

REPORT OF THE REVEREND R. M. LOUGHRIDGE
TO THE BOARD OF FOREIGN MISSIONS
REGARDING THE CREEK MISSION

By Carolyn Thomas Foreman

The Reverend R. M. Loughridge, on February 17, 1841, sent an account of his trip to the Creek country from Eutaw, Alabama, to the Board of Foreign Missions. This article is largely written from a typescript in Grant Foreman's Collection.

Mr. Loughridge wrote that he arrived at the Choctaw Agency, about sixteen miles southwest of Fort Smith, on November 27, 1840. He was very kindly received and entertained by Major William Armstrong, the Superintendent of Indian affairs for the Western Territory. Armstrong appeared to be interested in the success of a mission among the Creeks and gave Mr. Loughridge letters to Colonel James Logan, their agent, and General Roly McIntosh, head chief of the nation, in which he warmly urged the importance of having missionaries and mission schools among them.

Logan was away from the agency but was expected soon. Loughridge awaited his arrival so that there would be no hitch in the establishment of the mission. He spent a few days very profitably at Dwight and Park Hill missions among the Cherokees, the missionaries giving him a hearty welcome and rejoicing that another effort was being made to carry the Gospel to these much neglected Indians. Loughridge's journal reads as follows:

Dec. 6, 1841. Creek Nation, six miles south-west of Fort Gibson. The agent still being absent, I concluded to visit the chiefs alone and see what could be effected in the establishment of the mission. Called upon Mr. Lewis, one of the chiefs, and also upon Mr. Benjamin Marshall, an Indian of considerable information, and of great influence in national affairs.¹ They appeared quite friendly, but gave me but little encouragement to hope for the success of the mission.

¹ Benjamin Marshall, one of the most prominent men in the Creek Nation, held the position of treasurer, without bond, for forty years. He was intrusted with treaty-making with the United States concerning the removal of his people from Alabama to the West. He probably owned more slaves than any other Creek. "He was a man of unblemished character and one of the most far-seeing statesmen the Creek people ever had, and one of the chief councilors of the nation." (D. C. Gideon, *Indian Territory* [New York, 1901], pp. 352-53). In 1835, Marshall brought a small party of the Creeks to the Verdigris, where 630, after a frightful winter journey, had arrived the year before.

Dec. 7. Proceeded to the house of General Roly McIntosh,² in company with Mr. Benjamin Marshall, who acted as my interpreter. He met very friendly and invited me into his house. I then made known to him the object of my visit, and read to him the letter addressed to the chiefs by the Board, and also the letter of Major Armstrong to himself. He appeared pleased with the sentiments of both; but declined giving an answer respecting the mission, without consulting the other chiefs; especially as they expected soon to hold a general council to receive the annuity from the government of the United States, when an opportunity would be given me to lay the subject before them.

He suggested, that in case the council consented to your proposition, a written agreement should be drawn up; so that all misunderstanding in the future should be avoided.

He appeared much interested for the welfare of his people, and stated that during the past year they had been much healthier than heretofore since their removal;—that they were scattering out more and selecting more healthy and convenient situations;— that they had good land, and hoped in future would have good health. He appeared particularly desirous to see them raising cotton and making their own cloth.

Dec. 8. North Canadian, forty miles south-west of McIntosh's. Being under the necessity of remaining several weeks for the meeting of the council, I continued to spend the time within the nation; and improve it to the best advantage, by becoming acquainted with the Indians, and especially the chiefs, and urging the importance of a mission amongst them.

With this end in view, I set out this morning from the Arkansas river, forty miles distant, to visit the chiefs of the Canadian. Passed over a vast prairie of about thirty-five miles in width, and interrupted only occasionally by a range of trees. It is said to extend west, almost or quite to the Rocky Mountains. . . .

Dec. 11. Tuckabachee Council House,³ twelve miles southwest of N[orth] Fork. Met several of the principal chiefs of this part of the nation today, in accordance with a notice sent them yesterday. About thirty other Indians also attended. Our consultation was considerably protracted. No direct opposition was made, nor any opinion respecting the mission avowed; but from the manner in which the imprudence of one of their coloured preachers was spoken of, it was evident that one or two were at least not anxious to have missionaries amongst them.⁴ Some of the others, however, appeared very much in favour of it. The decision of the subject was, however, deferred to the meeting of the general council.

This part of the nation is the most desirable situation for a mission—that I have seen. It is well watered; the land is fertile, high, and rolling, and densely populated. It must be more healthy than that on the Arkansas, although not so conveniently situated in other respects.

² Roly McIntosh, head chief of the Lower Creeks, was the son of a Scotch trader and a Creek woman. He was a half brother of Gen. William McIntosh, and he married Susanna, his brother's widow. He occupied the position of head chief until 1859, a short time before his death in Texas where he had gone as a refugee during the Civil War. He was buried about four miles from Jefferson, Texas, on the Drew plantation.—Grant Foreman, *Advancing the Frontier* (Norman, 1933), p. 136, n. 30.

³ The town of Tuckabatchee was on the main Canadian River.

⁴ The Creeks had a very unhappy experience with their first missionaries and for years they refused to admit any more to their nation.

Dec. 15. Verdigris river; five miles south-west of Fort Gibson. Returned from the Canadian today. Met with the agent, Colonel Logan, who has just arrived at this place on a steam-boat, from New Orleans. He came prepared for the payment of the annuity; and the 5th Jan. next has been fixed upon for the meeting of council to receive it.

Dec. 17. Having now seen the principal chiefs, I shall be under the necessity of waiting patiently for the council. Dr. [W. M.] Anderson, who teaches the only school in the nation, has kindly invited me to make his house my home, during my stay.⁵ He is employed by the government, and appears well qualified for teaching. His school at this season of the year is generally small owing to bad weather, and the attention paid to Christmas holidays. I understand, however, that in the spring and summer seasons it is quite full. His usefulness among them appears very much circumscribed for want of house room.

Jan. 6th, 1842. The council met today, but owing to the absence of the principal chiefs on the Canadian, it will not be, properly speaking, a national council. I felt much disappointment on account of the absence of those chiefs, but, they were particular to send me word by their delegates, that they were pleased with my proposition of establishing a mission school. . . .

Jan. 11. Have been waiting several days to present the cause of missions to the council, but the business of their annuity engrosses their whole attention. Having now completed the distribution, however, they promise to give me a hearing tomorrow, and for that purpose have appointed a special meeting at the house of their agent.

The evils of intemperance are still to be seen in an alarming degree, notwithstanding the laudable efforts of our government to check them. The chiefs themselves have also passed very good laws on the subject,⁶ but they are not strictly enforced. I saw a considerable number of intoxicated Indians today, and understood that one was killed last evening in a drunken frolic.

⁵ Superintendent Armstrong reported to T. Hartley Crawford, Commissioner of Indian affairs, September 10, 1842: "The Creeks have but one school under treaty stipulation in their own country. This is taught by Dr. Anderson." According to Mr. Loughridge, "There was but one little day school in all the country, and it was a mere sham. Dr. Anderson, employed by the U. S. Agent, was nominally the teacher. . . . But it amounted to very little. It was, indeed, very much like the counterfeit money the Doctor afterwards made on a large scale and tried to pass off on the Indians, on account of which he was imprisoned at Little Rock, Ark."

Agent James L. Dawson reported in 1843 that the leading men of the Lower Creeks (General Roly McIntosh, Benjamin Marshall and others) had expressed a wish to have a preacher of some denomination among them. If they succeeded in enlarging their school fund Creek Agent Dawson thought it would be a decided advantage for the Creeks to establish a manual labor school, with a minister at the head of it.—*Report Commissioner Indian Affairs, 1842, p. 505; Ibid., 1843, p. 351.*

⁶ The Creek country was inundated with liquor from Arkansas; this was contrary to the U. S. Intercourse Acts, but little effort was made to enforce them. The Indians resented that they were discriminated against in the matter of drinking since all white men, except the missionaries, considered liquor a necessity. Angie Debo, *The Road to Disappearance* (Norman, 1941), p. 122.

Jan. 12. Attended the trial of an Indian for murder. After considerable deliberation he was cleared, as it appeared he was not a quarrelsome man—had killed the other in self-defence, and the relatives of the deceased were willing for him to be released, which are the conditions of their written law on the subject.⁷

After the trial was over, the chiefs proceeded to the Creek agency, where we had a long intercourse respecting the establishment of a mission amongst them.

Mr. Loughridge gave an account of the agreement between the chiefs and himself, then proceeds:

Such are the conditions on which a mission may be established among the Creeks, and although the privileges granted are not as extensive as we could wish, yet considering the difficulties which have occurred amongst them on this subject, they are perhaps as extensive as could be expected; and I have no doubt, *more liberties* will be granted, and every barrier to the spread of the Gospel removed, as soon as the chiefs have confidence in the missionaries, and are convinced by their prudent and consistent course in every respect, that their sole aim is to benefit their people.

They do not wish many missionaries to come out at first, that they may see how they will like their proceedings; they therefore limit the mission to *four men and their wives*;⁸ but if the school should *need more* they will then admit others.

They are very anxious to have a *boarding school*, and in fact this is the only kind they seem to have under consideration, and the only kind too, I am persuaded, that will effect much good amongst them.

They also wanted to know if we would not find *clothing* for the orphan children that would come to us. They gave full permission to open and close the school with prayer, and to teach the Bible and whatever books the missionaries may think best.⁹

Mr. Loughridge, having been granted permission to establish a school by the National Council, selected a station at Coweta, the town of the old chief, Roley McIntosh. There he and his bride settled in a small cabin which he bought for ten dollars. He built a log house to use for school and church and his wife commenced to teach fifteen or twenty children. Mr. Loughridge named the station "Koweta Mission."

⁷ *Constitution and Laws of the Muskogee Nation* (Saint Louis, 1880), Article I, Section 4: "Where a person not engaged in an unlawful act, shall be in imminent danger of loss of life or bodily injury at the hands of another unlawfully, and shall, in self defense, be forced to kill or maim such person, such killing or maiming shall not be considered unlawful."

⁸ Teachers employed in the Creek Nation from 1841 to 1850 were: Rev. R. M. Loughridge, 1841-61; Mrs. Olivia D. Hills Loughridge, 1842-45; Mrs. Mary Avery Loughridge, 1846-50; Rev. Edmund McKinney, 1843; Mrs. McKinney, 1843; Miss Nancy Hoyt, 1849-50; Rev. John Limber, 1844-45.

⁹ *The Mission Chronicle*, New York, Vol. X, No. 6 (June, 1842), pp. 170-72.

On July 4, 1842, the Reverend Edmund McKinney and his family arrived at the station, having been sent by the Board, and they started house keeping in a small cabin. During the autumn and winter Loughridge built a large log house, one story and a half high, with seven rooms; some of the Creeks who lived at a distance induced the minister to take their children into the school as boarders and the parents promised to pay all expenses.

The Board also sent out the Reverend John Limber to assist in the work. He was a highly educated young man, a good preacher, and Loughridge said he had an amiable disposition. Limber becoming discouraged in the work among the Indians, removed to Texas. After several years he went to Kentucky where he married, and he and his bride started down the Mississippi aboard a steamboat bound for New Orleans. During a stop at that city the minister went uptown to buy some books and he was never heard of after he left the book shop. Mrs. Limber waited until all hope of finding her husband was given up, then she continued to Texas and taught the school her husband had been engaged to teach.

On January 5, 1845, a church was organized with three members, and on September 17 of that year Mrs. Loughridge died suddenly, leaving two young children. Miss Nancy Thompson, of the Cherokee Park Hill Mission, went to the rescue and cared for the babies until Elizabeth Loughridge, the sister of the missionary, arrived from Mississippi to take charge.

On December 4, 1846, Loughridge was married to Miss Mary Avery of Conway, Massachusetts, formerly a teacher at Park Hill Mission.

Walter Lowrie, secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions, visited Koweta Mission in April, 1847, and entered into an agreement with the Creek chiefs for the enlargement of the station from 29 pupils to 40 boarders to be sustained in part by the national school fund. It was also decided to build a larger mission, and a contract was made for the erection of a brick building at Tullahassee for the accommodation of eighty students, and in 1848 Loughridge was appointed the superintendent. He was replaced at Koweta by Hamilton Balentine. The next year Mr. Balentine and Miss Anna Hoyt, a granddaughter of George Lowrey, second chief of the nation, were married.¹⁰

¹⁰ Hamilton Balentine, a native of Pennsylvania, was educated at Princeton College. He arrived in the Creek Nation in 1844 and taught at Tullahassee Mission before going to Coweta. Later he taught in several schools in the Choctaw Nation and at Wapanucka in the Chickasaw Nation. After one year in charge of the Cherokee Female Seminary he died February 22, 1876.

Loughridge wrote his report to Agent Logan on August 28, 1848, saying that "the whole number of children, besides three missionary children, was *forty-nine*, twenty-two boys and twenty-seven girls. of whom forty-two boarded in the mission family." The teacher, Mr. J. Sibley, declared the children had advanced very fast; some of whom could not speak English had learned to read and cypher a little and most of them had been obedient and eager to learn.

J. Ross Ramsey, superintendent of Koweta Mission, made a voluminous report to Creek Agent Philip H. Raiford August 25, 1851, in which he stated that the school had been in operation eight years, having been commenced in 1843. Because of illness in the family the school did not open until November 11 and it had continued without intermission, except for two weeks' vacation in April, until the first of August. At the opening there were forty boarders and three day pupils, and at the close of the session there were forty-one boarders and four day students.

The *Old Testament*, the *New Testament*, *McGuffey's Readers*, *Hale's History of the United States*, *Smith's Geography*, and his *English Grammar* were used in the mission. The Reverend William H. Templeton, the teacher, showed great diligence and much of the success of the school was owing to his gaining the affections of the children. A Sabbath school was conducted by the superintendent, assisted by Miss Green and Mr. Templeton.

Ramsey considered that at the current stage of civilization among the Creeks farming should be stressed in Manual Training, as the Creeks had a fertile soil. He had "noticed that when you see a good farmer among the Creeks, you also see a good house; not a 'log cabin,' but a good log house. . . ."¹¹

Koweta Manual Labor School opened with thirty students in the fall of 1852, but because of the illness of some of the missionaries, in a few weeks the boarders were reduced to twenty-three and there were only a few day pupils, and thus the school was continued until the summer vacation.

The pupils were diligent, their conduct was good and they were willing to engage in manual labor; in fact, such work appeared to be more of a pleasure than a task. This report was sent by William H. Templeton to Creek Agent Garrett, August 24, 1853.

Agent William H. Garrett of Alabama served the Creeks from 1853 until his death in 1861. He was an honest man and a true friend of the Creeks.

¹¹ Report Commissioner Indian affairs, 1851, pp. 387-89.

An interesting description of Koweta, written in 1859 by Augustus Loomis, stated that it was eighteen miles west of Tullahassee and that the road passed over rolling prairies, crossing two or three streams which the rains sometimes swelled to impassable rivers.¹²

The Mission house was pleasantly located among great forest trees, but the building itself was not imposing; they were constructed of such materials as were at hand on the frontier. There was no sign of paint, or ornament, but they looked comfortable. There was a solid one-and-a-half hewed logs house, facing east, with a wide hall and two rooms on each side of it. As the school increased, a two story building was joined to the south end; it was also of logs, weather boarded with clap-boards split from oak, and covered with pine shingles. Along the front was an open shed with seats. Another building was added on the west side of the original house. No. 1 building was the girls' department: Number 2, the boys' and No. 3, the dining room, store-room and kitchen.

When Loughridge started the mission he and his bride occupied a small cabin which was later used for the mill house; in that small house he and his wife taught a little day school; some of the pupils afterward became teachers and interpreters and useful men and women in their nation.

The Reverend David Winslet, a native preacher, continued in charge of the mission until it was broken up by the Civil War. During the seventeen years the mission functioned the Board spent \$35,000 on it and three of the missionary women died and were buried in the Mission cemetery. Mrs. Mary Avery Loughridge died in 1850 and was buried in Coweta Cemetery.

¹² Augustus Loomis, *Scenes in the Indian Country* (Philadelphia, 1859), pp. 41, ff. (The mission station was named "Koweta" by Mr. Loughridge when it was first established, the name of the school subsequently being reported in the official reports as "Koweta Manual Labor School." The name of Chief McIntosh's tribal town was "Coweta," which has been perpetuated in that of the present town of Coweta, in Wagoner County, Oklahoma.—Ed.)