

THE COLD WATER ARMY

*Annotated by Hope Holway**Cherokee Cold Water Army of the Olden Time*

*See us children full of glee,
Marching with our banners;
Drunkards we will never be;
Nor follow drunkards' manners.*

Chorus: Come and join us, one and all.

*Hear our invitation;
Come and fight King Alcohol,
Drive him from the Nation!*

*We will not fight with guns or swords,
Nor kill one son or daughter;
Our weapons shall be pleasant words
And cool, refreshing water.*

— Samuel A. Worcester

Tune: *Yankee Doodle*

"There used to be what they called a Cold Water Army and they marched to that song. They would have big picnics and Grandfather (he wrote the song) had a big apple tree with big yellow apples and they would take a barrel to the picnic. They had a branch of the Cold Water Army across the river (Arkansas) among the Creeks"

—Ann Augusta Robertson Moore¹ (about 1934)

"In general I do not know that the cause of religion has made much sensible progress among the Cherokees since we crossed the Mississippi. One effort, however, for their good, the formation of a temperance society requiring of its members total abstinence from all kinds of intoxicating liquors, has met with encouraging success and the work is going forward still. I think there are 400 members, the greater part Cherokees"

—Samuel Austin Worcester (1838)²

¹ Ann Augusta (Robertson) Moore (1851-1935), oldest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Wm. S. Robertson of the Tullahassee Mission and wife of Judge N. B. Moore of Muskogee. The recollection is quoted from an interview with her by Grant Foreman about 1934, taken by Mrs. Rella Looney and typed by her. It is now in a typed volume (PN 6131 F7) in the Oklahoma Historical Society Library. "Augusta Robertson Moore, A Sketch of Her Life and Times" by Carolyn Thomas Foreman,—*The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. XIII, No. 4 (December, 1935.)

² From a letter written by Samuel Austin Worcester on June 14, 1838, to Samuel Chandler of Bedford, N. H. A copy of the letter is in the volume mentioned above in the Oklahoma Historical Society Library. The Cherokees referred to are the Western Cherokees in whose country the Worcesters had settled and founded Park Hill in 1835.

"Commencing thus early in life to march along the path of temperance, these youthful soldiers, now the beauty and hope of our country and hereafter to become its mothers, fathers, laborers, law-givers, and guides, must exercise an immense influence and perhaps are thus destined to consummate the great cause in which they have enlisted"

—William P. Ross (about 1844)³

". . . . From my observation and acquaintance with the Indian tribes, I am decidedly of the opinion that all restrictive laws or arbitrary action by superior power is productive of evil consequences The effect of the present law is to introduce by stealth liquors of a bad quality and at exorbitant prices, while the consumption is induced by frolics in a spirit and temper in proportion to the efforts to restrain the inclination."

—Pierce M. Butler (1843)⁴

". . . . I could not at that time have been more than four years old, was marching at Tahlequah in the Cold Water Army, a Cherokee children's temperance organization. That was my first recollection of Tahlequah. We carried long purple plumes of flowers we called the Osage Almanac, because they said the Osages used to plant their corn and then go out on the staked plains on a buffalo hunt, and when these tall purple stalks blossomed out they knew it was time to go home and eat their roasting ears."

—Alice Robertson⁵

³ William P. Ross (1820-1891), nephew of John Ross, graduate of Princeton, editor of *Cherokee Advocate*, Principal Chief 1866-7 and 1872-5. One of the "most prominent men of the Nation" mentioned by Mrs. Edith Walker and Secretary of the Cherokee Temperance Society about 1844. The comment sounds like a portion of a rallying speech and is quoted by Grant Foreman in "A Century of Prohibition," *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. XII, No. 2 (June, 1934).

⁴ Pierce M. Butler (1798-1847), elected Governor of South Carolina in 1836 without a campaign, because he believed "the office should seek the man." He was appointed agent to the Cherokees in 1838, and the *Cherokee Advocate* of September 30, 1847, pays him the tribute of being just and showing sympathy for the Cherokees. He was the Colonel of the Palmetto Regiment in the Mexican War, and was killed at Churubusco in 1847. The comment above is from Agent Butler's 1843 report to the U. S. Commissioner of Indian Affairs. The Indian Territory was prohibition country under the Congressional Act of June 30, 1834. (For a sketch of his life see Carolyn Thomas Foreman, "Pierce Mason Butler, *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. XXX, No. 1 (Spring, 1952).

⁵ Alice Robertson (1854-1931), daughter of William and Ann Eliza Robertson; Republican Congresswoman from Oklahoma (1921-23). This recollection is a part of the "first chapter of Miss Alice's book that was being written by her at the time when she was stricken by her fatal illness," from *The Arrowhead*, a monthly published in Muskogee by Vivienne Brown and Lavon Lee. The issue of August, 1931, contains an article, "My Memoirs" by Alice Robertson, purporting to be this first chapter. A copy of the monthly is in the Alice Robertson Collection, University of Tulsa Library.

"Sons of Temperance had a big turn-out; processions, etc. I did not go to the doings, but those who went from here did not much admire their doings."

—William Schenk Robertson (1852)⁶

"The Cherokee Temperance Society, afterwards renamed the 'Cold Water Army' to include the children as well as parents, was started by Rev. S. A. Worcester, shortly after the removal of the Cherokees from the State of Georgia. Mr. Worcester, as the Secretary, kept the record and therefore spoke with authority. Of the organization he says—"The members sign the following pledge—"We hereby solemnly pledge ourselves that we will never use, nor buy, nor sell, nor give, nor receive as a drink, any whisky, brandy, rum, gin, wine, fermented cider, strong beer, or any kind of intoxicating liquors."

"On the list of signers to the pledge there are the names of 1560 Cherokees and perhaps 200 more whites and blacks, making a total of 1760 persons who abstain entirely from the use of intoxicating drinks of all kinds and from all traffic in them In this (Cherokee) Almanac from time to time he gave his views on the evils of strong drink and paved the way for the temperance society he organized shortly after reaching the new country west of the Mississippi

"One of my earliest recollections is the rallying of the Cherokee Cold Water Army at the convening of the National Council in Nov. of each year, when the delegates from every District (14 in number) assembled to form a 'March of Allegiance' around the Capitol Square, carrying banners and singing temperance songs, written and set to popular airs of the day by my Grandfather, at which time we listened to temperance speeches by the most prominent men of the Nation and members of the Cherokee Council, and at the same time *every* body was served with barbecued meat, chicken, pies and cake, which the mothers, wives, and sweethearts prepared. I can remember my mother saying she stood over the furnace—kettle in the old Mission kitchen and fried three bushels of doughnuts for one such occasion.

"Also, Mrs. A. E. W. Robertson, my mother's oldest sister, accompanied her father on yearly visits to the different

⁶ William Schenk Robertson (1820-1881), husband of Ann Eliza Worcester (so son-in-law of Samuel Worcester) and superintendent of Tullahassee Mission. This comment is quoted from a letter to his parents written from Park Hill, August 9, 1832. This letter was among others loaned to Grant Foreman by Robertson's daughter, Ann Augusta Moore, and is now in type-script in the volume mentioned above. Whereabouts of original unknown. This is a strange comment from such a member of the Worcester family, but there is no further explanation. Perhaps he considered the "doings" as too frivolous and spectacular.

districts of the Nation, to play the melodeon for the singing of the temperance songs at the gatherings for instruction and encouragement until the fame of the Cold Water Army spread far and wide and a similar organization was asked for by the Choctaws and Creeks.

“But the disturbed condition of the country just before the Civil War caused the discontinuance of the Denominational Missions and also the Cherokee National Schools and put a stop to the Cherokee Cold Water Army, which was never reorganized after Mr. Worcester’s death, though the influence of it continues to the present and will go down to Eternity as a mighty safeguard to the Cherokee people from the scourge of the liquor habit.”

—Mrs. Edith Walker⁷

“The National Cherokee Temperance Society, organized in 1845 by my father, Samuel Austin Worcester⁸ The Cherokee Council at that time met in a big shed in the center of what is now the “Capital Square” at Tahlequah, and in that place the Temperance Society began its existence. The annual meetings were always held during the sessions of the National Council and the officers of the Society were, many of them, members of that body The only qualification for membership in the Society was to sign the Society pledge

“My father taught his children and all who came under his influence to help in the temperance work We children knew that what we could do we were to do with no word of objection. Our father took us with him to the meetings and we all had our parts to perform. My brothers made music when they were hardly taller than their violins. One brother spoke the first ‘speech’ he ever made (in public) at the age of sixteen on Temperance.

“We went to many Temperance meetings—some in the woods on the banks of the beautiful clear running streams or near some one of the many fine springs so plentiful in our Nation. The people gathered from near and from far. Meat was barbecued (so delicious as we never get these days), bread, cakes, and pies provided.

⁷ Mrs. (Ann) Edith Walker (b. 1856), daughter of Hannah Worcester and Abijah Hicks, and so grand-daughter of Samuel Worcester. These recollections are in typescript in a volume titled “Missionary Correspondence,” an item of the Grant Foreman Collection in the library of the Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma. We also note that she closes as follows: “At the request of the Indians of the Five Civilized Tribes, Oklahoma was *born* dry and we are proud to say we still hope to see the day when National Constitutional Prohibition will win its victory in the U. S. A. and be a beacon for all Europe to follow.”

⁸ A temperance society was founded at New Echota in the 1820’s but languished and died. The one to which Hananh refers was founded soon after the arrival at Park Hill, 1836-7.

“Through the kind courtesy of the Christian Commander of the Post of Fort Gibson, Col. Gustavus Loomis,⁹ my father was permitted to have the attendance at some of his meetings of the ‘finest band in the U. S. Army’, then stationed at Fort Gibson, and once a choir of nineteen soldiers sang temperance songs . . . (my father) took with him his children and his ‘seraphine’. A brush shed was arranged at a place near the first ‘Old Agency’¹⁰ across the Arkansas from where Muskegee is now, and there near the Agency spring the people gathered and a Temperance Society was organized. The one who played the ‘seraphine’ that day was a young lady, my sister, afterward Mrs. A. E. W. Robertson of sainted memory

“Some time since there was published in the Fort Gibson Post an account of the last rally of the ‘Cherokee Cold Water Army.’ That was another work of my father; a company of boys and girls under the age of sixteen. He wrote songs for them, taught them to sing them and march to them; he spent hours and days making banners for them and different devices. Many happy days we had preparing for and attending the meetings. We sang, ‘Come and join our Temperance Army, singing Water, Sweet Cold Water.’

“. . . . The annual meeting was always held on the 4th of July at Tahlequah. Some of us had to ride the five miles in the slow and clumsy ox-wagon with the boxes and baskets of provisions for the dinner, while the more fortunate ones went in a “4-mule wagon” sent through the kindness of a wealthy neighbor (Mr. George M. Murrell) with a negro driver to carry 30 or 40 children Those who rode behind big, plodding old “Pete and Broad” had to start earlier than the others (though all were up and stirring before daylight to get ready). We had to bear it as well as we could to see the other party go dashing by us, singing-shouting, with streamers twenty feet long flying and other banners waving.

“That last, last meeting before the Civil War put a stop to all such things, was on July 4, 1860, after the death of its founder. On that day 125 children marched in line around the public square at Tahlequah. Every child carried a little banner with a printed device; the girls’ banners white, the boys’ pink, besides the twenty-foot streamer at the head of the line with “COLD WATER ARMY” in large letters painted on it and many other banners of different devices and mottoes

⁹ Carolyn Thomas Foreman; “Col. Gustavus Loomis, Commandant Fort Gibson and Fort Towson,”—*The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. XVIII, No. 3 (September, 1940.)

¹⁰ The Old Creek Agency (1835-1853) just east of Old Marshall Town and west of the Verdigris River, in Wagoner County.”

..... Two of my children marched in that company and a third one, too small to keep up, was carried by her father alongside."

—Hannah Worcester (Hicks) Hitchcock¹¹

*Song*¹²

Loud we shout "Away the bowl!"

Far away - forever;

We resolve with heart and soul

We will touch it never!

Sweet cold water, now we sing!

Water is the dandy!

Give us water from the spring,

And fling away the brandy!

Chorus: Come and join us, one and all.

Hear our invitation;

Come and fight King Alcohol,

Drive him from the Nation!

¹¹ Hannah Worcester (Hicks) Hitchcock (1834-1917), mother of Edith Walker and daughter of Samuel Worcester and Ann Orr. Edith was left one of the five small children of Hannah and Abijah Hicks, when he was ambushed and killed. Hannah later married Dr. Dwight Hitchcock, whose first wife was Sarah Worcester, Hannah's sister. These recollections are also in the "Missionary Correspondence" volume in the Foreman Collection at Gilcrease Institute, and like Mrs. Walker's recollections, apparently written for Mr. Foreman. See also "Notes on the Life of Hannah" by Muriel H. Wright. *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. XIX, No. 4 (December, 1941).

¹² Samuel A. Worcester in the *Cherokee Almanac*, 1856.