

## JESSIE ELIZABETH RANDOLPH MOORE OF THE CHICKASAW NATION

*By Muriel H. Wright*

Oklahoma has lost one of its best loved and revered pioneer women in the passing of Mrs. Jessie R. Moore. Proud of her Chickasaw ancestry and the people of the Indian Territory that was her birthplace eight-five years ago, Mrs. Moore was known far and wide over the state for her devotion and her contributions to the history of Oklahoma, which all hold in high regard. By chance, this issue of *The Chronicles of Oklahoma* commemorates her life since it still carries her name among the officers and members of the Board of Directors of the Oklahoma Historical Society, her name and title, "Mrs. Jessie R. Moore, Treasurer," having appeared in every issue of *The Chronicles* since the second number of Volume 1 published in October, 1921, a period of exactly thirty-five years to the time of her passing on October 7, 1956. This is a unique record in the annals of Oklahoma, now beginning its Semi-Centennial of Statehood, for her contributions to public life made her one of this State's leading women in its development as well as a guiding spirit in the attainments and the growth of the Oklahoma Historical Society. These words in review merely indicate the fine executive ability and staunch loyalty that were hers yet her talents lay in her incisive mind and her choice of words in expressing her thoughts.

Mrs. Moore was a poet at heart, even her recent contribution "The Five Great Indian Nations," the part played by the Chickasaw, Cherokee, Choctaw, Seminole and Creek in behalf of the Confederacy in the War between the States, that appeared in *The Chronicles* (Autumn, 1951) was poetic expression in its summary. Her "Lines Written on an Indian Face" will long be remembered as a prose poem with these words in a closing paragraph: "Your face has given me a message of Old Indian Territory—the glory of her days, a breath of the past from across the river of Lethe—of sorrow, and joy, and sweet life."

Jessie Elizabeth Randolph Moore, a daughter of William Colville Randolph and his wife, Sarah Ann (Née Tyson) Randolph was born in Panola County, Chickasaw Nation, near the home of her grandmother, Mrs. Charlotte Love Tyson Coffee, in the Coffee's Bend country in what is now Southwestern Bryan County, Oklahoma. Mrs. Coffee (née Charlotte Love) was of the prominent Chickasaw family of Loves for whom Love County was named at the time of the Oklahoma Constitutional Convention; and was the daughter of Henry and Sarah (or Sally) Love, the great grandparents of Mrs. Moore,

who lived in Mississippi and were the parents of seven children before the removal of the Chickasaws to the Indian Territory.<sup>1</sup> Henry Love was an influential tribal leader, a signer of the Treaty of 1834 in Washington, D. C., as a Chickasaw delegate sent from Mississippi to the National Capital, and served as member of the Chickasaw Commission in charge of tribal business for many years. The daughter, Charlotte, married James Tyson, a native of North Carolina, in Mississippi, and after coming west to this country in 1844, the young couple made their home near Fort Washita where their daughter, Sarah Tyson, married William Colville Randolph, a native of Virginia and a son of Isham Randolph of Roanoke.

William Colville Randolph served as an officer in the Confederate Army, under General Douglas H. Cooper, commander of the Confederate Indian forces in the Indian Territory during the War between the States. As a successful cattleman, Mr. Randolph moved his family in 1874, to the White Bead Hill region north of the Washita in what was then Pontotoc County, Chickasaw Nation, where he was a neighbor to some ten other intermarried Chickasaw-white families that settled there at the same time, all of whom established homes and ranches. The log schoolhouse built on the Randolph ranch was the first school attended by the daughter, Jessie Elizabeth. The family moved a few years later to Gainesville, Texas, where she went to school, and still later was sent to St. Xavier Academy at Denison, and then to Kidd's Seminary at Sherman, subsequently known as Kidd-Key College, the Alma Mater for the daughters of many prominent families from the Indian Territory.

The Randolphs returned to the ranch in the Chickasaw Nation where their daughter Jessie, was a charter member of the Presbyterian Church first organized at White Bead Hill in 1886. She taught a year in Pierce Institute, a Methodist school established in the community (1884), before her marriage in 1889 at Pauls Valley, to E. M. Moore of an old southern family of Tennessee. Mr. and Mrs. Moore made their home on a ranch south of Purell for ten years, after 1890, during which he served for a time as U. S. Deputy Marshal of the District. Mr. Moore died in 1925. In 1901, they had

<sup>1</sup> Henry Love, his wife (Sarah or "Sally" Love) and his brother Benjamin Love (and his wife, Lotty) were members of the Martyn Mission Presbyterian Church established among the Chickasaws in Mississippi. Martyn Mission was located 60 miles northwest of Monroe Mission which was 24 miles west of Cotton Gin Port, Mississippi, Monroe having been established in 1821 by the Rev. Thomas C. Stuart, under the auspices of the Presbyterian Synod of South Carolina and Georgia. Mrs. Sarah Love was the first of the family that joined the Martyn Mission Church on March 22, 1828. Her husband, Henry Love, was received into membership on August 23, 1828, and on the following day their six children were baptized: Amanda, John, Elvira, Overton, Charlotte and Frances. On April 30, 1831, their infant son, David, was baptized at Martyn Mission. The Presbyterian Mission stations among the Chickasaws had been transferred to the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in December, 1827, to be more closely affiliated with the missions among the Choctaws.—E. T. Winston, "Father Stuart" and the Monroe Mission (Meridian, Miss., 1927).

moved to Pauls Valley where Mrs. Moore was a leader for many years in club, civic and church life. She was president of the Pauls Valley Alternate Saturday Club, and a member of the Eastern Star. She remained a member of the First Presbyterian Church—the old White Bead Presbyterian Church that had been moved to Pauls Valley—, in which she taught a Sunday School class. Members of this class, among them Mac Q. Williamson, now Attorney General of Oklahoma, still remember and praise Mrs. Moore as a wonderful teacher and Christian leader.

In 1914, Mrs. Moore was appointed Deputy Supreme Court Clerk, with the office in Oklahoma City, the State capital. She studied law and was admitted to the Bar in 1923. The following year, she was appointed Assistant Commissioner of Charities and Corrections for Oklahoma. She was nominated in the Democratic primaries in 1926, as candidate for Clerk of the State Supreme Court, and won by a handsome majority in the statewide elections, the second woman in Oklahoma history elected to a State office. At the end of her term of office at the beginning of the nationwide depression, Mrs. Moore was appointed to head the Women's Division of Emergency Relief in Oklahoma County. In this work, she initially planned and organized the entire set-up for this Emergency Relief on a statewide basis, her plan of organization for Oklahoma being adopted and put into force on a nationwide scale by the Federal Government in 1933. Active as a leader in the Democratic Party, she headed the Indian organization of the Party in the campaign for the election of Governor Robert S. Kerr in 1942. She was elected in both 1940 and 1944 as Presidential Elector from Oklahoma, and made the trip to Washington in the duties of this office in the election of President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

For her outstanding contributions in both private and public life, Mrs. Moore was inducted into membership in the "Oklahoma Hall of Fame" by the Oklahoma Memorial Association in its annual Statehood Day Banquet on November 16, 1937. At the time of her passing last year, she had been a member of the Board of Directors of the Oklahoma Historical Society consecutively for thirty-seven years, except a very few times always present at the meetings of the Board in this long period.

Mrs. Moore was a member of the Chickasaw Council for many years both during the office of the late Governor Douglas H. Johnston of the Chickasaw Nation and that of the present Governor, Floyd Maytubby. Her last great pleasure and honor, in the Indian historical interests was when she served as an official representative of the Chickasaw Nation in the ceremonies at Memphis, Tennessee, dedicating the newly formed "Chickasaw Wing of the United States Air Force" on September 26, 1954. She made the flight to Memphis in a special plane for the event, with other members of the Chickasaw Governor's party. Her report on these ceremonies at Memphis to-

gether with some notes on Chickasaw history was published in *The Chronicles of Oklahoma* for Summer, 1955, a significant contribution to the history of this Indian nation.

After an illness of more than a year, Mrs. Jessie R. Moore passed away in October, 1956, at the McCurdy Memorial Hospital at Purcell. She is survived by one daughter, Mrs. Roy Rockwood (née Imogene Moore) of Wayne, Oklahoma; one grandson, Lewis Rockwood, a graduate of the University of Oklahoma; and one great-granddaughter, besides nephews and many relatives in the Love family. Burial was made in the old White Bead Cemetery west of Pauls Valley, beside the graves of her children who had died many years ago. Funeral services for Mrs. Moore were held in the First Presbyterian Church at Pauls Valley, during which Mr. Haskell Paul, of the pioneer Paul family of that City, gave her tribute from the memories of her fellow citizens and host of old friends. The following are excerpts from Mr. Paul's remarks:

### JESSIE RANDOLPH MOORE

1871-1956

We have assembled today to render honor and pay a last tribute to Jessie Randolph Moore, one of Oklahoma's heroic women. The meeting place in The First Presbyterian Church at Pauls Valley is most appropriate for such an occasion for Mrs. Moore was the last survivor of the charter members of this church which, according to her own words, was first organized in the year 1886 at Whitebead Hill and moved the following year to Pauls Valley . . . . . It is here that Mrs. Moore was first recognized for the great character she was, later to be appreciated by all the people of Oklahoma. Courage, generosity, humility and a strong intellect were some of her attributes . . . . .

Mrs. Moore was always proud of her Chickasaw blood, as much so as she was of her paternal ancestry. She requested that at her last rites her pall bearers should be selected from persons of Chickasaw descent. Each of her pall-bearers, today, at this service are Chickasaws, and included among them are Honorable Floyd Maytubby, Governor of the Chickasaw Nation, and Mr. Justice Earl Welch of the Oklahoma Supreme Court.

We people of Pauls Valley loved Mrs. Moore and revere her memory for the wonderful person she was in private life when she lived here and as we knew her . . . . . Concerning her private life, I must say I was quite young when Mrs. Moore moved from Pauls Valley. I remember her though when I was a very small boy and, of course, I knew her in later years. But concerning her private life here at Pauls Valley I requested my mother, Victoria Paul, who knew her for almost sixty years to characterize Jessie Moore for me. This is what she said:

"She was in every part a lady. She could look the world in the face with a clear conscience. In all the years I knew her I never heard her speak, even once, any evil of anyone; and she was a friendly woman. She visited the sick, no matter if they had a contagious disease, and would stay and help if they needed her and carry food if they needed it, which was often the case in early times."

What a wonderful tribute that is for one old pioneer to extend to another.

Henry Van Dyke, the author who was himself an octogenarian, once said:

"Four things one must learn to do  
If he would make his record true:  
To think without confusion clearly,  
To love his fellow man sincerely,  
To act from honest motives purely,  
And trust in God and Heaven securely."

The old friends of Jessie Moore and the people here in Pauls Valley feel that her entire life is an inspirational example of Van Dyke's great rule of human conduct . . . . .