

Copy of Oklahoma's First Newspaper-- Dated 1844--Found by Westville Couple

By Christine Foreman
Staff Correspondent

WESTVILLE, Okla. (Special)—The first copy of Oklahoma's first paper has been found.

Mr. and Mrs. T. Lacie of Westville have found a copy of the "Cherokee Messenger" dated August, 1844, among their possessions.

It was at the Old Baptist mission, located about three miles north of here, that this first paper was printed.

Here's Story

Here is the story of the Old Baptist mission and how it came to print Oklahoma's first paper.

The mission was established over a century ago by a group of Cherokee Indians who suffered hardships when they were forced to leave their homes in Georgia on the long trek which was called "The Trail of Tears" to the Indian territory.

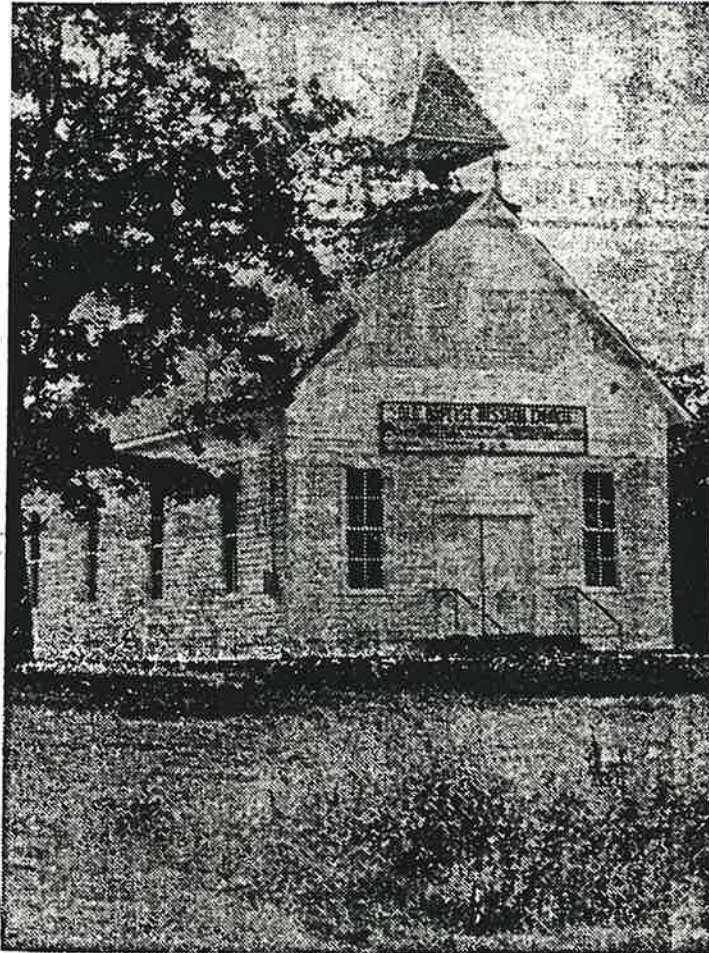
The Cherokees were forced to sign a treaty with the United States at the Cherokee Capital, New Echota, Ga., in 1835. By the terms of this treaty, they surrendered all of their land and property in the East. But, when Chief John Ross, the leader of the great majority of the Fullblood members of the Nation who were opposed to leaving their homes, refused to recognize the treaty, they delayed their departure for three years.

However, in the winter of 1838-39, they were forced at the point of bayonets to leave their homes and begin their tragic journey to the Indian territory. During this journey, one-fourth of the immigrants died and were buried along this "Trail of Tears", included among them the wife of Chief John Ross.

Settled Near Westville

In 1839, Reverend Jesse Bushyhead, a prominent Cherokee and a Baptist minister, lead a contingent of 1,000 immigrants to the Indian territory, north of Westville, and settled the community which surrounded the site where the Baptist Mission now stands. After shelter and food was provided for their families a log cabin church-house was built.

Some years later the log structure burned, but as quickly as possible the frame building was built a few hundred yards north of where the log cabin was located. It is this building which still stands and where services have been held



THE OLD BAPTIST MISSION, located about three miles north of Westville, Okla., is one of the state's historic spots.

down through the years.

When Reverend Evan Jones, founder of the Baptist Missions in The Cherokee Nation in the East, came to the Indian territory, Mr. Bushyhead gave him his home at Baptist, where the Cherokee Female Seminary was established.

In 1843, the Baptist Mission Board of Boston, Mass., bought and set up a printing press at this mission.

It was here that the first paper was printed in Oklahoma, The Cherokee Messenger, in August, 1844, one month before the Cherokee Advocate was printed at Tahlequah.

The first copy of the Messenger has been found in Westville among the possessions of Mr. and Mrs. A. T. Lacie. This paper consisted of sixteen pages and was printed in the Cherokee language, as most of the work of the Baptist Mission was among the fullblood Cherokees.

Through the efforts of the Missionaires and members of the dif-

temperance societies were organized.

In 1867, the mission was moved to Tahlequah, the capital of the Cherokee Nation. Bacone College at Muskogee is the outgrowth of the school at the Old Baptist Mission church and the Tahlequah Mission — but the Missionary Baptist church near Westville holds the spotlight because it pioneered the way, and denotes the 'End of The Trail 'of Tears.

In February, 1937, Governor E. W. Marland selected a committee to designate and mark places of interest to early Oklahoma History and one of the famous sights which was selected was "the Old Baptist Mission".

The little white mission which is still the church home for a number of the people who has been repainted and repaired. The pastor is Rev. C. E. McCormack of Stilwell; and the Deacon Board consists of J. H. Langley, Ernest Woods, L. W. Wadley, A. C. Williams, Everett Willis and L. L.

SERMON OUTLINES
ILLUSTRATIONS
STUDY BOOKS AT
DICK'S BIBLE STORE

The Church that Became a College

BY LUCYLLA LAMB

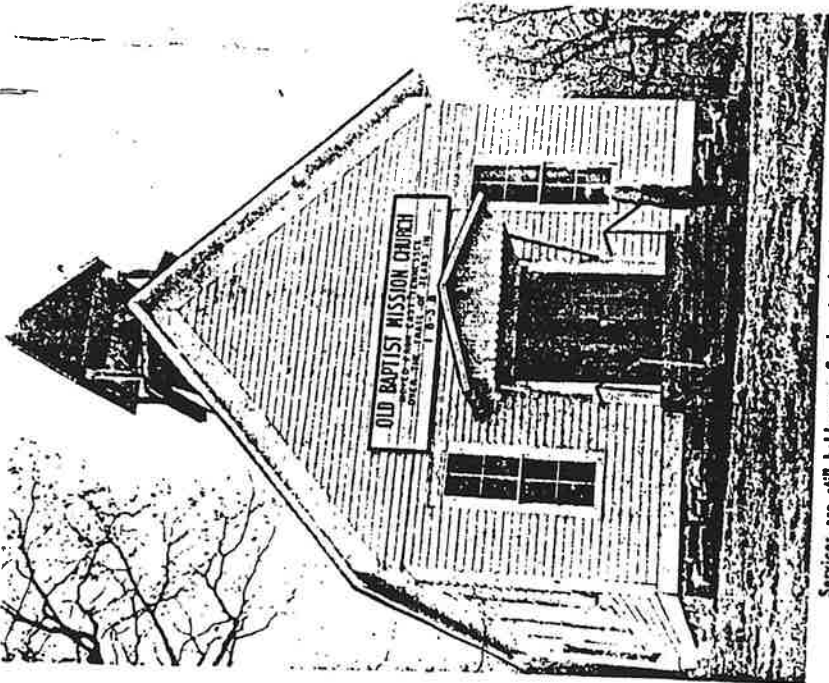
Led by Rev. Jesse Bushyhead and an assistant, Rev. Evan Jones, one of the first contingents of Cherokee Indians exited their long trek over the Trail of Tears to Indian Territory on Oct. 9, 1838.

Months later, at the end of the long trail, they built a church. It still stands there today, four miles northwest of Westville, on the site chosen by Rev. Bushyhead in 1839. Many of the old beams are still visible in the Baptist Mission Church. In fact, the basic structure remains pretty much as it was built in the 1800's. Sunday school and church services are conducted each Sunday by E. T. Oule of Westville and Elder Ford of Stilwell.

The first periodical ever to be published and distributed in Oklahoma was printed here. Rev. Jones was editor of the paper, The Messenger, printed principally in the Cherokee language.

On this site, Rev. Bushyhead also established a school for the Cherokees. It flourished, and in 1867 Rev. John B. Jones, a son of Evan, moved it to Tahlequah, the Cherokee capital.

When Rev. Almon C. Bacone came to Indian Territory to act as director of the school, he petitioned the board of trustees to open the classes to members of all tribes. Thus it was that in 1880 the school, so modestly begun near Westville, became a university for the education of all Indians. In 1885, with permission of the Creek tribal council, the school was again moved, this time to the outskirts of Muskogee, where it became known as Bacone College. Today, Bacone is the largest Indian college in the world, famed for its high educational standards and for its artists and musicians.



Services are still held every Sunday in the old Baptist Mission Church. Built in the 1800's, it's located northwest of Westville.



Historical marker beside the highway near Westville tells story of old Baptist mission.

REVEREND JOHN BUTTRICK JONES

John Buttrick Jones, the son of Evan and Elizabeth Lanigan Jones, was born at Valleytown in the old Cherokee Nation December 24, 1824. He came to the Cherokee Nation West with his father in 1839. He attended Baptist Mission, taught by his father, and graduated from the University of Rochester in 1855. He was ordained a minister July 14, 1855 and married Jennie Smith in October of 1855. He then returned to Baptist Mission where he assisted his father.

During the Civil War, John was Chaplain in the Third Regiment of the Indian Home Guards, a Cherokee regiment of the Union Army. He signed the Treaty of Washington July 19, 1866.

John and his father were a dominant force in the political affairs of the Cherokee Nation. The full-bloods especially rallied behind their leadership. The Downing Party, of which they were the leaders, elected every principal chief with the exception of Dennis W. Bushyhead after the Civil War. John was one of the organizers of the Keetoowah Society, which was organized in 1859. The Jones families were admitted to full tribal membership by the National Council in 1859. John moved Baptist Mission from Breadtown to Tahlequah in 1859 to be near the center of the Cherokee Nation.

John died in Denver, Colorado June 13, 1876, and he as well as his

Baptist Mission history told

(Editor's note: the following was submitted by Mavis Doering.)

The following is an interview of John A. Alberty on March 9, 1937, and can be found in the Indian Archives Section of the Oklahoma State Historical Building, Oklahoma City, Volume 1, Page 69-71 of the Indian-Pioneer History. THE BAPTIST MISSION, THREE MILES NORTH OF WHAT IS NOW WESTVILLE, OKLAHOMA.

About the year 1839, about three miles north of the present city of Westville, Oklahoma, in Sec. 19, T. 13 N., R 26 E and at

the east foot of the picturesque little Bushyhead mountain, which was named in honor of Rev. Jesse Bushyhead, there was established a mission known as "The Baptist Mission".

Much wisdom may be seen in locating a mission here when we consider that many of the Cherokees from the East first entered their new country near this place; for many of them came, by the way of Fayetteville, Arkansas and the Bushyhead mountain served as a point to guide them to their destination. Too, it may

be seen that this mountain was a guiding point for the Cherokees to get to the Mission for rations, for a place to trade, to worship, etc.

This Mission was established by Rev. Jesse Bushyhead, who was also very ably assisted by Rev. Evan and Mrs. Elizabeth Lonigan Jones, John Butterick Jones, their son, who was their interpreter. He later became a Baptist minister and labored among the Cherokees. It is said that John Butterick Jones was highly educated and that the Jones' published a monthly Missionary Paper about the year 1844 but that only a few issues were published.

This mission did much good in the way of rationing the poor Cherokees upon and after their arrival in the new country, for it was here that they came for some time and always found food for their families and themselves. For this reason in the early days of this country, Baptist Mission was popularly known as "Bread Town".

The main outstanding objects in establishing this mission were: to teach Chris-

tianity to the Cherokees, teach them to read and write and become better citizens. To a great extent all these objects were accomplished as has been told by some of the old people who have been told the early history by their fore-parents.

It is said that at this Mission was kept a school, a Sunday School and a very good store or trading post. It was really the real social center for the surrounding country for a great many years.

"Rev. Jesse Bushyhead was one of the leaders of the Ross party, holding many of the public offices, being Chief Justice when he died July 19, 1844. His disinterestedness in the feudal and political troubles among his people gained him a peculiar distinction of being the only man of any consequence among the Cherokees who habitually traveled among his people in the troublesome times, or period of from 1830-1844, unarmed except, as he said with his Bible."

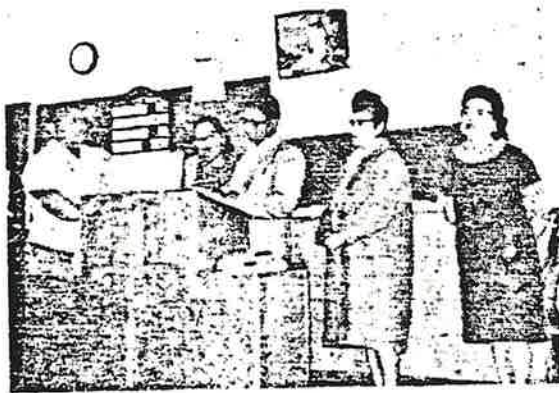
(This last paragraph is quoted from "Starr's History, pages 7779.)



Trail of Tears Baptist Church



South of Watts, Okla. is Breadtown, Baptist Mission and School, begun by Rev. Jesse Bushyhead.



Singing both in Cherokee and English, worship is still an important part of daily life. Harmonizing in the Cherokee language on the third Sunday sing at the Old Baptist Mission Church are Mr. and Mrs. Ned Watt, Mr. and Mrs. Dave Hammer and Mrs. Florence Phillips.

The Old Mission Baptist Church is listed in the 1836 register of the Triennial Baptist Convention which met in Richmond, Virginia. The first order of business was presenting the right hand of fellowship to England's delegate and the second order was the same to Cherokee O-go-na-ye. Only the message of O-go-na-ye is recorded: "We are thankful for what the good God has done for us. We teach our children the ways of God, we visit our sick and pray, pointing them to Jesus Christ. Once all was darkness but now we live in hope." Missionary Evan Jones interpreted and later came to Old Baptist Mission, also.

The register lists J. Bushyhead, ordained Cherokee minister, and states, "The church is near the eastern boundary of Indian Territory, with 23 native church members. The school has 20 scholars that are taught in English with Vineyard, Washington County, Arkansas as post office." Describing the country hereabouts, Issac McCoy's Annual Register of Indian Affairs says: "In general character the land is high and undulating. The soil is generally very fertile—it is watered by numerous rivers, creeks and rivulets, none of which are navigable. Timber is scarce, a serious defect..." This was the land that supported Rev. Bushyhead who became a chosen delegate from the Cherokee Nation to Washington D. C. in 1839. At the time of his death it was said of him that his only weapon was his Bible.

The Old Baptist Mission became a church represented in the Fayetteville Baptist Association where the original minutes are retained by the Calvary Baptist Church of Fayetteville and printed portions by the First Baptist Church of Springdale, Arkansas. Some are as early as 1840 with Mt. Zion Association. Record is given of "Western Benton County being destitute of the gospel" and recommendation given for a "Riding missionary to ride and preach." This must have been effective, for many of Western Benton County churches were constituted between 1868 and 1875.

Today Cherokee Baptists and others gather in the white building to sing from the regular books, with the piano. But little urging is required for using the small gray Cherokee hymnals. Words only are printed in their language. The hymns are some of the same ones used by Rev. Jesse Bushyhead such as "Blest Be The Tie That Binds"