since the beginning of the school physical education has had some attention, but there was no department of physical training until about the year 1934. The first football team was organized and coached by professor W. H. Culwell.<sup>47/</sup>

In 1933-34 a complete athletic program was inaugurated, including each of the major sports sponsored by the

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45/ Jacob Johnson, President of Conners.

46/ W. H. Culwell.

47/ Jacob Johnson, President of Conners College.

Oklahoma Junior Collegiate Conference - basket ball, foot-  
ball, and track. It has been the policy of the department  
since that time to carry on a well balanced program of  
<sup>48/</sup> intramural sports as well as a competitive program.

During the year 1935-36 a new auditorium with a seat-  
ing capacity of six-hundred, and a new Manual Arts Build-  
ing have been completed. And a new girls dormitory and  
<sup>49/</sup> a field house were erected in 1938.

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48/ Jacob Johnson, President of Conners College.

49/ Ibid.

## CHAPTER IV

## SCHOOL SINCE STATEHOOD

With the coming of Statehood, November 16, 1907, came many problems of the organization of a new state. The officers elected had an uncharted course to pursue in the inauguration of a new system of government in a new country.

The first county superintendent of schools was Dr. J. A. Settle, and he found one of his big tasks before him was that of dividing the county into districts of convenient size. Immediately upon coming into office he set to work on this great task. He began in the north-east corner of the county and laid out District Number One, three miles square; immediately west of Number One he laid out Number Two which also contained nine square miles; then Number Three was next, and thus he divided the county, numbering the districts consecutively to ninety-one, except the omission of number six, eight, nine, nineteen, and sixty-seven. These were omitted for the reason that it seemed some time in the future it would be necessary to subdivide some of the original ones.  
<sup>1/</sup>

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L/ E. N. Collette, Formerly County Superintendent.

After the division of the county into districts a meeting was called in each district, a board; consisting of a director; a clerk; and a treasurer; was elected,  
<sup>2/</sup> after which the districts were declared organized.

At the beginning of Statehood there were few buildings adequate for a new state, consequently it was necessary to promote a building program. Contracts were let in a large number of the districts, and within the next three years almost every school district in the county had a new building with new furniture and equipment.

Practically all the teachers had to be certified. There were only a few teachers in the county who had been to college. Many had not advanced beyond the eighth grade. In order to supply the schools with teachers it was necessary to issue temporary certificates. These were certificates issued without examination until the next examination.  
<sup>3/</sup>

Early in the year 1908 Dr. Settle was succeeded by J. F. Gambill, who had contested the election of Dr. Settle. Gambill entered upon the work of the newly organized system with great zeal. However the roads were

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<sup>2/</sup> E. N. Collette, Formerly County Superintendent.

<sup>3/</sup> Ibid.

not very good and it was necessary for him to travel on horseback or in a buggy when he visited the schools of the county, and his visits were somewhat infrequent because of the conditions.

In July 1911 Mr. Gambill was succeeded by Mr. E. N. Collette, who was elected in the November election preceding. Mr. Collette was a college graduate and an educator. He did much toward the development of the schools. It was through his efforts the first consolidated school district was organized. This was composed of common school Districts numbers 59 and 60, and three sections in McIntosh County. A three story brick building, containing nine rooms, was constructed at Council Hill, and a high school was organized for the first time. Transportation of the pupils was supplied by means of three wagons drawn by teams.

On June 6th, 1914 he organized Consolidated Number Two, at Wainwright. This was composed of common Districts numbers 33, 39, 56, and 57. A modern eight-room brick building was erected in the prosperous little oil town. The school was organized and planned to meet the needs

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4/ E. N. Collette, County Superintendent 1911 to 1915.

5/ Records in the County Superintendent's Office

6/ Ibid.

of the children of the farm as well as those of the town. A room was provided for manual training, and an instructor was employed to teach shop, which was the first course of the kind offered to the boys and girls of the rural section of the county.

Wainwright school was fortunate in securing the services of outstanding school men as superintendents during the early life of the school. Among them were J. R. Holmes, at present City Superintendent of Schools of Muskogee; J. R. Barton, later City Superintendent of Oklahoma City Schools; E. S. Hunn, later Superintendent of Schools at Bufaula; and George C. Wells, at present <sup>y</sup> Superintendent of Indian Schools for Oklahoma.

The growth of this Consolidated Number Two school was rapid and constant for several years, until the oil began to fail in the vicinity, when it remained about on an even keel.

At present the school has a high school enrollment of about eighty-five, and the elementary grades number about one-hundred fifty. There are seven members of the faculty. At the time of organization the pupils were transported to the school by means of six wagons drawn

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<sup>y</sup> Records in the County Superintendent's Office.

by teams, but now as in the other districts maintaining transportation the children are delivered to the school  
<sup>8/</sup>  
in modern busses.

On April 12, 1926 District Number thirty-three was annexed by Miss Etta Delay who was County Superintendent  
<sup>9/</sup>  
at that time.

The first union graded school district was organized by County Superintendent W. A. Battles, July 3, 1918. This district was formed out of Districts Numbers 36, 37, 38, and 39. It was designated Union Graded Number one. Then on July 9, 1926 Miss Etta Delay, County Superintendent annexed common school District Number 34. The central school was located at Boynton, and since the voters had voted to transport the children to the central  
<sup>10/</sup>  
school there were no wing schools maintained.

Mr. B. F. Watson was the superintendent of the newly organized school, and since the old building was insufficient to house the entire school there was agitation for a new building, until in 1924 a new brick building, containing twelve classrooms and a splendid auditorium,

8/ A. E. Grantham, Mainwright Superintendent of Schools.

9/ Records in County Superintendent's Office.

10/ Ibid.

was erected, on the south side of town, at a cost of \$50,000, and equipped with modern furniture and equipment.

On February 2, 1921 County Superintendent H. P. Battles called an election at Haskell for the purpose of voting on the proposition of forming Union Graded District Number Two. By this election common school districts Numbers 10, 11, 13 and 14 formed the second union graded district in the county. The central building was located at Haskell where the high school was located. There were three wing schools which served the elementary grades, up to and including the sixth, of the outlying territory.<sup>12/</sup>

Like Wainwright, Haskell was a thriving oil town, with a valuation of \$2,893,673, and the people were proud of their school, as they were of their town. At the time of the organization of the union graded district Haskell had an eight-room brick building which had been erected in 1908, but this was inadequate for the new school. Then at a cost of \$40,000 the citizens built an elegant fourteen-room building with an auditorium and gymnasium.<sup>13/</sup>

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11/ Records in County Superintendent's Office.

12/ Ibid.

13/ Ibid.

The citizens of Haskell have always demanded a high standard of schools, and at the present time the school holds an enviable record among the schools of eastern Oklahoma, for scholarship. The teachers selected are always of the highest type. The graduates from the high school always reflect credit upon the town and community. Many of them have become professional men and women.

14/ Union Graded Number Three is composed of original Districts Numbers 70 and 77. This was organized by order of County Superintendent H. P. Battles, on June 7, 1921. The school was located at Webbers Falls. There were no wing schools provided and all the children were brought in from the surrounding territory to high school building, known as the Brewer Academy. Outside the Muskogee High School this is the oldest high school in the county, a high school having been maintained here since 1905. However the school was not fully accredited until 1921, when the union graded district was organized.

15/ Webbers Falls may well boast of being the oldest school in the county; the first school was opened in 1853,

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14/ W. E. White, Superintendent of Haskell Schools.

15/ Records in County Superintendent's Office.

and with the exception of a few years during the Civil War it has been in operation continuously since that time. The exact location of the building has not been changed since the Reconstruction Period.<sup>16/</sup> The building has been remodeled, and has had some additions, the latest one was constructed by the W. P. A. in 1938. This addition was a high school building consisting of eight class-rooms in which the high school classes are now conducted. This improvement should render the building quite adequate for several years of normal growth of the little town.

By means of two large modern busses the high school pupils are transported from Districts Numbers 71, 78, 79, and 86.

There are at present one-hundred, twenty-five high school pupils, and two-hundred grade pupils in attendance,<sup>17/</sup> under the leadership of twelve competent teachers.

The fourth union graded district to be organized in the county was formed out of common school District Numbers 62 and 63 and by an election called March 23, 1926, by Miss Etta Dely, County Superintendent, and designated Union Graded District Number Four. The valuation of the two districts was \$699,199, and the area

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16/ Frank Vann, a pioneer citizen.

17/ Records in the County Superintendent's Office.

18/ was eight square miles. The high school was located at Oktaha in the six-room brick building, built in 1904 at a cost of \$20,000. A wing school was maintained in District Number 62, caring for the elementary grades through the sixth, until 1934 when it was discontinued and the children brought to Oktaha; 19/ where a fully accredited high school is maintained. Besides the grade children in the district the high school pupils from several surrounding districts are transported in two busses.

In 1933, by aid of funds from the Works Progress Administration, an excellent combination auditorium and gymnasium was constructed, with a cost to the district of \$3,000. This was a much needed improvement, since all the athletics, before its construction, was held in the open courts on the school yard.

The town of Braggs, near the famous potato growing region has maintained an accredited high school since 1923, but the growth of the institution has been somewhat slow and steady, 20/ until the addition of other district by annexation, when the district number 46 be-

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18/ Records in the County Superintendent's Office.

19/ Ibid.

20/ Ibid.

came the largest district in area in the county. In 1938 a petition was presented to the county superintendent requesting the annexation of Districts numbers 24, 25, 26, 45, and 48. Then on April 12, 1939 an election was called to annex District Number 47. The election carried and the election was officially made a part of District Number 46. These annexations were occasioned by Cootes Hill Project, a movement by the United States Government to re-settle many of the families who lived on farms which were not very productive.

After the district was enlarged it was found necessary to enlarge the building. Consequently the citizens voted \$20,000 bonds with which to match W. P. A. funds in the construction of a new building, which is to contain twelve class-rooms and an auditorium. The building is now under construction and will be ready to be occupied by September 1st.

During this year (1939) while the building was being wrecked, classes were held in churches, and other buildings made available. The school building formerly used by District Number 47 known as Mt. Zion was used for the fourth and fifth grades which were transported from the main building in the school bus. While this seems a trifle inconvenient, the children and the teacher appear to enjoy the novelty extremely.

The school at Ft. Gibson, while a very old school, is not unlike those of the other towns in the county. Soon after statehood the citizens built a new brick building containing nine rooms and an auditorium. A high school was organized about the year 1907, and Ft. Gibson has been considered one of the leading small town schools in the county.<sup>21/</sup>

Many of the people who work in Muskogee live in Ft. Gibson, and they are anxious to have access to the best educational advantages possible, and they are always ready to seize every opportunity to improve. The first great chance came when the W. P. A. approved a plan to repair the old building. A new room was added for home economics and manual arts in 1937, and a retaining wall was built around the grounds to check the erosion.<sup>22/</sup> This added greatly to the appearance of the plant.

The school was fully accredited for the first time in 1916, and has continued to hold this rank. The enrollment in high school is at present one-hundred twenty-five, with twice that number enrolled in the elementary grades.<sup>23/</sup> Ten teachers are employed, including the

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21/ E. H. Collette, former County Superintendent.

22/ Albert Withers, a citizen of Ft. Gibson.

23/ Ibid.

superintendent. The curriculum includes, besides the regular courses offered in the small high school, a <sup>24/</sup> commercial course, domestic science, and agriculture.

The district was made a joint districts in 1938 when the entire area of District number thirty-five in <sup>25/</sup> Wagoner county was annexed.

Muskogee City school system really began on an enlarged scale in September, 1910, when the new Central High School building was completed at a cost of \$250,000. It was equipped with the best equipment that could be <sup>26/</sup> obtained. True to fashion of most neighborhoods there were critics who thought that the building was too large for Muskogee, and that money was used to the extent of extravagance in preparing so many rooms for high school. But the builders were looking to the future, and the prediction of Superintendent Edwin S. Monroe has proved that Muskogee would grow to fill the building to capacity. To-day there are more than two-thousand students attending there.

Edwin S. Monroe, who was superintendent from 1909 to 1919, has well been called the father of the Muskogee School System. It was he who co-ordinated the entire

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24/ Albert Withers, a citizen of Ft. Gibson.

25/ Ibid.

26/ Three Decades in Muskogee City Schools.

27/ system. The grade schools throughout the city were made more uniform than they had been since the beginning.  
28/ and the schools progressed rapidly.

In 1909 the office of Superintendent of Buildings  
29/ and Grounds was created. Before this time this service was performed by the board members. Until 1910 there were no salary provided for school physicians. This service was donated by the various doctors of the town. But during the months of October and November six physicians were employed at a salary of six dollars a day. Later in the year Doctor Montgomery was employed  
30/ as medical supervisor. The departments of art and music were supervised by Miss Florence Rhine and Miss Ellen Russell. In the spring, May festivals, in which all the schools were represented, were conducted under the direction of the physical training supervisory, Miss  
31/ Bernice Veitch. This was an occasion to which the parents looked forward with much anticipation.

The increase of population necessitated the building of more schools. In 1911 Longfellow elementary

27/ Three Decades in Muskogee City Schools.

28/ Ibid.

29/ Ibid.

30/ Ibid.

31/ Ibid.

school was constructed on the west side of town.<sup>32/</sup> In spite of the prophecies that the high school building was too immense, conditions became so crowded in 1912 that a bond issue was voted to make additions to Central High School. Whittier elementary school was erected at the same time.<sup>33/</sup>

At the completion of the new additions to the high school, the seventh and eighth grades were transferred from the ever-crowded east side elementary schools to Central High School. On the west side the seventh and eighth grades were moved to Jefferson School.<sup>34/</sup>

In 1916 the seventh, eighth, and ninth grades were formed into the Junior High School. The school system was then placed upon the Six-Three-Three basis, six years in ward schools, three years in junior high school, and three years in senior high school.<sup>35/</sup>

In the spring of 1916, under the supervision of Miss Ellen Russell, Director of Music and Miss Marion Brown, Supervisor of Physical Education from 1915 until her death in 1918, a May Day fete, "The Song of the Nation" was

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32/ Three Decades in Muskogee City Schools.

33/ Ibid.

34/ Ibid.

35/ Ibid.

presented, by the ward school children. This presentation was a colorful sight, and was enjoyed by many parents and patrons. Spaulding Park was the place chosen for the exercises. The girls were dressed in white, and the boys were white shirts and black trousers.<sup>36/</sup>

Miss Myrtle Ward, the first writing supervisor served from 1914 to 1917 when she was succeeded by Miss Ione Turner. The First Grade supervisor, Miss Lillian Dinnius,<sup>37/</sup> was employed in 1917. In this same year Miss Minnie Starr became music supervisor. Under her direction the schools presented many musical entertainments, such as,<sup>38/</sup> "The Mikado" and "Pinefore".

During the World War the schools encouraged thrift, cultivated school garden plots and participated in the Junior Red Cross. Each room "adopted" a French Orphan to whom the children wrote letters and sent toys.<sup>39/</sup>

In 1919 Mr. R. T. Tighe succeeded Mr. Edwin S. Monroe as superintendent. He introduced many innovations into the school system. Additional supervisors directed subjects in the grade schools; departmental work was introduced into the grades; a night school under the direction

36/ Josephine Little, Teacher in Central High

37/ Ibid.

38/ Ibid.

39/ Three Decades in Muskogee City Schools.

of Mr. Ralph Butcher, was added to Central High School; a one year junior college course was added; and a summer school was organized for those students who desired to make up work. But at the close of Mr. Tighe's term in 1924 quite a number of these innovations were discontinued.  
40/

ed.

In 1924 Mr. W. G. Masterson, who had been superintendent of McAlester City Schools for several years, was elected to succeed Mr. Tighe, but resigned at mid-term. For the remainder of the year Mr. C. K. Reiff, Principal of Central High School, was made Acting-Superintendent, and became superintendent, which position he held until 1931 when he was elected City Superintendent of Schools of Oklahoma City,  
41/ where he won quite a reputation as an educator. Mr. L. M. Speaker succeeded Mr. Reiff as high school principal of Central.

Mr. Joe R. Holmes, Superintendent of Schools at Okmulgee was chosen, in 1931, to succeed Mr. Reiff. Mr. Holmes has continued to improve the system in many ways. Among the many improvements was a course of study in arithmetic worked out by Mr. Holmes and the faculty. This was the first time a modern course of study had been

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40/ Three Decades in Muskogee City Schools.

41/ Record in City Superintendent's Office.

prepared entirely by the faculty for the use of the city  
42/  
 system.

West High School was constructed at Sixteenth and  
43/  
 Broadway Streets, in 1920, at a cost of \$231,000. It  
 is one of the most modern and beautiful buildings in the  
 city. There are twenty class-rooms, including the manual  
 training shop, domestic science room, library, art, music,  
 and typewriting room. Each is completely equipped. In  
 addition there is a large gymnasium, with a high ceiling  
 and a running track, with locker rooms, showers, and  
 office, adjoining, and an auditorium. The cafeteria is  
 modern in every respect, and serves meals at cost to the  
44/  
 students who desire to take advantage of the service.

Mr. Herbert S. Jones was the first principal, and  
 the original teachers were: Miss Ella Bisell, Mrs. R. B.  
 Butts, Mr. P. C. Calloway, Miss Helen Copeland, Miss  
 Marie Crew, Mr. Fred L. Fordice, Miss Kate Frank, Miss  
 Ethel Mae Iliff, Miss Mary E. Kimberly, Mr. J. H. Lehr,  
 Miss Helen McClure, Miss Laura V. Meyers, Mr. A. F. Morris,  
 Miss Grace Musch, Miss Allene Nelson, and Miss Bella  
45/  
 Sherman.

42/ Record in City Superintendent's Office.

45/ Ibid.

44/ Mr. Jesse Cardwell, Principal of West High School.

45/ Records in West High School.

During the first year of the school "Lone Eagle", the first junior high school paper in the state, made its appearance. From the beginning the paper has been a success, and to-day it is the pride and delight of the faculty and student body alike.<sup>46/</sup>

In addition to making the paper a success the school organized a basket ball team in the fall of 1920, which was also a success. In that year the team won thirty-four games and lost eleven. The first out-of-town game<sup>47/</sup> was at Muskogee. West High winning 16 to 11.

To develop musical talent, a band was organized in the fall of 1921, by Mr. C. E. Starbuck. The school purchased the larger instruments while the members furnished their own small instruments. The band made its first public appearance before Judge Lindsey of Denver, Colorado, who was the guest of the Rotary Club. In June Mr. Anton Goetz began his band and orchestra work in the summer school. Since the fall of 1923, the classes have been<sup>48/</sup> scheduled in school hours.

The school, as other school of the city is carefully graded. By means of standardized tests, and by observation in the home-room, each student is enrolled according

46/ Mr. Jesse Cardwell, Principal of West High School.

47/ Three Decades of Muskogee City Schools.

48/ Ibid.

49/ to his ability to achieve. Each student has an advisor who visits the homes of the students in order to become better acquainted with the parents and to learn 50/ of the peculiar dispositions, and home-life problems.

In addition to Central and West High Schools there are ten elementary schools: Washington, located at Dayton and E. Streets; Jefferson, at Ninth and Boston; Franklin at Ninth and Dennison; Sequoyah, at D and Cincinnati; Irving at Gibson and J; Longfellow, at 2315 Columbus; Whittier, at Cincinnati and R; Edison, at Augusta and Gulic; Houston, at Houston and N; and Pershing, at Forty-fourth and Oklahoma Avenue.

The colored schools are very amply cared for, by a well organized system. Manual Training High School is one of the best colored high schools in this part of the state. 51/ Vocational work is stressed in an attempt to prepare the graduates for some vocation as soon as they are out of high school. There is a very thorough course in home economics for the girls, and for the boys much 52/ attention is given to poultry, and manual arts.

49/ Three Decades in Muskogee City Schools.

50/ Ibid.

51/ J. R. Holmes, City Superintendent, Muskogee.

52/ Ibid.

## CHAPTER V

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The first school established within the present boundary of Muskogee County was at the old Creek Agency, two miles west of the present site of Muskogee City, in 1845. Other elementary schools were established in the various communities, by teachers who saw the need of training for the children of the early settlers. These schools were small, yet they served the purpose of arousing an interest in education.

The elementary schools were followed by missions and boarding schools where secondary school work was conducted under the supervision of Christian men and women, who were leaders in the affairs of the people. These missions and boarding schools, for the most part, were under the general supervision of some church.

The early schools were closed during the conflict between the states, and were not opened again for several years. But one by one they were reopened until at the time of Statehood Muskogee County had a fairly well developed system of schools.

### CONCLUSION

In this study it was found that the period of educational development might be divided into three divisions: (1) schools before the Civil War; (2) schools from the Civil War to Statehood; and (3) schools after Statehood. It was found also that settlements changed from the locations of the earliest schools, and that schools followed the settlements. From a very early date each community had a school of some type.

The growth and development of education in Muskogee County has been gradual and constant. There seems to have been no time, except during the Civil War, when the educational institutions were not commensurate with the times.

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