NOTES AND DOCUMENTS


The Oklahoma Historical Tour will be held on April 29th and 30th, 1955. This tour will follow the route traveled by Washington Irving in October and November, 1832. Reservations for this tour should be sent to the Oklahoma Historical Society as soon as possible. Every effort will be made to visit as nearly as possible the exact site of each of the Irving camps. This will mean that the caravan of buses and cars will have to leave the main traveled highway in some instances. However, the route will be surveyed ahead of time and only the best roads will be followed.

Washington Irving and his friends, Charles Joseph Latrobe of England, and Albert de Pourtales of Switzerland, were in the party that accompanied Commissioner Henry L. Ellsworth, recently appointed by President Jackson to examine the country west of Fort Gibson for possible settlement of the immigrating Indian tribes in the 1830's. This proved a noted expedition in the history of Oklahoma, the story of which will be of absorbing interest to those who accompany the Society's Historical Tour this year.

AN UNMAILED LETTER FROM SENATOR THOMAS P. GORE TO CHIEF JUSTICE CHARLES EVANS HUGHES

The introduction and notes for the following letter written by the late Senator Gore of Oklahoma to the late Chief Justice Hughes of the United States Supreme Court were contributed to The Chronicles, by Monroe Billington, instructor of history at Eastern Kentucky State College, Richmond, Kentucky.

Introduction

Thomas P. Gore, Oklahoma's blind Senator who was sent to the Senate in 1907 along with Robert L. Owen, was defeated for reelection in 1920 but was returned to his old seat by the Oklahoma electorate in 1931. An advocate of Woodrow Wilson's progressive domestic legislation in the earlier period, the Senator had become quite conservative by the time he was returned to the Senate for his fourth term. Although supporting the candidacy of Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1932, Gore soon turned his back on the New Deal program which he considered to be "going too far too fast." One of the first indications of this opposition to the New Deal came during the debates on the revolutionary National Industrial Recovery Act early in 1933. Declaring at the time that the act would be found unconstitutional, the Oklahoma Senator spoke vigorously against what
he considered infringements upon the Constitution by New Deal legislation.

When the Supreme Court upheld his prediction in 1935 by declaring the N.R.A. unconstitutional, then Senator Gore wrote a letter to the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, but it was never mailed. This letter was found by the writer in the Thomas Pryor Gore Collection in the University of Oklahoma Archives, while he was gathering information for a biography of the Oklahoma Senator. It is the only letter in the entire collection which the Senator himself actually laboriously signed, all the others bearing the mark of a rubber stamp traditionally used by his secretaries. The letter reveals nothing new concerning the colorful Oklahoma Senator, but its contents give an insight into his basic thinking and adequately expresses his philosophy. The letter, which the Senator evidently decided would be a breach of propriety if mailed, reads:

UNITED STATES SENATE

May 28, 1935.

The Chief Justice,
Charles Evans Hughes,
United States Supreme Court,
Washington, D. C.

My dear Mr. Chief Justice:

I do not know whether it is a breach of propriety for a Senator to signify to the Members of the Supreme Court that he "approves and affirms" their decision. If it is an impropriety, then I must own to the impeachment. But no matter how many the counts of the indictment, there is one that would be missing. I cannot be accused of "contempt of Court."

I think that in the calendar of free government, May the 27th will take its place along side of July the 4th and the Surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown.

My approval is not "after the fact." I opposed the passage of the N.R.A. Act in the following language:

"The Constitution is the sheet anchor not only of our free institutions but of all our liberties. It is the sheet anchor of our Ship of State. If that anchor breaks, all is lost. The Supreme Court is our guardian under our Constitution, the guardian unswayed either by popular agitation on the one hand or by Executive power or Executive favor on the other. Under that narrow isthmus all our institutions, all our liberties "must stand or fall.""

Most respectfully,

(Signed) T. P. Gore.

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1 The Supreme Court ruled on May 27, 1935, that the National Industrial Recovery Act was unconstitutional. Notice that Gore wrote this letter on the following day.

2 Gore not only opposed the passage of the N.I.R.A. in word, he also opposed it by vote. The vote on the measure (H.R. 5755) was taken in the Senate on June 9, 1933. Gore joined twenty-three others to vote against it, while fifty-eight favored it. Four days later, with forty-six voting yea, he and thirty-nine others voted against the Senate-House conference report on the bill. See the Congressional Record, 73 Cong., 1 Sess., 5424-25, 5861.
A letter was recently received by the Editorial Department from Mr. David B. Hooten, of Idabel, Oklahoma, telling of his discovery of a history on the early church work of the Disciples of Christ in Oklahoma and Indian Territories. Mr. Hooten is a member of the First Christian Church of Idabel, and Director of Instrumental Music in the Idabel Public Schools. His letter of interesting notes follows:

Editor,
The Chronicles of Oklahoma:


The reason for this letter is to call the Historical Society's attention to the remarkable reports of the Churches of Christ in Oklahoma and in Oklahoma Territory in the year 1903. (The "Church of Christ" spoken of in these reports is the present day, "First Christian Church" or "Disciples of Christ" with their main college at Enid, namely Phillips University.)

To me, this book was a wonderful find, and providing this volume has not already been called to your attention, I hope you, too, will be interested in the reports.

The first report is on Oklahoma, dated 1903. It is by James M. Monroe, Oklahoma City, with a biographical sketch and picture. Here is the biography brief:

"Born, Mogadore, Ohio, November 25, 1843; farm life; Garfield Regiment; loss of limb at Vicksburg; College at Hiram and Alliance, Ohio, 1864-1870. Degree of A.B. at Butler University, 1871, and of A.M. 1874. Professor of Ancient languages at Christian College, California 1874-7; President Southern Pacific College, 1877-9, candidate for congress twice on the Prohibition ticket in Ohio in 1886, and in Kansas in 1890; Minister at Bellaire, Ohio, four years; Wichita, Kansas, two; Oakland, California, one; Honolulu, Hawaiian Islands, one; El Reno, Oklahoma, five; Revival held in El Reno, Oklahoma Territory, in 1898, with 132 converts, and in 1901 with 130 converts; corresponding secretary of the Churches of Christ of Oklahoma, in 1903."

In the report it was brought out that in 1903, Oklahoma had 16,000 members with 304 church organizations. Also, that "every city in Oklahoma with a population of a thousand has a church of Christ." In speaking of the many churches Mr. Monroe had this to say: "This condition of the cause in Oklahoma, in itself considered, might not be remarkable, but as the result of but eleven years history, it is phenomenal. Let it be remembered that Oklahoma has been opened to settlement in installments."
In briefing the report herewith are quoted the strongest paragraphs:

"Americans are the incarnation of the strong elements of all the dominant nations of Europe. In like manner, Oklahoma combines the stalwart elements of the North, the South, the East and the West. Oklahoma is the one point on the continent where American elements coalesce. . . .

"Of course the most striking feature of this Union of divers elements, is that of making the North and South homogenous. What seems to be an element of weakness here has been demonstrated to be quite the reverse. Here the northern and southern farmers are side by side, the southern and northern merchants are partners. In the church, the bold soldier that wore the blue and the one that wore the grey preside at the same communion table; the sons of the abolitionists and the sons of the slaveholders sit side by side in the pews.

". . . The first Church (of Christ) instituted in Oklahoma was in Guthrie, the capital city. And in this instance, we got in on the ground floor, for it was organized May 5, 1889, the second Lord's Day after the opening in a 12' x 15' cabin, without a roof and without a floor. M. M. Monroe organized this church with twenty-one members of which he and Dick T. Morgan were the first elders. The Guthrie Church now (1903) has 500 members and a $15,000 church building. J. T. Ogle is the popular minister. He and the church are a power in the city. . . .

"The Lord's day following the organization of the Guthrie church, May 12, a church was organized in Oklahoma City with 18 members . . . . there is a church at Capitol Hill, a suburb of the metropolis. At Enid, a $10,000 church is now being built . . . . the third church in the territory in power and influence is at El Reno with a membership of 450."

There are also some fine paragraphs concerning the History of Oklahoma in the report of Indian Territory by Thomas Roland Dean, South McAlester, Indian Territory. His biographical brief reads as follows:

"Born near Nicholasville, Kentucky, November 5, 1873; student at Kentucky State College, Lexington, 1891-6, valedictorian of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 1896-7, degree of LL.B. Located in the practice of law at South McAlester, Indian Territory, February, 1900, in the firm of McKennon, Dean and Willmott."

In this report, Mr. Dean describes Indian Territory as being wrought where it is: "Consigned to wild beast and wandering savage till in 1830, by treaty with the United States, it became the home of the Five Civilized Tribes . . . ."

In the write-up, Mr. Dean very unselfishly reports that, "The Baptists have for many years done, and are still doing, a great missionary and educational work among these tribes."

In Indian Territory, it is stated, "That there are 125 churches, 10,000 members and 75 church houses." In this second section of the report is a catch at humor with this statement.

"The foregoing estimate does not include hundreds, it may be thousands, of Christians living here who are not identified with the church, either because there is no organization within reach of them, or because their membership was left with the church back in the old state whence they came, or because their church letters, or their membership, is on a moral vacation in the bottom of their trunk."

The closing paragraph of this report, I think, is significant of the pioneer spirit of the early day Oklahomans:
"... And yet this growth and condition is but an earnest of what we shall set in this land. There are now one half million of white people here, nearly everyone of whom has either moved into or been born in Indian Territory since 1880. The marvelous growth of this country has hardly begun, for the statistician ten years from today will probably find here two millions of inhabitants. To gather into the fold thousands of this great multitude of hungering, dying souls and feed them spiritually is the duty and hope of the church of Indian Territory."

And to think that these are reports of but one group of religious people. Just think of the work the Baptists, Methodists, Catholics, and the many others were doing in those trying years. Don't you think the work of the Churches in the settling and developing of Oklahoma is most times underestimated and oft times completely overlooked?

I hope my efforts in writing this letter and revealing my "find" has not been in vain.

Yours very truly,

(Signed) David B. Hooten

A CHEROKEE ADVOCATE OF STATEHOOD

Allotment of Cherokee lands in severalty which would eventually bring the close of the Cherokee government and statehood for the Indian Territory was bitterly opposed by most of the Cherokees. Yet the cause had its strong advocates among them six years before the Dawes Commission succeeded in securing an agreement for Cherokee allotments. W. J. Watts was one of these who was invited to speak before a great gathering of citizens at Pryor Creek (now Pryor), in 1896, at which time he pleaded for harmony and unity among all the Indians of the Territory in facing a new day. This speech delivered more than a half century ago has been preserved by his daughter, Mrs. Ed McDonald of Dallas, Texas, and is presented here for its historical significance, with some introductory notes on the life of her father as follows:

"W. J. Watts was born in Gibson County, Tennessee in year 1840, the son of Malachi and Susan Toler Watts. In 1853 he moved with his family to Arkansas near Clarksville, where he worked on a farm until the breaking out of the War between the States in 1861, when he volunteered, joining Company C of the Arkansas Mounted Rifles which was commanded by Colonel T. J. Churchill. He fought in many of the major battles of the Civil War under the commands of Generals Price, Kirby Smith, Pat Cleburne and Hood.

"After the war he returned home and in year 1866, was married to Kittie Blackard of Clarksville, Arkansas where they lived until the year of 1871, when they moved to the Cherokee Nation, in the district of Sequoyah, on the Arkansas River. Here Mr. Watts opened a large store and engaged in agricultural pursuits for six years. In 1877 he engaged in the mercantile business at Cottonwood where he remained until spring of 1888 when the railroad was being built through Cherokee Nation. At this time he moved to the site of the town of Muldrow which he had the honor of naming. Here he engaged in the mercantile business and practice of law, and was co-owner of its first newspaper.
"The Watts family was of Indian descent, and after the year of 1865, Mr. Watts was in almost constant litigation with Cherokee authorities over the question of Citizenship, representing not only his own but a number of other families, defending them before the Department of Interior and the Congress of the United States.

"At the advent of statehood there were chaotic conditions and much dissension among the Indians, some wanting to remain and live as they always had. Mr. Watts being an energetic and progressive type of person and one of great hopes and a deep vision for the future of the Nation, was a strong advocate of the cause for allotment of Cherokee lands in severalty preparatory to statehood, and tried to so reason with those about him. Thus he was chosen to make this speech to the Cherokees at this meeting in Pryor Creek.

"With the exception of about two years at Wagoner, Mr. Watts resided and reared his family of three sons and a daughter (Mrs. Ed McDonald) in the Cherokee Nation and loved every inch of it. His sons were prominent in the early political life of the Indian Territory and Oklahoma, and were Jess W. Watts, Charles G. Watts, and Noah V. Watts. Judge Charles G. Watts of Wagoner and Mrs. Ed McDonald of Dallas, Texas are the surviving members of the family. Mr. Watts died at Muldrow November 7, 1904 and was buried there by the side of his wife at Camp Creek Cemetery."

Speech by W. J. Watts to the Cherokees

Pryor Creek, Indian Territory, June 27, 1896

Ladies and Gentlemen:—

To preface my remarks I wish to say it affords me much pleasure to meet you here today. When I received an invitation from your people to attend this grand annual picnic and speak to you on the past, present and future of the Indian Territory, I felt highly complimented for several reasons—Pryor Creek being an enterprising town peopled by an enterprising people, with whom I am happy to become acquainted. Of course, friends, I do not feel as though I were a stranger in your midst, as it is known that my name has been a by-word in the Cherokee nation for the past twenty-five years, and on some occasions, to my discredit, which I am satisfied would have been quite different had I been personally acquainted with you, although I am proud to say to you today that the question over which we have so widely differed will soon be settled, and the great difficulties under which we all have suffered will be removed, whether satisfactory to us or not I cannot say.

Friends, it was my pleasure two years ago to meet you people and partake of your kind hospitality, at which time I made the acquaintance of quite a number of your business men, and visited the homes of a number of your people. The kindness I have received from your hands, I assure you will ever be highly appreciated.

At that time, if you remember, I advised you people of the approaching danger, realizing as I did, that the great government of the United States had fixed and adopted a policy for the government of the five civilized nations, and to carry out that policy a commission was sent to you people with a message and a request for you to negotiate with said commission for a plan of government for the people, also for the allotment of land in severalty.

I also advised you to accept the propositions offered, or at least to treat the commission with due respect and meet them upon half-way ground. You are perfectly familiar with the results of their mission. The commission
again returns to the Territory with additional authority and power, still extending to you people an opportunity for shaping your future destiny. The great question is, will you people be a party to the pending change, which is inevitable, or will you sit idly by and wait for coming results?

Ladies and gentlemen and fellow citizens: It always gives me pleasure to speak a word for my country and the people of the Indian Territory, a country in which I have cast my lot for weal or woe, in the keeping of her future and under the star of her destiny. Wither she goeth, I will go, her people shall be my people, and her God my God.

In approaching this old, but simple sentiment upon the love story of the Bible, I trust and feel that I am working the heart-beat of every true citizen who loves his people and his country. I use it as an expression of that natural love of our own home and community that should not be peculiar to us alone, but should exist among people in every state in our country, and which is but the corner stone of wider love and allegiance that looks aloft to the Great Union and her star spangled banner.

I wish to confine myself today only to the Indian Territory; to tell of her past, to compliment her present and to predict the possibilities of her great future. Her past is not altogether a vision of imaginary thought, filled with fathomless existence and with infamous deeds of barbarians clustered in and remembrance and shielded with an armor of regretful reflection, but, thank God, who presides over the destiny of all nations, that we, as other states, have had some noble men and some grand deeds on which we can reflect with exquisite pleasure.

There are some who today lie beneath the cold and silent tomb, awaiting the sound of Gabriel's horn, who would do honor to any state in this broad union. Yes, there are some deeds registered on the annals of our Indian history to the credit of our heroes that will bear favorable comparison with the great Athenian generals of ancient Greece and Rome. We revere their memory and deeds as immortal; they have left impressions that will never fade from the memory of every true and patriotic citizen here today and in the Cherokee nation.

In looking over the vast cemetery, called the past, we must not forget to name some of those heroes, nor neglect to bestow a word upon those who, "though they sleep in dull, cold marble," still live in the thoughts of our people to inspire and lead them to loftier heights. Although we cannot speak of the number being so great and abundant as other states can do, whose state lives have been longer, and paths of opportunity broader and more lofty in the eyes of the world, yet we can speak with reverence of those around whose boughs we should decorate with the laurel and the palm, and we should hold them as dear to us as the more noted sons of more fortunate states, or to the people on whom they have conferred glory and renown.

From our history, though it may be short in length, I desire to invoke today the memory of a few of those to whom I have referred, whose services demand commemoration and love at the hands of the people, and serve as an example to the rising generation.

In this category of men we can name with pride, John Ross, a man noted for his integrity and ability, a man who labored for the upbuilding and advancement of his people and nation, a man whose name and fame will never be forgotten, and whose deeds will ever thrill the patriotic citizens of this country, regardless of party feeling.

Louis Downing, whose memory will be ever reverenced as a man of ability and integrity, who has left a living monument in the hearts of his
people and will be cherished as long as time shall last. It was my privilege to meet this honored gentleman in 1871, when I first moved into the territory, who extended to me special favors and advice as to how to proceed in regard to my claim for citizenship, which at that time no one doubted. Mr. Downing was a gentleman of broad views, though dearly loved his people, and had God—who rules the destiny of man—spared his life, the condition of affairs in the Cherokee Nation would, no doubt, have been different from what they are today.

Among other men whom I might mention was Robert Daniels, Wm. P. Ross, Hon. Henry Chambers, E. C. Boudinott, Sr., E. C. Boudinott, Jr., and last but not least, the lamented Joel B. Mayes, a man of strong character and true Indian.

These, fellow Citizens, are men whom we think could cope with the sons of any state in this broad Union. Then should we not feel proud of our noble sons who have hoisted the banner of honor and held it aloft amid the trials and struggles for National fame and honor?

Much more could be said of these grand heroes who devoted most of their lives for the good of their people, but I will not occupy your time further by referring to the past. The present is too fast passing away. The future looks to bright and promising to devote all our time to the glories of the past.

We are now undergoing a metamorphose. The times are rapidly changing. While the present conditions look flattering, and we view, with proud contemplation a glorious and prosperous future, we can not be content, we should not trust our treasures to the waves, nor cast our pearls before swine, nor believe the billows of time will bear us to ports of bliss; but should awake from our lethargy and remember there is something for us to do in shaping the destiny of our people.

The race of life is becoming intense, the runners are treading on each others heels, and woe unto him who stops to tie his shoe strings.

Friends, we comprehend what has been done in the past—bountiful is the harvest of the present; but the Alps are still beyond. Beyond us lie the decisive battle of victory for the Indian Territory.

Gird ye then your loins for the strife, blow a trumpet on the mountain top, and proclaim abroad our intention and fame in the name of the Indian Territory, without taxation or annexation to any other state or territory in the Union. Tis true, we are young in age, but our strength is as great as the senior Hercules, who stretched out his brawny arms and fought the enemy with vigorous attacks until victory was his spoil.

When we, fellow citizens, thus proclaim our situation and make known the many advantages we have, both natural and artificial, then will we see emigration from all over this Union coming to the Indian Territory with capital to invest and reap in her rich resources. Then will the forests give way to our civilization, to our growing agriculture and to our expanding commerce. The brightest stars of the west will then be placed in the constellation of this grand old Union, to guide and direct the wise men of the east to our manifest destiny. Then will this star, around whose border lies her sister, the "Lone Star State," shine and fortell, as did the Star of Bethlehem, the coming of something grand and supreme. Then will her true greatness and possibilities be developed—she will serve as an illuminator and reflect her rays far across the western plain.

Oh! I love to talk of the Indian Territory, although it has been said (and maybe today) that Watts is an intruder and has no interest here. Friends, that is a secondary matter to me today and one to which I am giving
but little attention. I love to tell of the beautiful corn fields, her productive potato grounds, her rich bottom lands and prolific prairies, where the cayote and bellowing buffalos, pollywog and hoot owls all join in the same tune with a whippoor-will solo, ringing and reverberating, all seemingly singing, "There's glory in the Land."

And now, ladies and gentlemen, after having considered in part the past and present, we arrive at the stage or upon that existence where we must predict. But, fellow citizens, it affords me great pleasure while standing here among the sacred memories of a once prosperous tribe, to expostulate to you a bright and successful future for the Indian Territory. Embarked and hedged, as we are, being given equal and exact justice to all men, of whatever state or persuasion, religious or political belief. Our constitutional provisions are the grandest and broadest ever prompted by any government. With this assurance, and the great national resources of this great land, our wealth as a state can not be enumerated.

Through the instrumentality of statehood the wheels of commerce and industry will be made to revolve, the hum of labor will fill the air, and furnaces will blaze in hundreds of towns. The cling of the blacksmith will prevail everywhere, year by year the harvest yields will increase, our corn fields will grow more golden. New Instruments of mechanism will be invented to assault and surrender the hidden minerals and treasures of "this rich gift of the Nile."

Education will ascend the lofty hill until we shall have snuffed the breezes of all sister states. Our students will go from our colleges equipped and at par with those of any state in the Union.

Our religious progress will enlighten and Christianize this whole land. All is gratifying, and today the rainbow of hope hangs from heaven's blue vault beckoning us onward, and onward with the procession and tide of emigration.

It is true in part that clouds of dissension have darkened our existence, but they are going away, and through the silver lining crest, I can see written with indelible ink "peace on earth, good will to men."

A nobler and grander government will prevail on this land than was ever conceived by the most astute dreamer. America has been especially preserved for us, and the true, and time honored principles of Democracy should ever throb, beat and prevail in the hearts of all nations.

Ladies and gentlemen, in conclusion, I must again repeat that our golden days are yet to come, and it shall be inscribed on the grateful hearts of untold thousands that our state, the Indian Territory, is one unsurpassed in the history of America, when the great and agitating questions of today have been settled, we shall have a country of which it can be said, "It is bounded on the North by the Aurora borealis; on the East by the rising sun; on the West by the setting stars, and on the South by manifest future destiny."