



#44's

Baptist Mission School

Baptist Mission School students with approximately 36 students

Photo Courtesy of A. D. Lester

Editor's note: We are most happy to print the article submitted by A. D. Lester on the Cherokee Baptist Mission. We will run this article in consecutive issues until completed in its entirety.

We feel like this article is well worth reading and offers much history to our readers.

By A. D. Lester

The Baptist Mission Church House, of which the Cherokees called "Meeting House," was used for a church and school. All church buildings erected at the Cherokee Baptist Mission Station, established by Evan Jones, Baptist Missionary, have been used as a church and school house, including the present church house, located in section 13 about 1/4 mile from the first mission station site. There were no section lines or sections until after Oklahoma became a state. So, there were none at the time (1841) the mission station was established. The first building to be erected after Evan Jones arrived, was constructed of brick, and used for church and school.

There has been two signs over the door of the present Baptist Mission Church, which contradicted each other. After the second sign was placed over the door, I decided, if possible, to find which one was correct. The first stated the church came from Geor-

gia. Which sign is now (1971) over the door. After a long (several years) tedious search, I have been fortunate in finding undisputable facts about this controversial church, that now stands by highway 59, about 4 miles northwest of Westville, Oklahoma. I may mention some of the articles that have been published about this church which are not correct, but I will not mention all of them.

The first school building was erected somewhere, not far from the present church house, and home of Jesse Bushyhead, of which he named "Pleasant Hill." Daniel S. Butrick, in his Journal said the following about the first school building.

On the way (Butrick was on his way to Battle Prairie) spent a night at Brother Bushyhead's, and as the neighbors had erected a school house, and had no teacher, I concluded to assist my dear wife in the school there for three months, if she was willing to engage in it commencing on the last Monday of this month. End of quote. neighbors has erected a school building. As there had not been school at this place, over a year had elapsed since the Cherokees arrived at the site that was to be a Baptist Mission Station, and no attempt

was made to establish a school, until the neighbors erected this building in April, 1840. Evan Jones after he and his family arrived at

the place where he was to establish a Baptist Mission Station, mentioned this school in a letter to the Baptist Board located at Boston, Mass, dated September 1841, in which he stated: "D. S. Butrick of the mission of the American Board, taught a school here, a few months.... Thus we find the first school taught in the present Baptist Mission area was taught by a Presbyterian Missionary rather than a Baptist, even though it was a Baptist community. If this particular school had a name, neither Butrick or Bushyhead made mention of it. Both men, however, are referred to Bushyhead's home as having the name, "Pleasant Hill." In his Journal Butrick stated he and wife were living in a cabin that belonged to Brother Bushyhead. I quote Butrick saying:

"Monday, spent in packing up our furniture to move to Mr. Jesse Bushyhead's. Monday (one week later) we proceeded to Mr. Bushyhead's, and in the afternoon went with him to the school house..... Tuesday, Rode 7 miles to get spelling books but found none.Wednesday, May 6, 1840, we commenced school having but eight scholars.... Sabbath, May 10, 1840. In the morning we opened the Sabbath School. Brother Bushyhead taught in Cherokee." End of quote.

Baptist Mission

The Cherokee Nation News, Tuesday, June 8, 197

By A. D. Lester

Continued From Last Week

"Thursday July 23, 1840. This brings the last of our school. A number of the neighbors came in and heard the children read, and then brother Bushyhead talked and prayed with the scholars and we dismissed." Thus came the close of the first school only a few miles from the present Westville, Oklahoma, and also the close of the first school taught in the area of the present Baptist Mission Meeting House.

It was June 25, 1841, when Evan Jones and family arrived at the place he planned, (before going for his family) to establish a Baptist Mission Station and school. On September 13, 1841, Evan Jones written, what I call his school letter, to the Baptist Board, at Boston, of which I quote in part:

"I have deferred writing on the subject of schools....I find that education is much more highly appreciated than at any former period....When we arrived, we found the people in full expectation that we would have made arrangements for school....We could have immediately have half a dozen schools filled, if there were teachers to take charge of them. In this immediate vicinity there are forty or fifty children who speak English, and whose parents are exceedingly anxious to have them educated.....

This would be a good location for a permanent Seminary; with competent teachers....If a respectful female department could be had.... Female character here, needs great care and attention in forming, and society has reached a point at which such effort are in encouraging degree appreciated.

Bushyhead offers to sell his home to the Baptist Board, and Jones states: He (Bushyhead) proposes to let us have the buildings, which he now occupies, with 30 acres of

land, for Five Hundred Dollars, or without the land, for Three Hundred and Forty Dollars. The following is a rough inventory of the property.

One hewed log cabin, with stone chimney, floored above and below, board steps for stairs. Shingled roof porches, back and front with clap-board roof, loose plank floors. Two low cabins, stick and clay chimneys, clap-board roofs, rough plank floors below. One round log cabin, wooden chimney. rough plank floor below, clap-board roof. One large round log stable; by moving and adding a few more logs, would answer for a small barn, clap-board roof. One smaller stable, sufficient for our use. Two small old cabins (would do for hog pens). One good low hewed log cabin, (without chimney) clap-board roof, rough plank below. A well with wooden pump in the yard. 3 Acres cleared land, used as garden and vegetable patch, rail fence round this and two horse lots. 30 Acres of land, under cultivation. These improvements are fully worth Eight hundred dollars, could readily be sold for that sum or more. All this would come to much less money than we could build them for. End of quote from letter.

The Baptist Board purchased the buildings, but they yet was in need of a suitable school building and teachers. Thus a building of brick was erected. As to where the brick came from I do not know. However, there are two sites east of the present Westville, where bricks were manufactured, and there could have been others places. Seemingly, the Cherokees were more familiar with using brick than we might have thought they were. Writing from Valley Towns, North Carolina, on

September 27, 1821, Humphrey Posey who was in charge of building the Valley Town

Baptist Mission Station at that place, said: Our school is doing well; 40 Cherokees

are still improving very fast...."We have bricks burnt and one chimney started." (From History of North Carolina

Baptists, by Paschal). Thus, the Cherokees were

burning and using bricks as early as 1821, and perhaps earlier.

My first knowledge of a brick building at the site of the present Baptist Mission Church, was when I read a copy of the report of P. M. Butler, Cherokee Indian agent. This report is rather lengthy, thus

I shall only quote a part of it, which follows.

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Cherokee Baptist Mission

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Continued Next Week

Brother Bushyhead, as Buttrick calls him, had no church to pastor at this time, as the two Baptist churches that came with Jones and Bushyhead were not established as churches. But were permanently located soon after Evan Jones arrived with his family.

I know not the exact location of the school building as it was so far from Bushyhead's cabins, were Buttrick and his dear wife were staying that Mrs. Buttrick rode horseback to the school house, which Buttrick stated the following:

"Wednesday 8th 1840, This morning, as we started to school the horse was frightened and by a sudden start threw my dear wife almost instantly upon her face. I was walking just before the horse, when I helped her up, the blood ran freely from her face....After she got to the house and washed the blood from her face we rubbed it with opodeldoc and she remained at home...."

The medicine 'opodeldoc,' was a soap liniment. Buttrick further in his Journal says they were having upwards of 50 scholars. He describes the last day of school in the following words:

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