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THE ORIGIN, DEVELOPMENT, DISCONTINUATION, AND IN 12 1939
INFLUENCE ON OKLAHOMA EDUCATION OF THE
"OLD WILLIE HALSELL COLLEGE", CRAIG COUNTY
VINITA, OKLAHOMA

By

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Bachelor of Arts and Science

East Central State Teachers College of Oklahoma

Ada, Oklahoma

1933

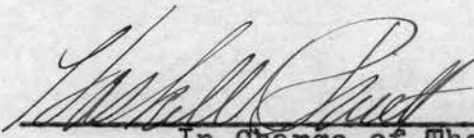
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1939

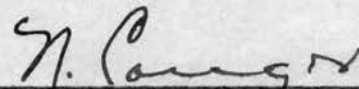
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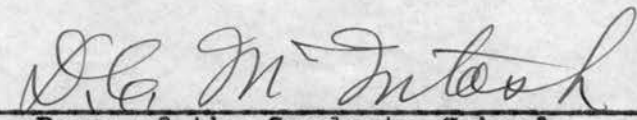
APPROVED:



In Charge of Thesis



Dean of the School of Education



Dean of the Graduate School

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PREFACE

It has been the purpose of the author of this thesis to collect all records possible concerning the "Old Willie Hallsell College" in Vinita, Craig County, Oklahoma.

The facts have been so organized that the reader will observe the continuous growth, development, and influence of this school.

The records pertaining to this school are incomplete, it being under the control of the M. E. Church at Nashville, Tennessee, and not under any governmental agency which is now in existence.

It is hoped that this thesis will serve as a basis for preserving early history regarding the schools of Oklahoma.

The author acknowledges his indebtedness to the many persons whose names appear in the bibliography--the Library of A & M College, Dr. Haskell Pruett, Dr. N. Conger and Miss Vera Jones, for so many helpful suggestions.

LFG

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

BALTIMORE PAPCHMENT
 1003646 USA

*Vinita, County Seat of Craig County and location of Willie
Halsell College.





"OLD WILLIE HALSELL COLLEGE"

CHAPTER I

ESTABLISHMENT AND DISCONTINUATION OF WILLIE HALSELL COLLEGE

- I Early Vinita Schools
 - a. Cherokee Schools
 - b. Worcester Academy
 - c. Willie Halsell College
 - d. Sacred Heart Institute
 - e. Vinita Public Schools

- II Erection of Willie Halsell College

- III Erection of Annex

- IV Sale and Discontinuation of Willie Halsell College

CHAPTER I

ESTABLISHMENT AND DISCONTINUATION OF WILLIE HALSELL COLLEGE

I EARLY VINITA SCHOOLS

Vinita, located in the Northeastern part of Oklahoma, was, before statehood, the center of a huge cattle industry. It was within forty miles of three states: Missouri, Kansas, and Arkansas. Two railroads, the "Missouri, Kansas, and Texas", and the "St. Louis and San Francisco", crossed at this point. This made it a place easily accessible and habitable. It had its milling, hotel, and stock transferring facilities.

Many residents of Northeastern Indian Territory, at this time, were Indians, some of whom had come from their original homes, protesting because they feared there would be no school privileges for them, as had been provided for them in their old homes. While treaties between the government and Indian tribes provided for some formal education, there was a definite place in the territory for missions and church schools.¹

Recognizing the truth of the saying, "Illiteracy is the bane of any town or country",² the Cherokee citizens

1 Buchanan & Dale, History of Oklahoma. Row, Peterson and Company, 1924.

2 Home Missionary Society--Easter Messenger, Indian Chieftain, 1900.

early made application to the board of education for a school, and as they could produce the thirteen for winter and fifteen for summer their request was granted and a teacher appeared on the scene calling for a house and pupils to be supported by the national funds. There was no provision for the education of children of non-citizens except by permission from the Cherokee authorities allowing them to attend the national schools upon payment of a nominal fee. This arrangement lasted for several years. Then the growth of the town and increase in the number of non-resident pupils demanded larger school buildings and a greater number of teachers. Steps were taken to procure these at the earliest practicable moment. The primary necessity was a building site for the school. Mr. Johnson Thompson, one of the wealthy, progressive and enterprising pioneers of Vinita gave a lot for a dormitory; Col. L. B. Bell, an ardent and zealous advocate of higher education, gave the lot on which a substantial structure known as Worcester Academy was erected. It was a beautiful site for the school and a fitting tribute to the memory of Dr. Worcester after whom it was named.

Dr. Worcester was one of the most devoted of the missionaries who came among the Cherokees at an early day, and no name was more loved and revered among them than his.

3 Board of Trustees--Catalogue of Worcester Academy, Indian Chieftain, 1891.

The people of Vinita, citizens and non-citizens, with the aid of the Congregational Church at large, brought Worcester Academy to completion--installing Rev. Mr. Scroggs, a Congregational minister, as principal of the first high school ever taught in Vinita.⁴ There the children and youth of the town who did not attend the public schools, studied and mingled together, until "expansion" called for still greater educational facilities. As Methodism had become predominant in religious influence among the people, it was deemed advisable by the Methodist conference to add a college for the scholastic needs of the growing city.⁵ Bishop Galloway, of Mississippi, and the citizens of Vinita, especially the wealthy members of the Methodist Church, gave liberally of their means and Willie Halsell College was a monument of Methodist zeal and energy.

The Cherokees, admitting the word "might" of a section of the treaty of '66, giving equal educational privileges to their former bondsmen, provided houses and teachers for the colored population, and the benefits of the public schools have been theirs the same as Cherokees, with one restriction, viz: the schools have ever been separate, the Cherokee law forbidding the Cherokee children attending the same school with the colored.⁶

4 Home Missionary Society. Easter Messenger, Indian Chieftain, 1900.

5 Ben Funk, Reunion Notes, Vinita Leader, 1933.

6 Home Missionary Society. op. cit.

Private schools on a small scale were inaugurated in Vinita from time to time, but proved unsatisfactory, therefore were evanescent. Another seat of learning was added to the Vinita list of schools, which is still being conducted in Vinita, this is the Sacred Heart Institute, the Catholic school in Vinita.

Such was the state of schools in Vinita when a new era dawned. A town board was elected by the citizens of Vinita, who immediately began devising means for obtaining buildings suitable for all children, both citizens and non-citizens. The board secured Worcester Academy for the purpose and installed a principal with five assistant teachers, three of whom were appointed by the national board and paid from national funds. Three were appointed by the town board who received their remuneration from the town of Vinita.

The Public School of Vinita began September 18, 1899, under the new regime with five teachers and four hundred and sixty pupils.

At the session of the Indian Mission Conference of the M. E. Church, South, held in Eufaula, Ind. Ter., in 1896, Bishop Galloway presiding, a committee was appointed to select a location for a male school. After a thorough canvass of the matter, Vinita having offered the best inducements, the school was located in that town. At once the solicitation of subscription of funds with which to erect the necessary buildings was begun. There was a liberal response by the enterprising citizens of Vinita. Also quite

a liberal sum was given by St. Louis merchants.⁷ One hundred and sixty acres of land were granted by Act of Cherokee Council in concordance with the treaty of 1866. This tract of land lies just outside the corporate limits of the city on the north. The first session of the school opened in the Methodist Church in September, 1888, under the principalship of Professor Bishop, an experienced educator of Texas. The original name of the school was Galloway College. After due consideration it was decided to erect a new four-story and basement building in the middle of the 160 acre tract of pasture land. The building was completed in 1889. A debt of several thousand dollars was hanging over the property notwithstanding the parent Board of Missions donated \$7,000 toward the school. Not being able to overcome this indebtedness, W. E. Halsell generously paid the debt and gave large contributions for maintenance of the school.⁸ In appreciation of his timely help, the name of Galloway College was changed to Willie Halsell College in memory of Mr. Halsell's daughter Willie, who had died shortly before at an early age.

President Bishop Carried on the work of the new college during the years 1889-90 and 1890-91. He was then retired and W. E. Rowsey came to be put in charge, in 1892,

7 Ben Funk, op. cit.

8 Home Missionary Society, op. cit.

and he had charge of the school for three years. With President Rowsey came the following members of the faculty: his brother, J. E. Rowsey, W. S. Dugger, and the Misses Spence, Croom, and McClatchley, who taught the children elocution, art, and music, besides the regular branches of learning.⁹

In 1893, it was decided to make the school coeducational. For a time the college building contained both classrooms and living quarters for students and faculty. The students lived on the upper floor; the president and faculty below; and the class rooms, the assembly room, the music room and the art department were between the living quarters. Up to that time the college building was the most impressive structure in Northeastern Indian Territory.¹⁰

Out of need for dormitory space and the desire to maintain as efficient supervision as possible over the boys and girls living away from home, came what was known as the "Annex", a roomy, two-story dormitory--which building was also financed by Mr. Halsell in part and by other citizens of Vinita, as well as the Board of Missions.¹¹

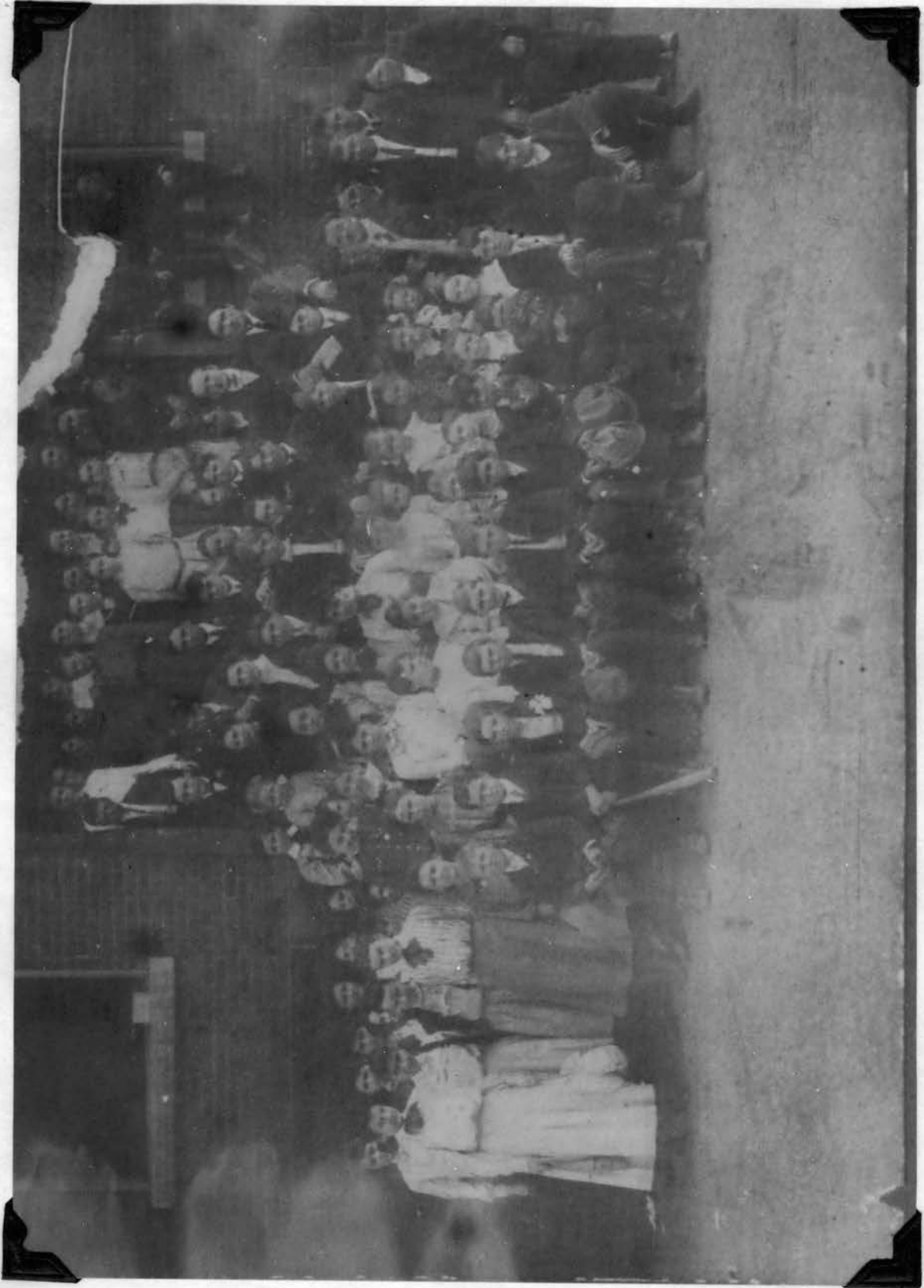
9 Board of Trustees Minutes of Board Meetings, Manuscript, 1896-1908.

10 Home Missionary Society Easter Messenger, op. cit.

11 Ben Funk, op. cit.

The school continued its gradual growth for several years. Finally, it became indebted, the expenditures were exceeding the income from tuition and gifts, etc. The sale from time to time of land overcame this indebtedness. At a Board Meeting, May 6, 1908, the following resolution was adopted: "Whereas it has been found impossible to maintain the college at this place and that the building and improvements will rapidly decrease in value by decay and neglect. And whereas such price as is offered by W. E. Halsell is the reasonable value of said property. Therefore, be it resolved by the local board of trustees that it is the judgment and opinion of the board that the sum of \$25,000 is the reasonable value of said college property including land, furniture and fixtures and that such offer as was made by W. E. Halsell should be and is by this board recommended by the Board of Missions.¹²

12 Final Minutes of Board of Trustees, May 6, 1908.



FACULTY AND STUDENT BODY

CHAPTER II

I FACULTY AND STUDENT BODY

A. Faculty

B. Student Body

CHAPTER II

FACULTY AND STUDENT BODY

Needless to say, the men who supervised this work were men of vision and missionary zeal. The devoted first president or principal was W. P. Bishop, who together with a small faculty served to bring to Oklahoma the onward march of education. President Bishop carried on the work of the new college for two years, after which a young graduate from Vanderbilt University, W. E. Rowsey, was put in charge. With President Rowsey came his brother, J. E. Rowsey, W. S. Dugger, and Miss Spence, Miss Croom, and Miss McClatchley. Rowsey and Dugger were both Vanderbilt graduates and they strove to inculcate the fine courses of study to which they had been accustomed in the older colleges. ¹³

Aunt Laura Cooper was chosen to be manager of the "Annex", where the boys of the school lived. Three of her own children: Glenn, Alice, and Oneida, were students of the Willie Halsell College and her heart was big enough to shelter every small, homesick boy who came to live there. ¹⁴

In 1896, President Rowsey resigned and the college was taken over by W. L. Chapman, assisted by F. S. E. Amos who later was to become editor of the Vinita Leader, and who is

13 Ben Funk, op. cit.

14 Ibid

now a faculty member of the University of Oklahoma in the Department of Government.

In the secretary's minutes of the Board of Trustees, dated October 14, 1896, we read, "The Board of Trustees of Willie Halsell College met at the office of Drs. Fortner & Bagby. The meeting was opened with prayer, after which C. M. Coppedge was elected temporary secretary. The secretary read the contract under which Prof. Chapman is managing the college, which contract is made for a period of ten years. Prof. Chapman gave some general information as to the conditions and work of the school.

Dr. B. F. Fortner and W. C. Patton were appointed as a committee to make a report to the Annual Conference.

The Executive Board has authorized a house to be built on the southwest corner of the college grounds by C. M. Coppedge (to be a district parsonage for the M. E. Church, South), the building of said house not to affect the present status of the title to said piece of ground in any way whatever; its use by the church being considered strictly within the purpose of land grant by the Cherokee Nation.

On motion the board adjourned.

C. M. Coppedge, Secretary.

In 1902 Rev. C. C. Browning was present at the Board Meeting and gave his report as President of the Institution for the year 1901-02, which showed 160 pupils enrolled

during his "encumbency", day pupils 120, and 40 boarders. Other than this statement, we know little of this man as president, but the following year the appointment of Prof. W. S. Dugger by the Executive Board of the Church at Nashville, Tennessee is on record. This man served at the head of the school for the school years 1903-04 and 1904-05. He and the local board at Vinita, composed of B. F. Fortner, E. N. Ratcliff, W. H. Darrough, J. M. Gross, and W. T. Wade elected the following teachers for this time: Prof. A. S. Humphrey, Prof. E. H. Coulter, Miss Laura E. Scott, Miss Daisy M. Phillips, Miss Margaret Maynard, Miss Louise Graper, and Mrs. Mattie M. Kinnear.

At this time Prof. Dugger gave the board a complete list of property belonging to the college together with improvements that had been made since he took charge of the school.

The following teachers were selected at the July 14, 1904 meeting: W. S. Dugger, President; J. R. Turner, Vice-President; Reid L. McClung; Princess Turner, Primary Department; W. W. Flora, Piano; A. A. Crecelius, Elocution; E. H. Coulter, Commercial Department; and Mrs. Mattie Kinnear, Art.

In 1905, a Professor Nelson took charge of the school, electing to teach with him E. J. Hodby and wife and Miss Anna Williams. The name of Prof. V. H. Felder appears in the annals of the college in March, 1906, as Music Teacher.

That year the board employed Mr. Dice R. Anderson, principal of Chesapeake Academy at Irvington, Virginia, for a term of five years, but we have a record of his resignation at the end of the 1906-07 school year and a motion to employ a certain man named C. P. Farree to serve the next five years. By this time the school had become indebted and was sold to W. E. Halsell for the sum of \$25,000.

The assurance is given by those whom we have personally interviewed that the teachers were capable and thorough, not allowing a student to be promoted until he had mastered the subject he was then studying.

A majority of the students were from out-of-town. Most of them lived or wanted to live at the college, to enroll themselves as "night-hawks" as distinguished from the town boys and girls, who were known as "day-dodgers".¹⁶

It was necessary for the Board of Trustees to charge tuition. This was fixed for the lowest grade at \$1.50 a month and for the Senior work at \$2.50 per month. Between, the fee varied. Small registration charges were also made.¹⁷ Board and room cost the student \$10 per month.

Every student who lived in the school brought with him a pillow and pillow case, pair of blankets, soap, and towels.

16 Ben Funk, op. cit.

17 Board of Trustees, Minutes of Board Meetings, Manuscript, 1896-1908.

Letters from these different pupils testify to the fact
 that they were immensely happy in this institution. ¹⁸

The most illustrious personage who attended the school was a young boy who became a famous screen actor, columnist, and politician--Will Rogers. John Oskinson, himself internationally known as a newspaper man, magazine writer and author, says that in those old days at Willie Halsell, Will Rogers was called "Rabbit". Although his mother called him "Will", he was known as "Bill" to his schoolmates there. ¹⁹

Quoting from Ben Funk we have this interesting item concerning our Hero,

"At recess time and during the noon hour this young out-door lad with Sam Cobb, Heber Skinner and other schoolmates, spent his time roping yearlings, that grazed on the college grounds, and riding them, sometimes. That characteristic clung to him down through the years."

"A grand feature of the college, situated in the middle of the 160 acres of pasture, was that the boys who rode horses to school had plenty of room to race. The road from the wide flight of steps toward town became a favorite race-tract for Joe Little, John Skinner, and Henry Knight. Down it they spurred and whooped." ²⁰

Among the students enrolled in the classes who have established reputations in Northeastern Oklahoma or other sections are: Ewing Halsell, now a California man, ^{Years + Okla.} Marshall Stevens, now a professional man, and his sisters, Carrie and Laura; Emmet Skinner, Earl Walker, now clerk in

18 Catalogue of Willie Halsell College, 1899

19 Ben Funk, op. cit.

20 Ibid

the First National Bank of Vinita, and his brother Charles; Tot Foreman; Jim Wimer, Grace and Lucille Fortner, Dora, Ella, and George Franklin; Frank, Bill, and Joe Little; Ludie, Janie and Clint Hall; and Holland Clark, son of the presiding elder of the Methodist Church.

Tot Foreman is now Mrs. R. V. McSpadden, having married a relative of Will Rogers; Henry Knight is secretary of the Craig County Election Board. Others among the College Pioneers were: Bess Barrett, sister of John Barrett of the first graduating class; Sue Clark, who later became Mrs. James Kell, wife of another student of the college; Ann, Della, Ludie, Lucy, and Jimmy Duncan, children of a Horse-Creek farmer; Roby and Willie Aiken, and Nanie Hunt, now Mrs. Carey Caldwell, wife of a prominent Vinita Attorney.

Hattie Franklin acquired merit by marrying the 'model boy' of the school, Lewis Martin. He was often held up as a model to the others. For example: "You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Will Rogers, think of Lewis, walking three miles to school every morning, never absent, always having his lessons, and behaving like a little man."

It was tough to be compared to Lewis--or even to John Denbe of Claremore, a sterling student, an exemplary student of character, and the second best tobacco spitter among the boys. John later married Laura Fields, another student.

Oskinson characteristically described some of the out-of-town students at the institution. "From Alluwee

came the Damon and Pythias pair, John McCracken and Charley Mehlin (John immediately fell in love with Aunt Laura's daughter, Oneida, and later married her after they graduated). From Bartlesville came the Keeler boys, Bill, Frank, and Bert, of the pioneer family that helped to establish John Bartle's town. From Chelsea and thereabouts came Beth McSpadden, Jim Keil and Tom and Shasta Lane. Claremore sent Big Ernest Scrymser, dapper Henry Walkley and others.

Where "Big and Little Pete" Evans came from could not be recalled, nor what prairie dugout yielded the big, awkward and ambitious Charles Comstock."

Some are the homemakers of Vinita and many others are scattered, each, doubtless, treasuring in his mind the happy years at Willie Halsell College.

The following is a list of Willie Halsell College Students made on August 25, 1933, at a Home Coming in Vinita, Oklahoma:

Helena Marrs Scott, Vinita, Oklahoma
 Lee Douthitt, Vinita, Oklahoma
 William Highland
 Mrs. Hallie Thompson Wimer, Vinita, Oklahoma
 J. H. Wimer, Vinita, Oklahoma
 Dan W. Bridgman, Vinita, Oklahoma
 Richard Harris, Vinita, Oklahoma
 Benjamin S. Hyatt, Vinita, Oklahoma
 James Highland, Vinita, Oklahoma
 Joe A. Billingssea, Grandview, Missouri
 Marshall Stevens, Vinita, Oklahoma
 Nannie Collins, Vinita, Oklahoma
 John Varrell, Vinita, Oklahoma
 Josephine Davidson, Vinita, Oklahoma
 Drualle Roach Danil, Vinita, Oklahoma
 John Oskinson, Estella, Oklahoma
 Mrs. Sam Carr, Big Cabin, Oklahoma
 Hattie Franklin Marton, Durant, Oklahoma
 Jeanette Kornegay Thomason, Vinita, Oklahoma
 Hazel Roberts Hunt, Vinita, Oklahoma

Garland Marrs, Tulsa, Oklahoma
 Mrs. H. J. Hill, (Emma Dupree) Vinita, Oklahoma
 Mrs. T. B. Allen, (Lucy Couch) Vinita, Oklahoma
 Chas. W. York, Vinita, Oklahoma
 Byrde Tayler Webb, Vinita, Oklahoma
 C. E. Chouteau, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
 Verna Edmiston Hillin, Pryor, Oklahoma
 J. W. Gatewood, Pryor, Oklahoma
 Henry S. Knight, Vinita, Oklahoma
 Jennie Fowler Campbell, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
 Henry C. Walkley, Tulsa, Oklahoma
 Eugene Homer Trott, Marble City, Oklahoma
 Mrs. Gertrude Nidiffer, Mahoney
 Mrs. Jessie G. Nidiffer Lucas
 Chas H. Collins, Vinita, Oklahoma
 Artie Cobb, Vinita, Oklahoma
 Carrie Stevens Laurence, Vinita, Oklahoma
 C. N. Tyler, Vinita, Oklahoma
 Van S. Chandler, Cleora, Oklahoma
 Clarence Ashbrook Rider Mottley, Vinita, Oklahoma
 Bessie Barrett Seaton, Bartlesville, Oklahoma
 Laura Stevens McClure, Vinita, Oklahoma
 Jess M. Scott, Vinita, Oklahoma
 Anna Chandler Bresnehan, Blue Jacket, Oklahoma
 Elmer Dupree, Vinita, Oklahoma
 Ruth Morrison, Vinita, Oklahoma
 Alice Cooper Hamilton, Afton, Oklahoma
 Oneida Cooper McCracken, Nowata, Oklahoma
 Clara H. Meldin Allowee, Nowata, Oklahoma
 J. W. McCracken, Nowata, Oklahoma
 Ulalah Harris Blount, Vinita, Oklahoma
 Browning Lewis, Strang, Oklahoma
 J. Walt Adair, Vinita, Oklahoma
 Bertha Gilstrap Wilson, St. Joseph, Missouri
 Lidie Hall Parker, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
 Emory Martin, Vinita, Oklahoma
 Effie Cox Proudlove, Vinita, Oklahoma
 Stella Cox Laroe, Vinita, Oklahoma
 Press Kornegay, Vinita, Oklahoma
 Opal Love Burchalter Parker, Dallas, Texas
 Frank Little, Romona, Oklahoma
 Mrs. M. J. Spalding, Vinita, Oklahoma
 Nannie Hunt Caldwell, Vinita, Oklahoma
 Mrs. Fay J. Barborino (Fay Trott) Atlantic, N.J.
 C. S. Kornegay, Vinita, Oklahoma
 Mrs. H. F. Couch (Ida Coker) Coody's Bluff, Okla.
 Mrs. J. F. Dale (Willie Ella Myers) Nowata, Okla.
 Nannie L. Chandler White, Adair, Oklahoma
 Rosa Skinner Neville, Adair, Oklahoma
 Gazelle Lane, Claremore, Oklahoma
 Byrd Ironside Davenport, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
 Tom Cannon Burchalter, Vinita, Oklahoma

T. A. Connelly, Vinita, Oklahoma
H. R. Thomas, Vinita, Oklahoma
Mrs. Eleanor Breher, Los Angeles, California
Elsie Morrison Nichols, Vinita, Oklahoma
Thomas Taylor, Cardin, Oklahoma
Earl Walker, Vinita, Oklahoma
Rachel Crouch Haynes, White Oak, Oklahoma
C. M. Haynes, White Oak, Oklahoma
Mattie Riley Skinner, Talihina, Oklahoma
Clarence Tily Hale, Pryor, Oklahoma
May Voiles, Weber Falls
Harry Bagby, Tulsa, Oklahoma
Browning Lewis, Strang, Oklahoma
Slater McClure
Bess Spalding, Omaha, Nebraska
Lluell Milford Alvin, Tulsa, Oklahoma
Josie Nidiffer Davidson, Vinita, Oklahoma
Eva Ratcliff Gillett, Vinita
Will Highland, Vinita, Oklahoma
Laura Gott, Muskogee, Oklahoma
Maita Stevens Hughes, Vinita, Oklahoma
Blanche Oborn Rodman, Vinita, Oklahoma
S. S. Taylor, Vinita, Oklahoma
Laura Cooper, Afton, Oklahoma
Mrs. Isabell Coyne, Centralia, Oklahoma
John Gore, Blue Jacket, Oklahoma
Effie Wolf Cheatham, Okemah, Oklahoma

TABLE I
 Eighteen Years of Willie Halsell College
 1889---1907

YEAR	SUPERINTENDENT	SALARY	ENROLL MENT	MONTHS	TERM	ANNUAL COST
1889	W. P. Bishop	no rep.	no rep.	8	1	no report
1890	W. P. Bishop	"	"	9	1	"
1891	W. E. Rowsey	"	"	9	1	"
1892	W. E. Rowsey	"	"	9	1	"
1893	W. E. Rowsey	"	"	9	1	"
1894	W. E. Rowsey	"	"	9	1	"
1895	W. E. Rowsey	"	"	9	1	"
1896	W. L. Chapman	"	"	9	1	"
1897	W. L. Chapman	"	"	9	1	"
1898	Prof. Morrison	"	"	9	1	"
1899	Prof. Brewer	"	"	9	1	"
1900	Prof. Brewer	"	"	9	1	"

(Cont'd)

TABLE I (Cont'd)

YEAR	SUPERINTENDENT	SALARY	ENROLLMENT	MONTHS	TERM	ANNUAL COST
1901	Prof. Brewer	no rep.	no rep.	9	1	no report
1902	C. C. Browning	\$ 160	"	9	1	\$ 2900
1903	W. S. Dugger	no rep.	"	9	1	no report
1904	W. S. Dugger	"	"	9	1	"
1905	Prof. Nelson	"	"	9	1	"
1906	Dice Anderson	\$ 95	"	9	1	\$ 2900
1907	G. P. Farree	no rep.	"	9	1	no report

Years 1889-1899, 1902-1907 from Minutes of Board of Trustees

Years 1899-1902 from personal interview with Finnie May Taylor Harmon

CHAPTER III

I Methods of Procedure in Schools

- A. Methods of Management
- B. Aims or Objectives
- C. Results

CHAPTER III
METHODS AND PROCEDURE

Practically all early schools in Oklahoma operated on the same plan regarding practice and methods. This particular school was directly under the control of the Southern Methodist Conference, with a local board at Vinita, that acted under the direction of the church board.

The underlying purpose or principle of the school seems to have been to wield a religious influence over the young people enrolled and at the same time teach the general academic subjects, music, and commercial courses.

The following minutes from the secretary of the Board's record book gives very definite ideas about the management of the school:

Vinita, Ind. Terr. June 12, 1900

The Board of Trustees of Willie Halsell College met.
Present, Rev. P. B. Hicks, W. E. Halsell, and B. F. Fortner.

Having been informed that the Foreign Missionary Board of the M. E. Church, south, to which this college belongs, desires to assume closer relations to it, has appointed as a local Board of Trustees the above named persons together with Drs. J. H. Pritchett and W. P. Lambath. It is decided to organize a permanent board with a president and secretary who shall be residents. Accordingly, B. F. Fortner was elected president, and P. B. Hicks, Secretary.

It is resolved that this board shall have supervision of all finances of this school.

A committee consisting of W. E. Halsell, and P. B. Hicks was appointed to investigate the needs of the building as to repairs and additions.

Adjourned subject to call,

P.B. Hicks, Secretary

The school year 1901-02 showed cash receipts \$3700 and expenditures \$2900. This estimate did not include expenses or receipts from the farm.

By charging tuition, it was supposed to be possible to make the school self-sustaining but a record is early given of the Board of Missions donating \$500, which was expended for repairs, electric lights and an artesian well.

The president was held responsible for all damage to the property and furniture other than the result of natural wear.

The Trustees shared in the management of the school in accordance with the following regulations:

1. All title to the property of the college is vested in the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.

2. The Trustees shall have power to elect the President of the Willie Halsell College, subject to confirmation by the Board of Missions

3. The President of Willie Halsell College shall have

power to appoint teachers for said school, subject to confirmation of the Board.

4. Any questions of discipline or other matters pertaining to internal management of the college shall be subject to the final decision of the Board of Trustees. ²¹

It is very interesting to note the kind of equipment these early schools had. From an early inventory made by Prof. C. C. Browning in the year 1902, we have the following list of class room equipment:

ON THE FIRST FLOOR

1 Black board
 8 Recitation seats
 3 Pianos
 2 Tables
 1 Stove in Music Room
 Curtains for all windows

ON THE SECOND FLOOR

9 Tables in Commercial Room
 3 Lights and fixtures
 1 Stove in Commercial Room
 1 Stove in S. W. Room

In 1905 we find the courses of study divided into the Literary Department and Music Department. It seemed to be thought especially necessary for those attending to study music and art, as well as the Bible, Algebra, General History, English Literature, English Composition, Latin, Elocution, Bookkeeping, Grammar and Botony. The subjects compared then with the courses of study in school of today. The best preparatory schools in the eastern states at that

²¹ Board of Trustees, Minutes of Meetings, op. cit.

time were models for these early schools west of the Mississippi. An early catalogue makes reference to the fact that their curriculum was patterned after Exeter, N. H.; Andover and Easthampton, Mass., and Norwich, Conn. 22

This selection from a former pupil gives a very interesting view of some class room methods of the time:

"Many years ago there sat in a big old-fashioned schoolhouse in a small Indian Territory town, a group of restless boys and girls. To all intents and purposes they were memorizing a poem about "Autumn". "The Goldenrod is yellow--The corn is turning brown, The trees in apple orchards with fruit is bending down--". I doubt if two from that group could finish the poem--I almost doubt if two of them ever memorized the poem. There were so many interesting things to do. For instance, Hugh Myers could, if he had the patience and kept a wary eye on Miss Hal Thompson, succeed in driving his knife through the big, flat bow of ribbon that dangled from the end of Bertha Thomason's long braid. It wasn't, of course, much fun unless Bertha stood up suddenly, then, there was a screech--and no end of excitement. It usually ended in Hugh standing on the floor, and all the girls casting indignant glances at him. Though secretly most all of us wished it had been our braids. Hugh was quite a beau in those days."

"The Goldenrod is yellow"--But Jessie Nidiffer is whispering to "Cute" Frazier that--"If you make eyes and nose on a pillow slip and put it over your head it makes a good ghost costume". It's nearing Hallowe'en-- "The corn is turning--". Artie Cobb holds up her hand to go to her art lesson. For Old Willie Halsell had a very fine art department, and pupils were excused all through the day for art or music. Artie leaves the room and Pauline Kelly come in and takes her seat. She casts a glance over at Hugh--takes up her books and begins all over at--"The Goldenrod is yellow". Another interruption. Miss Hallie rushes down the aisle to snatch a bean shooter just as Henry Rains aims at Oliver Scott. Well, that was lucky, for Oliver hasn't that red hair for nothing. Henry was really thirsting for trouble. Oh yes, the poem. Order is restored. "The corn is turning brown". Mabel Bagby came quietly in, she's been to her music lesson."²³

22 Board of Trustees Catalogue of Worcester Academy, 1891

23 Bertha Gilstrap Wilson, Letter to Vinita Journal, 1937

A letter from Ludie Hall Owen will give interesting history concerning the school, showing the fine arts were not being neglected:

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
Monday, 14th

Dear John:

I shall be delighted to be on hand to attend the Reunion, but I am out of training for "Elocution" and when once I got started on "The Crooked Mouthed Family", "Hiawatha's Wooing", or some of those Medal Contest Speeches, I should never know when to quit. One of my famous stunts was at Willie Halsell College, when I stood up boldly--or boldly stood up--and sang "After the Ball". Lucille Fortner at the piano, Bob Blakeney fiddling. Then Lowen Crockett and I sang a duet, "On the Banks of the Wabash" at the Methodist Church. Extremely appropriate.-----24

The general impression is gleaned from all available sources that the college was attended by a fine class of young people, and that the course of instruction compared very favorably with that of the best institutions of the time. Since it was operated much like a private school, ample opportunity was afforded the superintendents and those in teaching positions to instruct and guide every avenue of the young lives entrusted in their care. This was, undoubtedly, their aim, and they accomplished this thing, as one can easily recognize, when the list of names included in this chapter is considered and what valuable lives they are each living. Places of service and responsibility have been their portion. They have lived to use in life's school the valuable lessons and ideals that they learned in early school life in this old college.

25

24 Ludie H. Owen, Letter to John Oskinson, 1933.

25 Home Missionary Society, Easter Messenger, op. cit.

CHAPTER IV

I INFLUENCE ON THE PRESENT

- A. Influence on students early life.
- B. Influence of school on community.
- C. Participation in later life of early day students.
- D. Influence on present day of early day students.

CHAPTER IV

INFLUENCE ON THE PRESENT

Without doubt, the greatest figure having been influenced by Willie Halsell College was our beloved Will Rogers. His schoolmates have laughed at his wit after thirty-four years have gone by. At the last reunion he was dead, but the fine messages he had brought to his former schoolmates will live in their minds forever. They were gathered there on the exact spot where Galloway College, later known as Willie Halsell Institute, was established.

Doubtless those happy days contributed to the sunshine that Will Rogers was always dispensing. One year when he could not be present at the reunion this is the telegram that he sent to them:

EARL WALKER
VINITA, OKLAHOMA

I THOUGHT YOUR CELEBRATION WAS TOMORROW NOW HERE COMES
A VINITA JOURNAL AND SAYS IT'S TODAY - I THOUGHT IT
WAS TO JOIN WITH THE BOOTLEGGERS IN GIVING THANKS
FOR FIXING THEIR HIGHWAY FROM JOPLIN TO TULSA THE
BAD ROAD FROM CHELSEA TO VINITA HAD BROKE MORE
BOTTLES THAN THE PROHIBITIONISTS CHELSEA WAS JUST
EXISTING ON BROKEN GLASS NOW I FIND THAT THEY ARE
CELEBRATING THE PASSING OUT OF WILLIE HALSELL INSTI-
TUTE THERE WAS GUYS WENT THERE THAT WOULD HAVE
PUT EVEN HARVARD OR YALE OUT OF BUSINESS I BELIEVE
JOHN OSKINSON WAS THE ONLY ONE WE REALLY GOT EDUCATED
BUT THEY TAUGHT A LOT OF THEM TO GO OUT AND LEAD FINE
USEFUL LIVES TO THEIR COMMUNITIES THE WORLD DON'T
HAVE TO HEAR OF YOU TO MAKE YOU WORTH WHILE I STILL
BELIEVE EARL WALKER HEBER SKINNER SAM COBB SUNNY
KNIGHT JOHN MCCRACKEN CHARLEY MEHLIN AND DOZENS OF

FINE INDIAN TERRITORY GIRLS WHO WENT TO OLD WILLIE
 HALSELL ARE AS GREAT A CONTRIBUTION TO AMERICAN LIFE
 AS "PRETTY BOY FLOYD" I WISH I WAS THERE TODAY BUT
 THESE MOVIES HAVE A QUEER IDEA THEY THINK IF YOU
 WORK FOR 'EM YOU OUGHT TO BE AROUND ONCE IN A WHILE
 I STUDIED "ART" THERE ONCE "CRAYON PAINTINGS" I WAS
 STUCK ON THE TEACHER I DREW A HORSES HEAD I
 HAVE IT NOW IT STILL LOOKS LIKE A BUFFALO I
 TOOK ELOCUTION I STOPPED IT JUST IN TIME OR I WOULD
 HAVE BEEN A SENATOR MR HALSELL COMES UP TO MY PLACE
 EVERY FEW DAYS HE MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR US TO BE
 THERE EWING IS OUT HERE NOW A FINE SON A REAL
 COWMAN ANY PARENTS DELIGHT HE CARRIED ON HIS
 FATHER'S PROFFESION NOW WHY DON'T THEY BUILD A ROAD
 OUT TO THE WHITE OAK STOMP DANCES THERE IS THE
 WORST ROAD IN THE WORLD THIS IS JUST ABOUT ALL THE
 JOKES I AM ABLE TO PAY FOR SO THE NEXT TIME I WILL
 COME AND TELL 'EM TO YOU "IN PERSON" BUT AINT IT
 WONDERFUL TO GO FROM VINITA TO CHELSEA AND NOT HAVE
 TO GO BY COFFEYVILLE OR MUSKOGEE GOOD LUCK AND
 BEST WISHES TO EVERY ONE OF YOU

YOURS

WILL ROGERS
 24 8 pm 27

Another son of this college that became internation-
 ally known was John Oskinson, famous author, who was a
 member of the first graduating class, later attended Leland
 Stanford University and has traveled far and wide, gaining
 fame as a columnist and magazine writer, carrying with him
 knowledge and inspiration gained at his early alma mater.
 No doubt the position which these two illustrious figures
 hold in the citizenship of our land was largely due to the
 early training in the Old Willie Halsell College.

In order that we may see further results of the influ-
 ence of the school and its faithful teachers, it will be well
 to relate the part some of the others have played in life:

27 Will Rogers. Telegram to Earl Walker, August 26, 1933

1. W. E. Rowsey, Bank President in Muskogee, Oklahoma.
2. Marshall Stevens, Vinita Business man.
3. Nannie Collins, Vinita School Teacher.
4. Charlie Collins, Vinita Banker.
5. Elmer Dupree, school teacher and farmer.
6. Sam Cobb, Traffic Policeman in Vinita.
7. John McCracken, Nowata County Clerk.
8. Charley Mehlin, Ex-county Commissioner.
9. Annie Audrain Shepherd, Fairland school teacher.

The establishment of the present local high school in Vinita is but a remote effect of those early struggles many years ago to impart learning to our youth. The religious and moral side being stressed has left its bearing on many former pupils. How significant that J. Emmett Rowsey, early associated with this college as a teacher should write these lines to one of his former pupils, "Several have gone to await the Reunion at the Great White Throne, where I hope we all shall meet and know each other again".

No one can dispute the sublime influence of the college when we read these paragraphs in an article written for the Vinita Daily Journal:

"A few years ago I saw a motion picture that impressed me greatly. It was just one writer's conception of our passing from this world to the Larger Life. To others it may have been fantastic, but I thought it a beautiful thing. For centuries wise men have puzzled over what this transition would be like. This writer has depicted the change as though we walked along out and up--up a great shining roadway. As they walked others joined them. Up and up they walked along there was no effort, no weariness, At last they came to a great gathering, and in the background rose the City Eternal.

Waiting at the entrance, through which shone a dazzling light, waited the Risen Savior himself--hand outstretched, smiling much as a kind, welcoming host, stands in his doorway, to greet expected guests. As the travelers reached the entrance, their old garments dropped from them and they passed into the Beautiful City, clothed in shining angel robes, and disappeared from sight. How simple it all seemed, and how perfectly natural! Just, "I go to prepare a place" and behind him, "The Many Mansions". Lately, I have been thinking of the steady procession that has gone up from Vinita to Fairview Cemetery. There were hardly any graves there when we came there about 45 years ago--now there are many. Year after year, the great and the near great, the rich and the poor--men who have made their mark and children who hardly started life. And I thought how wonderful if we could all catch the Vision seeing our loved ones not stopping there in the cemetery but using it as a gateway, that they only paused there to drop their old earthly garments, that all our mistakes and heartaches could be dropped like a ragged old coat at the door."²⁸

²⁸ Bertha Gilstrap Wilson, Letter to Vinita Daily Journal, April 20, 1938.

DEPOSITION

This is taken in Vinita, Oklahoma, June 1, 1938.
Those present are: Sam Cobb, L. F. George, and Lorraine Carselowey.

- Q. What is your name?
- A. Sam Cobb.
- Q. How long have you lived in Craig County?
- A. 50 years. I cam here in 1889.
- Q. Where did you live before you moved here?
- A. I lived in Tennessee.
- Q. In what part of this county did you first settle?
- A. I settled in what is known as Craig County. Right here in Vinita.
- Q. At the time you settled here were the people mostly whites or Indians?
- A. There were some Indians, but they were mostly mixed breeds.
- Q. This was Indian Territory at that time?
- A. Yes.
- Q. Were there any towns in Craig County?
- A. Yes. They were about the same as they are now. They were just being laid out then. At that time Afton was the shipping point on the Frisco.
- Q. Were there any schools here?
- A. Yes. There was a school called Worcester Academy located where the High School building is now.
- Q. How old were you when you started to school?
- A. I guess I was about 11 or 12 years old before I started to school.

- Q. Where did you first go to school?
- A. I first went to school in a little school house built on Cabin Creek. It was called Sycamore School and was a subscription school.
- Q. Were a lot of the children Indians in Sycamore School?
- A. They had Indian blood.
- Q. Do you remember how the teacher was hired?
- A. The teacher would be hired by the neighbors.
- Q. What kind of equipment did they have?
- A. We had homemade desks and benches to sit on.
- Q. Do you remember any of the people who lived out in that district?
- A. Well, there was W. H. Donaldson, S. S. Cobb, "Humpy" Taylor, Dr. Fortner, and they got together and hired the teacher and sorta acted as the school board.
- Q. How many grades were offered in this school?
- A. About the only things they studied were reading, writing, and arithmetic.
- Q. How long was the school term?
- A. It was a short term because we all had to work on the ranch. And when you worked like I did I'd go to school one day and maybe miss the rest of the week.
- Q. When you quit did you go to Willie Halsell?
- A. Yes. I rode horseback to school.
- Q. Do you remember any of your school friends?
- A. There were quite a number of them. John McCracken, Nowata, County Clerk; Charley Mehlin, Alawee, ex-County Commissioner. Jim and Tom Donnelly, Vinita; Marshall Stevens, ex-paymaster for State Projects in Craig County; Will Rogers, deceased; Charley McCracken, deceased.
- Q. Can you tell anything of your experiences with Will Rogers?

- A. Well, he was just like the rest of us boys, what time we were'nt in class we were out into mischief, roping steers and things like that.
- Q. While in school did Will Rogers ever show any sign of talent for entertaining?
- A. We used to have entertainments and have these dialogues, or whatever you call them, and he was always kinda witty in a way.
- Q. Do you think the school had any influence on the course he took in later life?
- A. In a way I think it did. He got that idea, while he lived here, from Mulhall and the rodeos we had in those days. Mulhall was Livestock Agent for the Frisco. He had a band that he called the Frisco Band and he organized a bunch of cowboys from this county and started on a tour. First we went to Kansas City, then to Des Moines, Iowa; from there to St. Louis, Mo., and we showed there at the dedication of the World's Fair. Later on we made quite a few rodeos at Memphis, Springfield, Joplin, and places like that, and that is when he got interested in show business.
- Q. When you boys went your different ways in life did you see much of Will Rogers after that?
- A. When we organized for a Willie Halsell College Reunion he couldn't come the first time but he came for the second one. The Will Roger's Rodeo started at his suggestion, that was in 1934. I had him as guest at my house and we had a cow hand dinner and invited a bunch of the old boys.
- Q. What constitutes a cow hand dinner?
- A. Beans and Ham hock, cornbread, scrapple bread, barbecued beef, cove oysters, Wagoner Salad(his favorite salad that he made on the Wagoner Ranch down in Texas) and plenty of big white onions. Every time anyone would come to take a picture of him he would be eating one of these onions or scrapple bread. We all enjoyed having him with us that year. He said he enjoyed that day more than any day he knew of. He went so far as to say: "I had dinner with the President of the United States before I came down here, but I'm enjoying this dinner."
- Q. Did you boys stay at the Annex?

- A. We first stayed at the College. Later on we stayed at Coopers' Annex. We used to go along calling it: 'Coopers' Hall, Chapman Street, Johnson's boarding house, and nothing to eat. Of course, this was all in fun.
- Q. What did you boys do for pass time?
- A. We did so many things it is hard to say.
- Q. Do you feel this training had its influence upon your later lives making you better citizens?
- A. Yes, I do.
- Q. What form of punishment did they use in the college?
- A. They would talk to us and give us demerits. They never used the board on us.
- Q. What were some of the things you did to receive this?
- A. There was a big pasture of blue grass by the college and we always had horses. If we wanted excitement we would leave the gate open and let the horses that were on free range come in and we built a corral and we were caught with a bunch of other people's horses breaking 'em and training 'em to ride.
- Q. From a religious standpoint do you think the college had its influence?
- A. Yes. They would make us go to church and Bill and I would try to out-sing the old sisters up in front and they would try to get us to come up and sing with them but we never would do that.
- Q. Is there anything else you can think of that would be of interest about this school?
- A. During the time I went there we had Arbor Day. We would go to the creek and get trees and bring them back and plant them in the school yard, and when we planted them we would name them for someone in the school. Maybe some girl's name or some boy's name. There are still some trees on the old site, but I don't know if any of them are the ones we planted.
- Q. Would you say that the school life at Willie Halsell had its influence on the community life?
- A. Yes, indeed.

- Q. Do you believe that the influence of that school had its effect on the schools today in Oklahoma?
- A. The schools have been built up from that school, you might say. There is no doubt but that it had its influence.

DEPOSITION

This is taken in the home of Henry S. Knight, May 25, 1938, Vinita, Oklahoma. Those present are: Henry S. Knight, L. F. George, and Lorraine Carselowey.

- Q. What is your name?
- A. Henry S. Knight. They called me "Sunny".
- Q. Where were you born?
- A. 12 miles east of Vinita.
- Q. When did you come to Vinita?
- A. In 1882.
- Q. What schools were here when you came?
- A. The Worcester Academy and Vinita Public Schools.
- Q. Did you attend either of these schools?
- A. Yes. The Public School in about 1887.
- Q. What grades were offered in this school?
- A. Up to the 8th grade.
- Q. How were these schools maintained?
- A. The Public School was a Cherokee School and supported by the Cherokee Nation. The Worcester Academy was a Congregationalist School and the students paid tuition.
- Q. Do you remember the names of any of the teachers?
- A. Mr. and Mrs. S. S. Stevens, Miss Emma Breedlove, and Miss May Washborne.
- Q. When did you start to Willie Halsell College?
- A. In about 1893.
- Q. How was this school financed?

- A. It started as a Methodist school and then W. E. Halsell gave the land site to the Church in return for their naming it Willie Halsell, after his deceased daughter. He also gave contributions to the school.
- Q. Did the students pay tuition?
- A. Yes.
- Q. What kind of equipment did the school have?
- A. About the same as we have today. It was pretty well equipped. They had maps, chalk, blackboards, 6 big class rooms, the art room and the music room.
- Q. Were the art and music courses free?
- A. No, they had to pay extra for those things.
- Q. Are there any buildings left on the original site?
- A. No. John A. Wise salvaged the old Willie Halsell College and used part of the material to build a house on the site and also to build the present Post Office Building.
- Q. Did you chum with Will Rogers?
- A. Yes. I was with him just like the other boys at the college. I didn't think much about it for he wasn't any different from anyone else who went there. He was just an ordinary kid.
- Q. About how many students attended when you were there?
- A. I don't know. There were quite a lot. About 30 or 40 boys from over the state and a lot from around close here. They were mostly white students.
- Q. Did they offer any Public Speaking?
- A. No. They called it Elocution, then.
- Q. Did you have any sports?
- A. Yes. We had a good baseball team.
- Q. Did you have any other sports?
- A. No. We all rode calves for our sport at that time.
- Q. Do you remember many of the students?

- A. Well, there was Curtis Flippin, Will Rogers, Arthur Bynum, Sam Cobb, Marshall Stevens, Earl Walker, and a lot of them I don't even remember.
- Q. In 1893 who was the Superintendent and teachers?
- A. Superintendent Rowsey, Miss Crumes, Misses McClatcheys, Emmet Rowsey and I don't remember any others.
- Q. How long did you attend?
- A. About three years.
- Q. Did you live at the dormitory?
- A. No. I lived at home.
- Q. About how far did you live from school?
- A. About a mile and a half.

Diligence Leads to Victory.

Willie Halsell College,
W. E. ROWSEY, PRESIDENT.

REPORT OF *Henry S. Knight*

MONTH ENDING *1/23* 189*4*

DAYS ABSENT *0* TIMES TARDY *1*

DEPARTMENT *90*

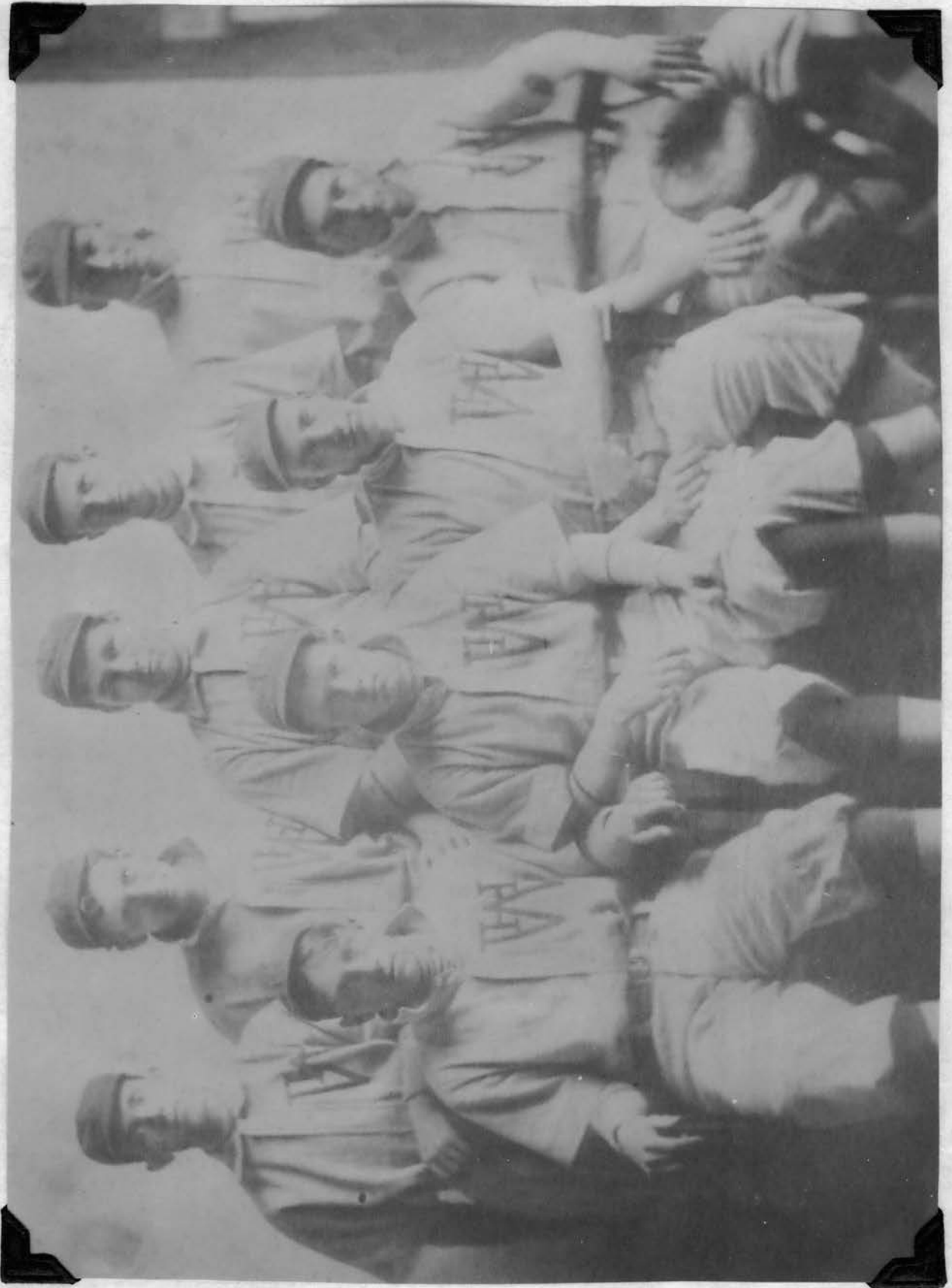
Constant Attendance is Necessary to Success in Study.

The Cooperation of Parents is Desired.

SCHOLARSHIP GRADES.	DAILY.	EXAMINATION.
English	<i>90</i>	
Latin		
Science		
Book-Keeping		
Arithmetic	<i>96</i>	
Algebra		
Geometry		
Trigonometry		
Psychology		
Reading	<i>86</i>	
Spelling	<i>89</i>	
Music		
Elocution		
Art		
<i>Geography</i>	<i>100</i>	
<i>General Knowledge</i>	<i>95</i>	

Parents are earnestly requested to examine this report carefully and to encourage the pupil to a greater effort by bestowing such praise or reproof as his standing deserves.

J. R. Knight Parents' Signature.



DEPOSITION

This is taken in the home of Hallie Thompson Wimer, May 24, 1938, Vinita, Oklahoma. Those present are: Hallie Thompson Wimer, Jim Wimer, L. F. George, and Lorraine Carselowey.

Q. What is your name?

A. Hallie Thompson Wimer.

Q. When did you come to Vinita?

A. About September, 1890.

Q. Did you teach at Willie Halsell College?

A. Yes, I taught the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th grades. It was more like a private school.

Q. How long did you teach there?

A. Two terms.

Q. How long was a term?

A. 9 months.

Q. Just like it is now?

A. Yes.

Q. Was it run by some denomination?

A. Yes, it was a Methodist School.

Q. Who was superintendent when you taught there?

A. W. L. Chapman.

Q. How many grades were offered at that time?

A. They had 12 grades. They had some very fine instructors. There was an art teacher from Texas, Miss Mattie Watkins. They had their brick kilns and they turned out some lovely china. Miss Cummings taught music, she was from Boston.

Q. How many teachers were there in the system?

- A. About 10 or 12.
- Q. Was this a boarding school?
- A. Yes. Some girls would come and stay at the boarding school until they finished.
- Q. Do you remember if they taught Latin?
- A. Yes, they taught Latin.
- Q. After you finished the 12 grades were you ready to teach?
- A. Yes. They gave diplomas. It was a very, very nice school, too. A well filled school.
- Q. What was the equipment like?
- A. They had real up-to-date teachers for that time. The seats were the same as they are now.
- Q. Did they teach Home Economics? Manual Training?
- A. No.
- Q. About how many students were there in your classes?
- A. There was about 49 or 50. They were all in one room.
- Q. Was there another school in Vinita at this time?
- A. Yes. Vinita Public School. I taught there before I went to Willie Halsell.
- Q. Where was it located?
- A. Where the North Ward School now stands. At that time it was a Cherokee School. They did not let anyone go there but Indians. White children had to pay tuition. I taught there 4 terms.
- Q. Do you remember the date you started teaching there?
- A. About September, 1890. I came right up here and started teaching.
- Q. Do you remember how much the tuition was for white children?
- A. \$2.00 a month.
- Q. How many teachers were there in the Public School?
- A. There were only two.

- Q. Were they promoted by terms?
- A. No. They were promoted as they finished the work.
- Q. Do you remember your salary in the Public School?
- A. It was \$40 per month and all tuition paid by whites.
- Q. Who paid your salary?
- A. The Cherokee Nation.
- Q. What qualifications did you have when you taught?
- A. At that time we would go take our examination--I went to school at Little Rock, Ark.
- Q. Did they require you to go through High School?
- A. I had to finish the 8th grade.
- Q. Did they require any extra work to teach in Oklahoma?
- A. No. I just brought my first grade certificate with me.
- Q. Who hired you?
- A. The school board.
- Q. Were most of the children Indians?
- A. They were of mixed blood.
- Q. How long did you teach in the Public School?
- A. About 4 terms, then Mr. Chapman came and employed me to teach at Willie Halsell College. That was about 1894 or 1895.
- Q. What was the salary you received at Willie Halsell?
- A. \$45 a month and board and room.

DEPOSITION

This is taken in the home of Circe Taylor, May 25, 1938, at Vinita, Oklahoma. Those present are: Finnie May Taylor Harmon, Jemina Taylor Skinner, L. F. George, and Lorraine Carselowey.

Q. What is your name?

A. Finnie May Taylor Harmon.

Q. When did you first attend Willie Halsell?

A. When it was first started. In 1889. There were three of us children who attended school there. Chester, Maggie, and myself. I went to Willie Halsell for two years while Professor Bishop was there and then I went one year to Worcester Academy. I went back to Willie Halsell when Professor Rowsey was there, that was about 1892. Chapman came in about 1895 or 1896. Then Professor Brewer followed Chapman.

Q. Where were you born?

A. I was born in this county.

Q. What other schools were here at this time?

A. The Worcester Academy and the Public School.

Q. Do you remember any of the teachers who taught at Willie Halsell?

A. When it started Prof. Bishop was the superintendent. Miss Selnick was the music teacher and Mrs. Bishop taught. There was nor art or elocution teacher when it first started.

Q. What kind of equipment did they have?

A. They had wood stoves, blackboards and chalk, maps and charts, no library and no carpets on the dormitory floors. The younger girls stayed about 8 girls to the room. We had an 8:30 chapel program, prayer, roll call, then the Superintendent would read from the Bible and we would sing.

Q. Were your instructors very thorough in your work?

A. Yes. We knew the fundamentals, reading, writing, and arithmetic, thoroughly before we passed to another book.

Q. When Professor Rowsey came, did your course of study change any?

A. We had a larger faculty and more subjects. Miss Lela Crooms taught art, Miss Rose Coppedge taught elocution, Miss Georgia Trint taught music, and the two Misses McClatcheys taught piano, and then there were Miss Glover, Emmet Rowsey and Professor Dugger.

Q. Did you have any training in Glee Clubs?

A. No. We didn't have anything like that. We had Literary on Friday afternoon. We would have programs, recitations, debates, dialogues and the boys played baseball afterwards. The girls jumped rope for their exercise.

Q. Did they have recess from your studies?

A. Yes. About 10:30 in the morning and about 2:30 in the afternoon.

Q. All grades?

A. Yes.

Q. Did you know John Oskinson?

A. Yes, he graduated the second year I went there.

Q. Did the students, at any time you went there, wear uniforms?

A. Yes. The second year Professor Rowsey was there we wore dark blue serge uniforms. They were dresses with eton jackets with black satin down the front of the jacket and the sleeves were trimmed with the satin, and we wore dark straight brimmed sailor hats with a ribbon around it.

CHAPTER V

I SUMMARY

- A. Present day influence of early school.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY

I Present day influence of early school.

After a close study of the formation of this educational institution, the hardships encountered, and the progressive attitude in spite of opposition, we are sure that Oklahoma's educational life would have suffered a severe loss without the Church Schools as well as others.

The high religious ideals inculcated there have doubtless spread in as many homes as the former students of Willie Halsell College have founded.

The thoroughness of the courses, and the careful instruction has gone with the students and helped them to be better citizens. Some of the early students are among Vinita's most prominent men. Bank presidents, explorers, writers, and movie stars have been the product of Willie Halsell College.

Usually the college authorities, by wise and patient oversight, won these scholars to obedience and loyalty--life's essentials--and certain stress was placed on such points as personal cleanliness, politeness, attendance at church and other high ideals.

The instructors in charge of this college have evidenced that they left the impress of a personality and culture that are the making of a worthwhile citizenry.

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- Funk, Ben. Reunion Notes, Vinita Leader, 1933.
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- Owens, Ludie H., Letter to John Oskinson, 1933.
- Rogers, Will. Telegram to Earl Walker. August 26, 1933.
- Wilson, Bertha Gilstrap--Letter to Vinita Daily Journal, Vinita Journal, 1937.

PERSONS INTERVIEWED

- Cobb, Sam, City Traffic Patrolman, Vinita, Oklahoma
- Collins, Charlie, Cashier of First National Bank, Vinita.
- Dupree, Wright, County Clerk of Craig County, Vinita, Okla.
- Garrison, Nannie, Teacher of Vinita, Oklahoma.
- Harmon, Finnie May Taylor, Citizen of Oklahoma.
- Knight, Henry S., Citizen of Oklahoma.
- Kornegay, C. S., Attorney-at-Law, Vinita, Oklahoma

Marks, Mrs. L. W., Citizen of Vinita, Oklahoma.

Stevens, Lily Burns, Citizen of Vinita, Oklahoma.

Stevens, Marshall, Paymaster, W.P.A. Projects, Vinita, Okla.

Wimer, Hallie Thompson, Citizen of Vinita, Oklahoma.

Wimer, Jim, Citizen of Vinita, Oklahoma.

MAPS AND CHARTS

Map showing Craig County.

Picture of Willie Halsell College.

Picture of student body at Willie Halsell College.

Table I

Grade Card of former student

Picture of Willie Halsell Baseball Team.

STRAITMORE PARCHMENT

100% P.A.C. U.S.A.

TYPIST

Lorraine Carselowey

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