

BAPTIST MISSION

#442

The Removal Group under the leadership of Rev. Jesse Bushyhead and Rev. Evan Jones settled at what was to be called Breadtown north of present Westville. Many of the emigrants had been members of the Baptist Mission at Valletown in the old Cherokee Nation. They continued as a church and mission in the new location. Rev. Evan Jones and Rev. Jesse Bushyhead were associated with the work, which was carried on by John Buttrick Jones, son of Rev. Evan Jones after the deaths of the former leaders. It was moved to Tahlequah in 1867. Professor A.C. Bacone became associated with the institution in 1880. Indian University became an offshoot of the mission with the university (later named Bacone College) being moved to Muskogee in 1885. Baptist Mission continued to operate in Tahlequah under the direction of Rev. Daniel Rodgers. The mission was housed in a building located on the site of the Tahlequah Junior High School and the Wyly House, which is being restored.

REV. EVAN JONES

Rev. Evan Jones was born in Wales May 14, 1788. He was a member of the Church of England and the Methodist Church as a young man. He came to the United States in 1821, stopping briefly in Philadelphia. While in Philadelphia, he joined the Baptist Church becoming a missionary a month later. He arrived at Valletown, in September of 1821. Jesse Bushyhead, Lewis Downing and Charles Thompson were among his converts and pupils. He and Rev. Jesse Bushyhead led a party of emigrants during the Removal.

The "Cherokee Advocate" reported that Rev. Jones preached to 10 or 12 congregations with a membership of 500-600, most full-bloods. The churches of Bushyheadville, Flint, Tinsawatter Delaware and Verdigris were among his pastorates.

Rev. Jones was a devout abolitionist and introduced a bill to free the slaves, but it was vetoed by Chief John Ross. In spite of the difference of opinion, and the fact that Chief Ross was a Methodist, the two were closely aligned politically, and Rev. Jones had a great deal of influence.

"The American Magazine" gives the following tribute concerning Rev. Jones: "He was a man of scholarly attainment and acquired the Cherokee language and spoke it very freely. The confidence in which he was held among the Cherokees, who venerated him as a father, was never impaired. Even in the hours of his last illness, they came from far and near to hear a few words of comfort in their native tongue from their revered friend." He preached until his death August 18, 1872. He is buried in the Tahlequah Cemetery.