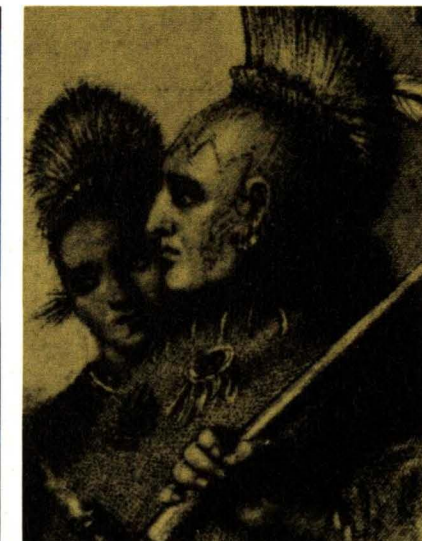
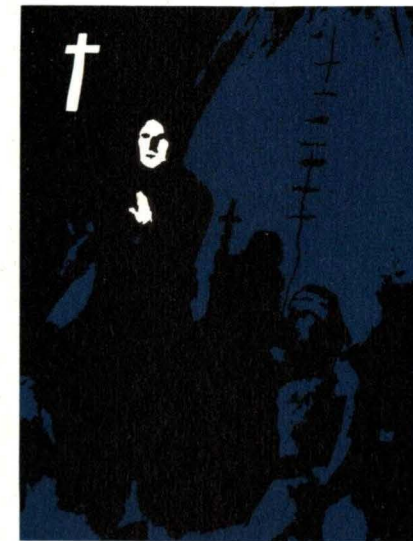




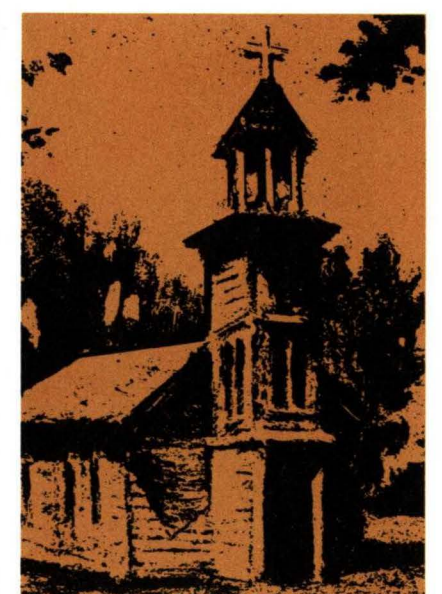
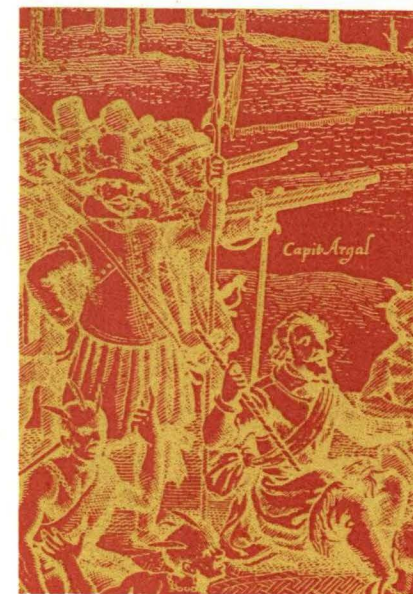
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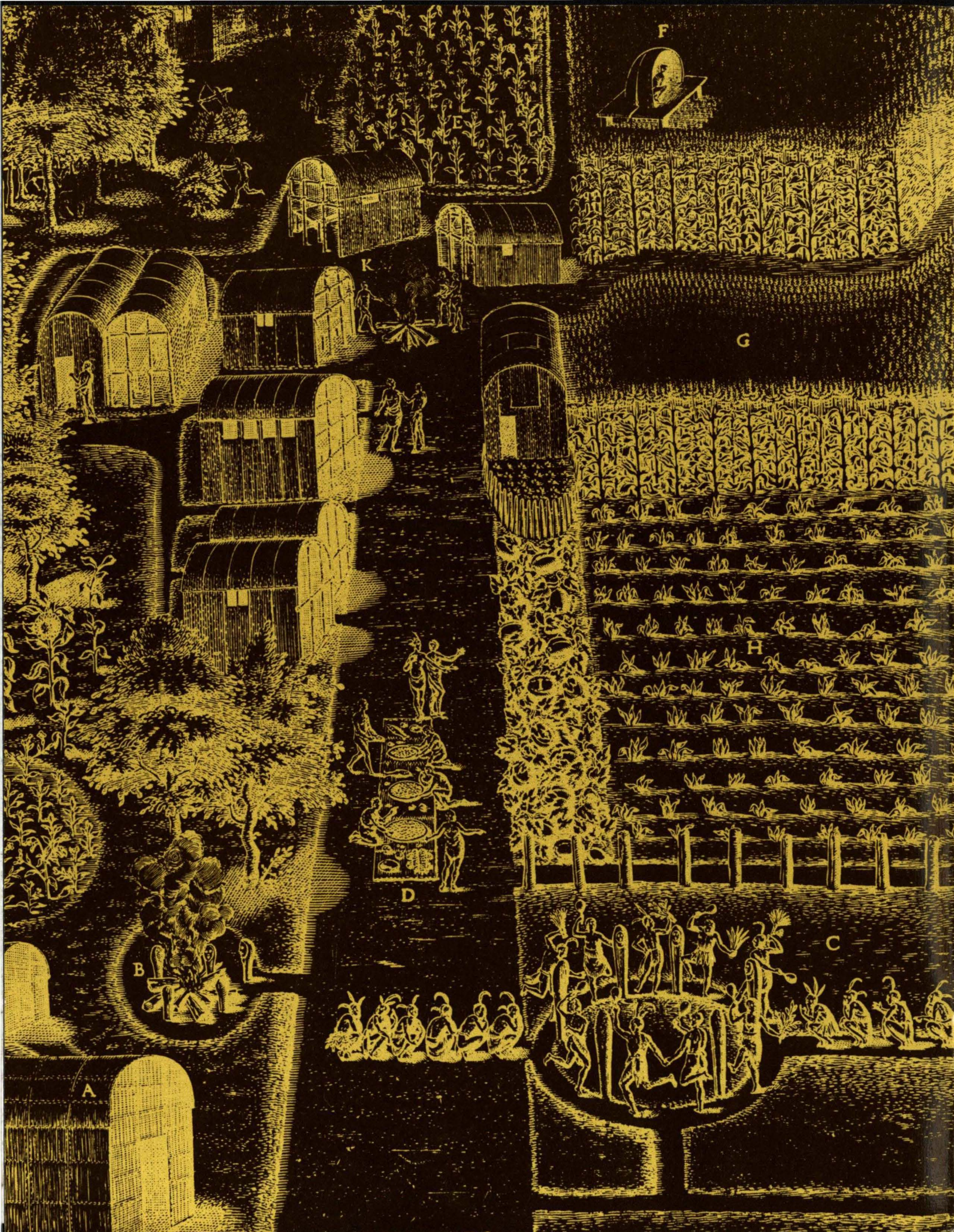
INDIAN MISSION FRONTIER

IN NORTH AMERICA



*The
American
Scene*





INDIAN MISSION FRONTIER

IN NORTH AMERICA

Being a brief account of Christian missionary activity among the dispossessed tribes in the eastern United States and the later influence of the missions west of the Mississippi, particularly in that region designated as "Indian Territory."

Compiled from various sources in the Gilcrease Library and written especially for the American Scene by David C. Hunt.

Men of faith, purpose, and imagination constituted a restless element in American society in the opening decades of the nineteenth century. Dedication to a cause characterized the social ferment of the time and many Americans, singly or in groups, championed various reforms or promoted with equal vigor the concepts of "progress" and the nation's "manifest destiny." The plight of the politically oppressed, the issue of slavery, the appeal of the poor and downtrodden elicited responses from many sincere and enthusiastic persons; but perhaps no cause enlisted more recruits than that of "converting the heathen" to Christianity.

In New England in particular, graduates from the colleges and seminaries gathered together in their resolve to carry the gospel to distant lands, inspired with a conviction regarding the rightness of their purpose difficult to appreciate in this

uncertain and self-critical age. On the mission rosters the American Indian was listed along with the "foreign heathen" of Tahiti or Africa with no allowance made for possible differences in character or customs: for the idea that all peoples of all cultures should espouse the Christian message for the good of their souls and the betterment of the world was all that mattered. The government of the United States also had an interest in missionary activity, at least insofar as the Indian was concerned, anxious perhaps to modify by such means the unhappy results of its official handling of Indian problems.

Political and social intervention was rife in Congressional circles and there was much activity on the part of reforming elements directed against the sale of guns, ammunition, and whiskey to the western tribes. Treaties made in the meantime, tempered by the pressures of powerful lobbying

The American Scene

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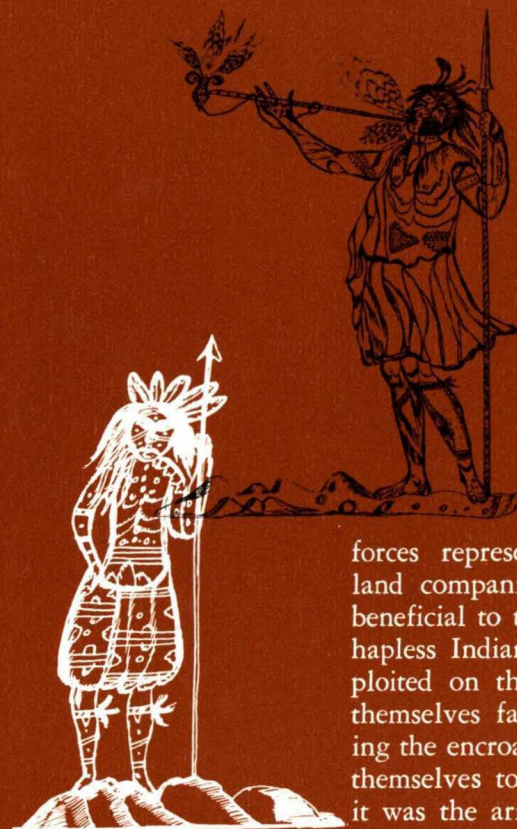
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forces representing Eastern trading firms and land companies, often in practice proved more beneficial to the traders and speculators than the hapless Indian. Subsidized on the one hand, exploited on the other, the Indian nations found themselves faced with the alternatives of resisting the encroachments of civilization or removing themselves to less settled regions westward; and it was the army on the frontier which took the brunt of the troubles that inevitably followed.

As one officer is said to have remarked concerning the confused policy of the government:

"Civilization approaches the Indian with a Bible in one hand, a treaty in the other, a bludgeon under her arm, and a barrel of whiskey in her wagon."

In 1819, the Congress authorized President Monroe to employ persons of "good moral character" to instruct the Indians in agriculture and "to teach the children reading, writing, and arithmetic," appropriating funds in the amount of \$10,000 annually to support this work. The authorization did not include, specifically, the conversion of the savages to Christianity; however, the mission societies were almost the only organizations to be found at this time interested in bettering the lot of the disadvantaged. There was little unanimity of opinion among the churches respecting the importance of secular instruction. Doubtless, the majority of the brethren envisioned the missionary as going forth to save souls. In the field the situation proved otherwise. The schools rather than the churches became the center of mission activity in the West, for the Indian very often realized the practical value of the "white man's learning" far better than he grasped the concepts of sin and salvation. ■

The aboriginal American had been the object of missionary interest almost from the first instance of European contact in this hemisphere. Especially in the West Indies the Spanish zeal for conquest had been matched by an equally zealous desire to convert the natives to Christianity at whatever cost to the prospective converts themselves. First in the Caribbean, then in Central and South America, conquest and conversion had led the way.

"We came," wrote Bernal Diaz del Castillo, one of Cortez's soldiers, "to serve God, and also to get rich." This very nearly sums it up.

The English conquest of North America differed only slightly from that of the Spanish or the French, exemplified at the outset by the commercial precepts of the "joint stock" company. Among the English, however, war and the eviction of the Indians from their lands had been accompanied by none of the troublesome questions characteristic of the Spanish conscience. There was no body of laws designed to protect the Indians from abuse and no real control by a central authority among the colonists themselves. This situation was modified somewhat when the colonies all were taken over by the Crown; but English colonial policy for the most part continued to be what the first company directors had made it: a simple matter of economics.

Many accounts concerning the Indians and their relations with the colonists survive to the present day in the form of letters, diaries, military order books, and the like. One of the earliest in the Gilcrease library concerns itself with descriptions of the manners and customs of the tribes of the upper New York area, found in the report of a British colonial officer named William Hyde, or Hyde, as it is sometimes spelled. Written in or around Schenectady in the year 1698, this commentary describes the Senecas, Mohawks, Oneidas, and other members of the Iroquois League at a time when their numbers had dwindled considerably from the effects of their continuing struggle with the French to the north and west.

Hyde observes that the Iroquois generally are "modest and inoffensive people when Sober, but very Brutall in their drinke which they are much

addicted to." Of the Algonquins he remarks that when taking captives in time of war, "they often goe for prisoners of their owne and accord to bring to their Castles to torter them out of Revenge for the loss of their friends Kill'd in the Warr."

Hide's report does not present a very edifying picture. Nearly a hundred years later Benjamin Franklin, in commenting upon the character and habits of the American Indian, describes them in much more sympathetic terms. In his *Remarks Concerning the Savages of North America* published in pamphlet form in London in 1784, he says:

Savages we call them, because their manners differ from ours, which we think the perfection of civility; they think the same of theirs. Perhaps if we could examine the manners of different nations with impartiality, we should find no people so rude as to be without any rules of politeness; nor any so polite as not to have some remains of rudeness.

Franklin goes on to relate something of Indian communal life where there is "no force . . . no prisons . . . no officers to compel obedience or inflict punishment . . .

"Having few artificial wants," he reflects further, "they have an abundance of leisure . . . Our labourious manner of life compared with theirs, they esteem slavish and base; and the learning on which we value ourselves they regard as frivolous and useless."

Commenting upon their politeness in conversation, Franklin observes that "it is indeed carried to excess; since it does not permit them to contradict, or deny the truth of, what is asserted in their presence. By this means they indeed avoid disputes; but then it becomes difficult to know their minds, or what impression you make upon them.

"The missionaries who have attempted to convert them all complain of this as one of the greatest difficulties of their Mission. The Indians hear with patience the Truths of the Gospel explained to them, and give their usual tokens of assent and approbation: you would think they were convinced. No such matter. It is mere civility." ■

Unlike the buffalo hunting peoples of the western prairies encountered by pioneers in the nineteenth century, most of the Indians of the eastern forests were town dwellers and agriculturists. Some, like the Iroquois, lived in long barracks or multi-family dwellings. Others built single-family huts of mud and wattle inside fortified compounds referred to as "castles" by early observers. Some lived the freer life of the hunter or fisherman, visiting the "towns" only at certain times of the year, cultivating corn or tobacco in a more or less off-hand fashion. Multi-tongued, they shared many traits and customs and their characteristic expression of political action seems to have been that of a confederation: usually an amalgamation of families or tribes whose banding together was based upon similar aims or interests.

The largest confederation encountered by the first English colonists had been that of the Powhatan, whose chief or "king" also was called Powhatan

by the settlers in referring to his position as leader of the Virginia coastal tribes. Powhatan's daughter, Pocahontas, doubtless is the most famous woman in the annals of early American history. Her marriage to John Rolfe established a certain measure of tranquility among the Indian factions and the colonists set about to learn from her people the cultivation of tobacco. Accompanying her husband to England, Pocahontas created a sensation wherever she went. Contracting smallpox, she died abroad in 1618 at the age of twenty-one, leaving behind a son from whom several modern Virginia families claim descent.

An engraved portrait featured at the beginning of John Smith's *Generall Historie of Virginia* (London, 1624) shows Pocahontas dressed in the English fashion of the time. Of passing interest, the English engraver has given us a full description of her identity and lineage. Calling her by her English name, *Rebecka*, he further considered it



Engraved portrait of Pocahontas from John Smith's *Generall Historie of Virginia* (London, 1624).

as worthy of note to mention that she was "converted and baptised in the Christian faith."

Meanwhile, in America, old Powhatan died, his place taken by his brother, Opechancanough, avowed enemy of the English. His attack on the English settlements in 1622 resulted in the deaths of 350 colonists. Survivors among the latter swore to exterminate the Powhatans, organizing expedition upon expedition against their villages until in 1644, remnants of the once powerful confederacy accepted the cessation of hostilities and turned to the adoption of reservation life.

Smith's earlier adventures in America had carried him into what is now Massachusetts where in 1614 he had come upon a Wampanoag village called *Patuxet* by the Indians. Here, in 1620, a band whom we now refer to as "the Pilgrim Fathers" ventured to settle. Other Anglican non-conformists known as "Puritans" arrived in the nearby Massachusetts Bay area shortly afterward; but by 1635, most of the good land was taken up and the Bay Colony settlers began moving westward into the Connecticut Valley. In 1637, the Pequot Indians engaged in hostilities against the English and the new colony of Connecticut joined forces with Massachusetts to put an end to this menace. The decisive contest occurred near the Thames River in eastern Connecticut where the colonists surrounded several score of Pequot "forts," burning alive some 500 Indian men, women, and children trapped within.

A Captain John Underhill, leading the English forces, marvelled at the destruction of the Indians. In his published account of the incident he included a large, fold-out diagram of the campaign showing the colonials ringed about the Indian palisade and attacking those within. Evident from the reading of Underhill's report is the fact that he considered the reduction of the Pequots a deed of much merit, consistent with the general view of the English settlers of this period who regarded all such disasters visited upon the Indians as signs of the "approval of God" Who thus swept their path of enemies and made way for their march into the savage wilds.

Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, settlers and Indians beyond the Appalachian frontier continued to come into conflict. The Indians themselves became embroiled in the rivalries of the Europeans in America and not a few tribes took advantage of their foreign alli-

ances to wreak vengeance or hardship upon their beleaguered brothers. Forts and garrisons eventually reached all the way from Maine to western Pennsylvania, for no one could predict where the enemy next might strike. The English blamed the French, of course, for stirring up Indian hatred against them. The Indians themselves remained for the most part divided in their loyalties between the contesting European nations.

During this difficult period, individual settlers and Indians along the frontier nevertheless bided peaceably together. Colonists in the wilderness frequently adopted Indian foods and methods of cookery and hunting. A number of settlers in turn acted as civilizing agents among their rustic neighbors. A few studied Indian dialects and even translated portions of the scriptures into various native tongues. A colonist named John Eliot studied the Algonquin speech from one of the survivors of the Pequot disaster and after some thirty years succeeded in translating the entire Bible into the "Indian language." He also founded on the Charles River the first of several settlements of "praying Indians" which by the 1670's constituted four congregations of approximately 2,000 persons.

New England minister Roger Williams worked among the Narraganset of Rhode Island for several years, agitating for Indian rights to ownership of land until the purchase of tracts from the natives became an accepted practice in the English colonies. His appeal for religious tolerance among the colonists, first published under the title *The Bloody Tenant* in 1644, still rings with the force of his arguments against "persecution for cause of conscience," expounding the principles of accommodation between Papist and Protestant, settler and Indian in a day when few held such sentiments.

A first edition of this volume is preserved in the Gilcrease library along with an even earlier and lesser known work entitled *A Key into the Language of America, or an Help to the Language of the Natives in that part of America called New England* printed in 1643. Containing his reflections upon the character of the native races in America, Williams' narrative includes such remarks as:

I cannot observe that they ever had (before the coming of the English, French, or Dutch amongst them) any Names to differ-

At left, lithograph depicting Huron Indians visiting local Catholic shrine; from Coke Smyth's *Sketches in the Canadas* (London, 1839). Below, eighteenth century engraving of Creek chief, Tomo Cachi, and his nephew.



ence themselves from strangers, for they knew none; but two sorts of names they had, and have amongst themselves.

First, generall, belonging to all Natives, as . . . signifies Men, Folke, or People.

Secondly, particular Names, peculiar to severall Nations, of them amongst themselves. . .

They have often asked mee, why wee call them Indians, Natives etc. And understanding the reason, they will call themselves Indians, in opposition to English, etc.

Concerning their probable origins, Williams further speculates:

From Adam and Noah that they spring, it is granted on all hands.

But for their later Descent, and whence they came into these parts, it seems as hard to find as to finde a Wellhead of fresh Streame, which running many miles out of the Countrey to the salt Ocean, hath met with many mixing Streames by the way. They say themselves, that they have sprung and Grown up in that very place, like the very trees of the wilderness.

In the seventeenth century when Europeans first probed the wilds north of Florida between the Atlantic and the Mississippi, the largest body of Indians in this area was governed by some fifty towns in present day Georgia and Alabama under the jurisdiction of a group known as the Muskogees. Early English traders from the Carolinas spoke of these people as the Indians of Ocheese Creek, or simply, the "Creek" Indians, a name by which they have been known ever since. West of the Creeks were the Chickasaws, smallest of the tribes later to be designated as "civilized," whose trail through the wilderness to a landing on the Mississippi led the first English traders to the banks of that river. Below the Chickasaws dwelt the Choctaws who also spoke one of the dialects of the widespread Muskogee language. Most of the tribes throughout this region belonged to this "language-family," as it is called, with the exception of a small group known as the Biloxi, related to the Sioux, and the Shawnee of Algonquin extraction. The Tuscarora and the Cherokee, most populous of all the nations in this section of the country, spoke variants of one of the Iroquoian dialects.

Joseph Thayendanege, called the Brant, Great Captain of the Six Nations: engraved from an original painting of G. Romney by T. R. Smith, published February 10, 1779. Gilcrease prints collection. Brant was the friend of Sir William Johnson, English agent among the Mohawks during the French and Indian wars.



Another, smaller tribe called the *Natchez* by the French were the only temple-mound builders still in possession of their unique culture at the time of the European penetration of the Mississippi Valley. The first French missionary visited them in 1699 and a trading post was established in their territory in 1713. In 1729, the Natchez attacked this post and killed most of its inhabitants. French retaliation was swift and total. Aided by a band of Choctaws, they drove the Natchez from their homeland, forcing them to seek refuge among the Chickasaws and Creeks. Today, only the city of Natchez stands to remind us that they ever existed.

The record of English relations with the people of this area seems to have emphasized commercial motives almost to the exclusion of other interests. Among the Indians themselves, however, the desire to gain familiarity with the more civilized arts of the white man proved a decisive factor in initial contacts with them. Welcoming Oglethorpe's Georgia colonists, the Creeks sent a delegation from their Lower Towns to Savannah as early as 1732 with a request for missionaries and teachers to come among them. English traders and land speculators, taking advantage of Indian friendship, soon penetrated the wilderness in ever-increasing numbers.

Oglethorpe took representatives from the Creek villages on a visit to London in 1734. Among these was a chief named Tomo Chi Chi who petitioned the Crown for the establishment of regulatory laws respecting trade between the Indians and the whites. Painter John Verelst made a portrait at this time which may be a likeness of this same Indian leader. An English engraver by the name of John Faber later produced a copy of this portrait but recorded the chief's name as *Tomo Cachi*, calling him "Mico or King of Yamacraw." Whether or not this man was the same as the one who accompanied Oglethorpe to England, the print is among the earliest to preserve the appearance of a member of the Creek confederation of those days. In the background, the artist envisioned a semi-tropical wilderness suggestive of earlier descriptions of the Indies.

Farther south in Florida at this time dwelt the Calusa and Timucua Indians earlier revealed in the drawings of French cartographer, Jacques le Moyne de Morgues. After the founding of St. Augustine by the Spanish, these tribes had been systematically conquered and regrouped into mission compounds in accordance with the aims of Franciscan evangelists who dreamed of establish-

ing an ideal "Christian Indian state" in the wilderness isolated from the influences of European commerce. In the 1680's, as English traders wandered in the direction of the Florida frontier, the Spanish ventured northwards into Georgia territory. Conflict between these groups and between the Spanish and the Creeks resulted.

Together with another tribe called the Yuchee, the Creeks joined English slavers in raids on the Spanish missions. Poorly equipped garrisons provided the only protection for the Spanish settlements and the hapless mission Indians were rounded up and carried off into bondage or exile from which only a few returned. Taking refuge in the swamps to the south or the islands of the Florida keys, remnants of the Calusa nation were removed to Cuba when Florida passed into English hands. By 1745, the Florida settlements were in ruins, their Indian converts scattered far and wide. Some eventually banded together again, joined by others from the north, including runaway slaves and renegades from the lower Creek villages. In the nineteenth century this mixed population came to be known as the *Seminoles*: a name derived from a Creek word which meant about the same as "outlanders."

Of the original population inhabiting the 200 settlements in old Powhatan's league, only a thousand or so remained at the time of the American Revolution. Most of these had retired to the less settled environs of Chesapeake Bay. A traveler through these parts remarked at this time to the effect that the Indians and Negroes of this region hardly were considered as human, and that violence or murder committed on them by the planters seldom or never was followed by bringing those responsible to justice.

The fate of the Powhatans was repeated all along the Atlantic coast, first among the Leni Lenape, or Delaware, of the Middle Colonies, and then the proud Iroquois to the north. The Revolution succeeded in splitting the ancient league of Indian nations into warring factions, destroying at last the native bulwark that so long had opposed the white man's advance along the Mohawk Valley and westward into the Ohio wilderness. Mohawk chief, Thayendanega, also called Joseph Brant by the colonists, joined forces with the British during the war for American independence, while the Oneida and the Tuscarora sided with the embattled Continentals. A Seneca spokesman named Sagoyewatha reluctantly agreed

"Circuit riders" bringing the Christian message to settler and Indian alike were among those who dared the dangers of the wilderness in America during the eighteenth century. Wesleyan evangelists such as George Whitefield and Jonathan Edwards traveled among the frontier settlements in the South. David Zeisberger, Moravian missionary to America, worked among the settlers of western Pennsylvania, carrying his labors to the Indians of that region from about 1745 until his death in 1808.

The print portraying Zeisberger preaching to prospective Indian converts recalls a man whose career among the natives of America stands in bold relief against the harsher background of the Anglo-European conquest of the continent.



to an alliance with the British, receiving as a token of friendship a red jacket from which he derived the nickname he carried for the remainder of his life. After the war, Thayendanege and his Mohawks sought refuge with the British in Ontario, while the Senecas' warring chieftain, Cornplanter, signed treaties with the Americans, ceding vast tracts of land to the new government. Red Jacket alone continued to rage against the white man, particularly the British, in the aftermath.

Less affected were the Hurons in Canada upon whom the French depended for their rich traffic in furs from the interior. Affording the Indians within their area of occupation more freedom of movement, the French assimilated the natives to some extent into the life of their settlements. Roman Catholic missionaries had been at work among the Hurons for many years and had managed to keep them relatively free from the entangling associations of the Iroquois nations to the south.

Among the rarer pictures describing the "French

Indians" of a subsequent period are those found in a collection of colored plates by a traveler by the name of Coke Smyth entitled *Sketches in the Canadas* published in London sometime before 1839. In this volume are to be seen rare views of the Canadian wilderness, activities among the hunters and traders, and a set of exceptionally fine plates featuring portrait studies of the Indians of Ontario as they appeared in those later days of peaceful settlement.

For nearly three centuries, the Indian fought stubbornly against white intrusion into his ancestral lands, resisting each successive advance of the Anglo-American frontier westward with a determination born of despair. Forced to give way, foot by foot and mile by mile, the native fled ever westward or was engulfed by those who overran his ancient hunting preserves and killed off all the game. Inevitably, the plains and mountains of the Far West became the theatre into which this struggle finally was carried: for by the beginning

of the last century, there was no other area into which the battered tribes could retreat, no other place where game was still abundant, no quarter of the continent remaining into which the white man had not penetrated.

The fresh hostilities engendered among the tribes in the East during the War of 1812 left in its wake the conviction on the part of many that the white man and the Indian never could live peaceably together. In 1825, Secretary of War John C. Calhoun proposed a solution to the problem to Congress: remove all those tribes residing within the limits of the United States to territory west of the 95th Meridian. Calhoun's suggestion became the policy of President James Monroe's administration. Later expanded by legislation enacted during Andrew Jackson's term of office, this policy resulted in the passage of the Indian Removal Act of 1830.

In 1832, the post of Commissioner of Indian Affairs was created within the War Department. The Indian Trade and Intercourse Act of 1834 defined as "Indian Country" all the area west of

the Mississippi with the exception of Louisiana, Missouri, and Arkansas. In 1838, Congress again more specifically defined as "Indian Territory" a large section which included most of present day Oklahoma and a portion of southern Kansas. Here were forcibly resettled, after much trouble and suffering, the majority of those groups of native peoples occupying parts of Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee, Kentucky, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Minnesota.

Earlier, in 1825, a Creek chief in Georgia named McIntosh had signed a treaty of cessation at a place called Indian Springs. This act had aroused a great amount of dissension among his people, however, and within weeks McIntosh was murdered by a member of a hostile faction. Opothele Yoholo, leader of the opposition, had repaired to Washington to protest the Treaty of Indian Springs soon thereafter, and had succeeded in having it replaced for a time with a new agreement, by which the Creeks surrendered all property in Georgia with the exception of a long-occupied strip along the Chattahoochee.



Reflecting upon official government policy to reduce, subjugate, or remove those native elements opposing U. S. expansion in the East, contemporary artist Brummett Echobawk has envisioned in his *Trail of Tears* a detachment of Cherokees migrating westward to reservations in Indian Territory.



Charles M. Russell's painting of the Jesuit missionary, DeSmet, and his first meeting with the Flathead Indians of Montana.

The Cherokees as well were the objects of this design, having occupied parts of North Carolina, northwestern Georgia, and Tennessee for many years where they had advanced as a civilized nation under guarantees accorded them by the U.S. Government. John Ross, principal chief of these people, led the group opposed to the cession of Cherokee land, but with little success. In 1835 another chief known as Major Ridge under pressure signed a treaty with the United States at New Echota, Georgia, by which the Cherokee Nation gave up all title to property east of the Mississippi in return for land in the distant, newly designated Indian Territory west of Arkansas. Throughout the 1830's many migrated over the weary "Trail of Tears" to make a new life for themselves in an unfamiliar land.

Many became farmers or businessmen in the new country west of the Mississippi, building schools and churches and governing themselves under a system similar to that of the United States. Friction over tribal boundaries created occasional disturbances among these emigrant groups and the U. S. Government dispatched soldiers to the area to effect peaceable negotiations. Meanwhile, the Comanche, Kiowa, Cheyenne, Osage, and other indigenous tribes in the area, resenting the newcomers from the East, waged war against them. More troops were needed to

quell the trouble and to attempt to make peace between the displaced peoples and the hostile plains tribes.

Forts Gibson and Towson had been built as early as 1824 in this area. Fort Washita, and in Kansas, Fort Leavenworth, were established shortly thereafter. Together with posts such as Fort Snelling in Minnesota and Fort Jessup to the south in Louisiana, these settlements marked the front line of defense along what came to be known as the "permanent Indian frontier" in the second quarter of the nineteenth century.

Many councils were held within the walls of these scattered installations and amicable agreements were secured with some of the warlike plainsmen. Age-old tribal conflicts among these nations only complicated the problems of frontier defense, however, and mutual hostility continued to characterize Indian-white relations in this region for years to come despite the admonitions of such men as Jonathan Bell, Secretary of War, who, in commenting upon the troubled conditions along the Arkansas frontier in 1841 wrote that "as a means of preserving permanent peace with the Indians . . . there is more to be effected by a strict observance of the obligations of justice and humanity in our relations with them than upon any amount of regular military force assigned to that district."

Opposite: early view of Wheelock Mission in Indian Territory; watercolor by Mary Chamberlain, c. 1840's.

At right, Montana historian, Olaf Seltzer, portrays a missionary of a somewhat later date at work among the western tribes threatened from the encroachments of civilization. The soldier and the missionary often found themselves opposed to each other. The hapless Indian was caught in-between.



Meanwhile, the big steam canoes of the white man crept farther and farther into the immense and little known areas to the north and west, bringing more traders and settlers into country which represented the last stronghold of the native races. Strictly forbidden by the U. S. Government, liquor nevertheless made its way in ever increasing amount to the trading posts along the Upper Mississippi and into the hands of the Indians. The smuggling of spirits was carried on chiefly by the riverboat captains who managed by various means to slip it past the inspection points at St. Louis and Fort Leavenworth. The military authorities themselves often appeared sympathetic to the traders' interests, unmindful of the devastation which this continuing traffic produced among the western tribes.

The American Fur Company traded whiskey and guns with the Potawatomie at this time in the vicinity of Council Bluffs where a mission had been established by a Jesuit priest from Belgium by the name of DeSmet. Alarmed at the effects of drinking and disease upon the Indians in his care, DeSmet dreamed of establishing one day a "Kingdom of God" among the natives in some remote spot totally isolated from the corrupting influences of the white traders. Thus it was that in 1839 when a deputation representing the Flathead Indians beyond the Bitter Root Mountains stopped by his post en route to St. Louis, DeSmet became interested in the possibilities of founding a mission in that distant country.

Two years later, accompanied by two more priests and three lay helpers, DeSmet established their mission in the Bitter Root Valley at a site previously selected.

Charles M. Russell commemorated the historic meeting between Father DeSmet and the Flatheads in what is thought to be the last picture he ever painted. The canvas is, in fact, unfinished and shows Father DeSmet in front of the tent prepared for him by the welcoming Indians. He holds aloft the cross that was to prove such a sign of contradiction among the tribes of that distant mountain country. Surrounding him are the Flatheads who came down river to escort him to their ancestral lands to the north.

DeSmet believed that the Indians beyond the Rockies would remain safe from white influences



since few but trappers had found their way across the mountains at that time. In less than ten years, however, the Bitter Root Valley was taken over by the fur traders who brought with them their manufactured goods, liquor, and a variety of diseases to which the natives were unaccustomed.

Early in the 1830's when Indian Territory was set aside for the Civilized Tribes migrating from the East, the only white persons permitted to reside there were those who could secure licenses from the government as readers or missionaries: the one interested in profit, the other in salvation. Between 1820 and 1860, approximately seventy missions were established in this area, most of which operated schools controlled by home boards in the United States. The committees back home at first had little idea of the problems to be faced by the missionary teacher in an unsettled wilderness. Difficulties associated with communication and travel were especially hard on the women and children of mission families and little preparation was made beforehand to condition them to rough living and strange languages and customs.

The first school opened in Indian Territory by the United Foreign Missionary Society was that of Union Mission dedicated to the conversion of the Osage Indians in 1821. This mission operated for about twelve years until conflict with immigrating Cherokees into what is now northeastern Oklahoma forced the Osages to move farther west. Principal chiefs such as Clermont and Tallee sent their sons to Union Mission and many Osage children received their first introduction to European culture at this place.

Portrait of Sequoyah from McKenney & Hall's *History of the Indian Tribes of North America* (Philadelphia: E. C. Biddle, 1837).



Title page from 1833 edition of *Poor Sarah* published by the United Brethren Missionary Society.



Cherokee Female Seminary, I. T.; watercolor by Vincent Colyer, c. 1860's.

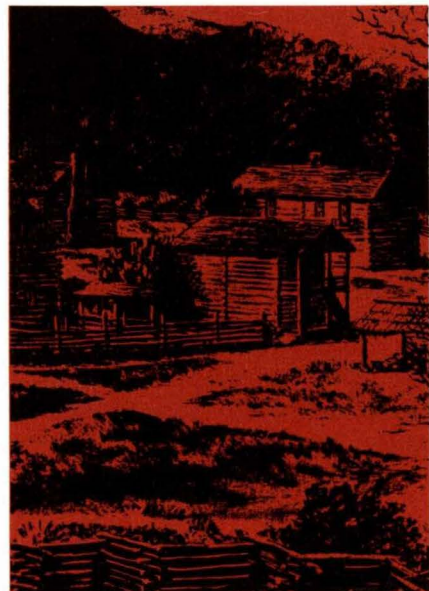
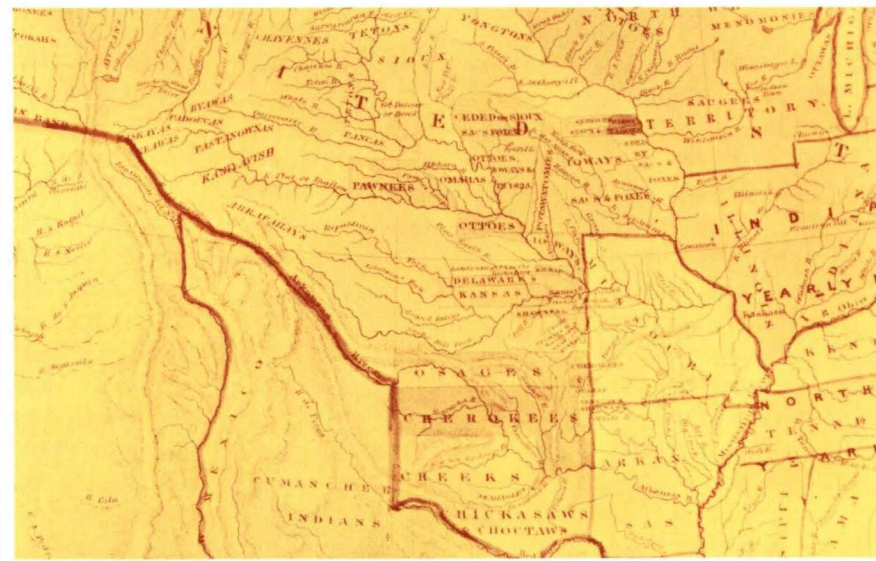
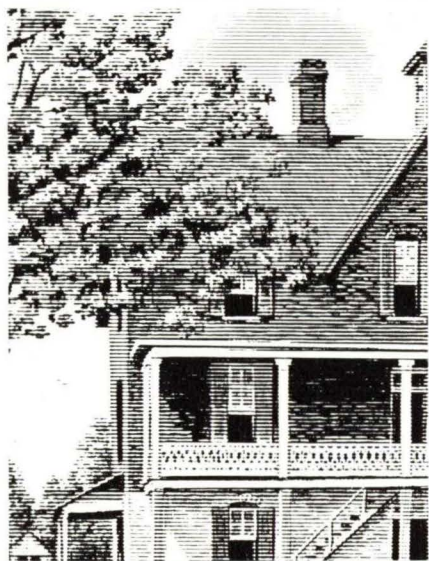
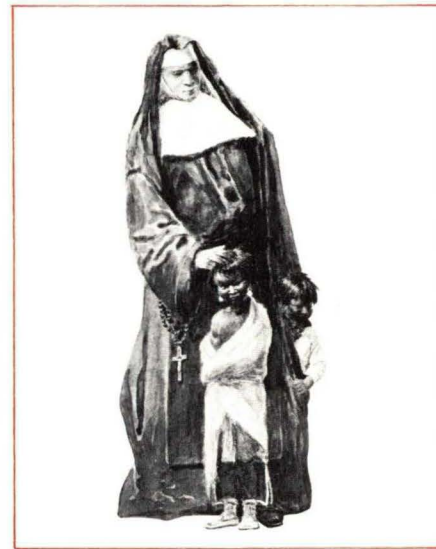
In the Choctaw Nation, the earliest mission was at Wheelock, followed shortly by that of Stockbridge founded by Cyrus Byington in 1832. Here, with the assistance of his wife Sophia, Byington devised his *Choctaw Definer* which featured an extensive English-Choctaw dictionary. A mission at Pine Ridge later was established and two schools for Indian boys started: Armstrong Academy supported by Baptist funds and another at old Fort Coffee housed in a row of deserted barracks. Tallahassee Mission founded ten miles northwest of Fort Gibson in 1848 was supported jointly by the Creek Nation and the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions. The Reverend W. S. Robertson served as its first headmaster. Robertson's wife, Ann Eliza, was the daughter of Samuel Worcester, missionary to the Cherokees in Georgia and friend of Sequoyah with whom he had worked in developing the Indian linguist's now famous syllabary. Following her father's example, Mrs. Robertson published many textbooks and missionary tracts in the Creek tongue and in later years became the first woman in America to receive an honorary doctor of philosophy degree for her translation of the Creek language into writing.

Realizing an effective means of communication through the development of a written language was a significant step taken by the Indians and represented one of the most important contributions to their advancement on the part of the western missionaries. With respect to the Cherokees, writing was the invention of the man called

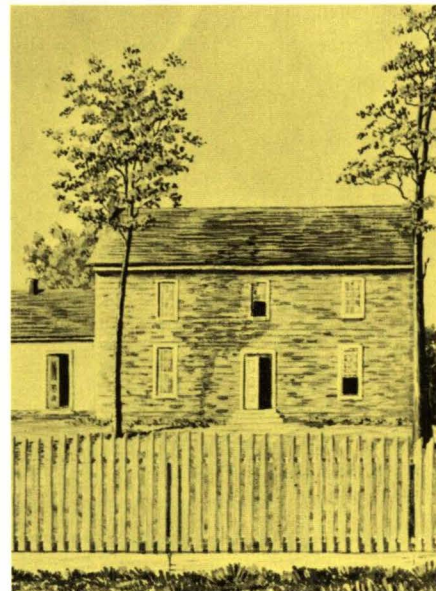
Sequoyah, son of an Indian mother and an unknown white father, who spent several years devising a list of characters to represent the sounds peculiar to the Cherokee tongue. The Reverend Samuel Worcester was instrumental in helping Sequoyah achieve his purpose and revised some of the Cherokee symbols so that they could be cast more easily in type for printing. A great number of books, pamphlets, and tracts yet survive published partly or wholly in Cherokee and are readily distinguishable from texts in Creek or Choctaw composed of Roman letters arranged more or less phonetically.

Selected portions from the Bible are prominent among these printings as are spellers or "definers," almanacs, instructional guides, and popular narratives presented in pamphlet form such as that of *Poor Sarah* which tells of the trials and tribulations of an old Indian woman and her difficult road to salvation.

After the removal period of the 1830's, each of the Five Civilized Tribes established its own national government and constitution outlining its laws and methods of electing governing officials. Several national schools were founded and many of the early missions established in the Territory later were supported by Indian national funds. Among the Cherokees in particular, education was one of the most vital of interests during the period following removal. As a nation, the Cherokee people had advocated the idea of public and higher schools for their children in the Treaty of 1835. In 1841, public schools were provided for by an act of the national council.



Left to right: Cheyenne Boarding School and Farm by Vinson Lackey; Missionary Nun, watercolor by Olaf Seltzer; Sac and Fox Boarding School by Vinson Lackey; 1844 Map of Indian Territory west of the Mississippi; view of Dwight Mission, by Vinson Lackey; and New Hope Seminary, Vinson Lackey.



In 1846, the first school for higher learning was founded at Park Hill near the present Tahlequah, Oklahoma, paid for and supported by monies received from the sale of land to the United States Government. A second academy followed shortly. Called simply male and female seminaries, these institutions instructed many young Indian men and women in history, mathematics, and the classics. Many students later were sent to colleges in the East at the expense of the tribal government to receive further education. These promising members of a new generation returned home to Indian Territory to instruct their people in arts and crafts, serving in a variety of ways as teachers, ministers, lawyers, and physicians.

A small watercolor by Vincent Colyer who visited in this district in the 1860's gives us some idea of the general appearance of the Cherokee National Female Seminary. Constructed entirely out of brick, the structure served as a model for other institutions of its kind. Today, only a few brick columns remain to testify to the location of the original building. These stand near the site of a reconstructed Cherokee village built by the Cherokee National Historical Society headquartered in modern day Tahlequah.

In this same district, Samuel Worcester set up his printing press in 1836. Here, from 1844 to 1904, with intermittent periods of suspension, the *Cherokee Advocate* was published and distributed to the nation: the only known newspaper to have been regularly issued in an Indian language. Early editions of the *Advocate* are indeed rare today, but the press which published this paper following the Civil War is presently housed in the Thomas Gilcrease Institute, still in operable condition.

The thunder of the first guns announcing the start of the War Between the States was heard only faintly in Indian Territory where the majority of the resettled tribes were preoccupied with their own internal affairs. Influences were at work, however, which ultimately brought these people into the conflict. Many of the Indians were slave holders and owners of large tracts of land. Convinced by white agents from Texas and Arkansas that they would find protection of their rights and property only by joining forces with the South, the bulk of the Civilized Tribes sided with the Confederacy.

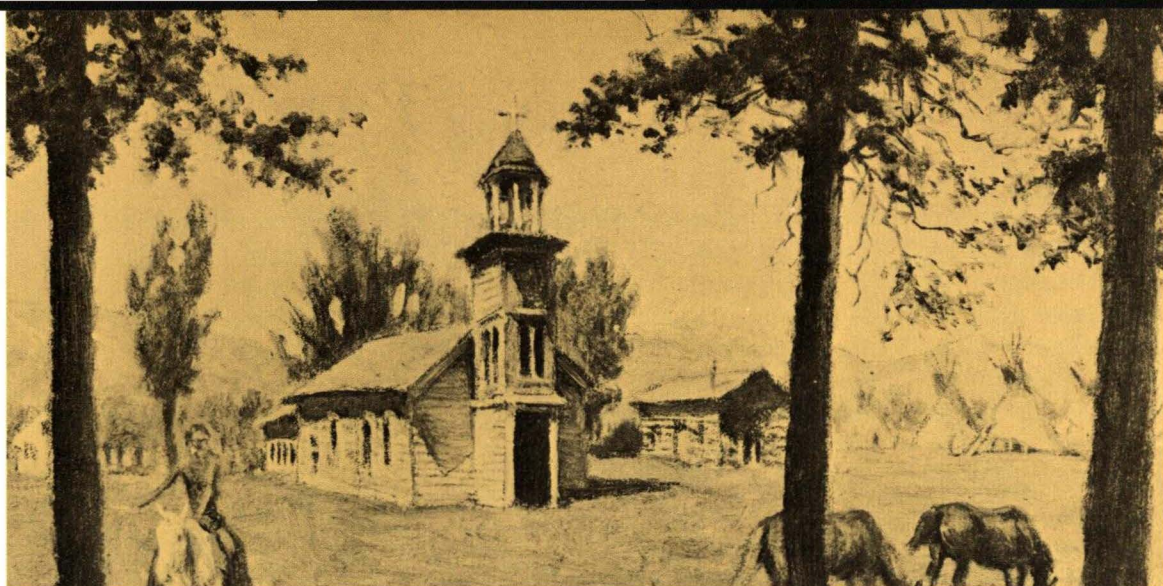
Indian troops served in the Confederate Army in Indian Territory throughout the war under the direction of Major General Albert Pike, commander of all forces west of Arkansas. Some Cherokee and Creek contingents remained with the Union, however, serving in Indian "home guard" regiments of the Federal Army. The passions which racked the entire country at this time thus disrupted tribal life in the West, as well; and it might be said that the real "civil war" was fought in just such areas as Indian Territory, Kansas, and the border states in the East where families were torn by controversy and brother was set against brother.

A lack of funds and the disruptions brought about by the war caused mission schools to close during the 1860's. Whole families of missionaries left the area, although some, like the Byingtons, waited out the period of strife and managed to subsist by farming. Buildings originally housing students served as temporary garrisons for opposing forces or were burned together with all their Indian language textbooks and equipment. Likewise, the press at Park Hill was seized and destroyed.

Following the Confederacy's surrender to Union forces in 1865, the Indians again faced the problem of rebuilding a shattered society. As allies of the defeated states, they paid dearly for their participation in the war, suffering the loss of nearly half their original treaty lands. Most of the Cherokee Nation was devastated and similar conditions characterized much of the Creek, Seminole, and Choctaw lands. The problems of rebuilding homes and schools only added to the burden of defeat. Most difficult of all was the problem of how to achieve a new understanding among themselves by which bitterly hostile factions might once again live in peace and re-establish as a unified people their relationship with the United States.

Some of the mission schools were reopened following the war, many with their buildings and fields destroyed. In some cases, the burden of maintaining these institutions rested solely with the Indian national councils, for not a few mission societies in the United States had withdrawn their support even before the outbreak of hostilities over the issue of slavery.

Indian Territory never was organized under one territorial government by Congress, and each nation moving into this region throughout the nineteenth century was allowed to retain its autonomy.



Throughout the 1870's and 80's, the government settled many other tribes on land in the western part of the territory under the supervision of Federal agencies established in this area. Tribes and portions of tribes continued to move from nearly every part of the country until 1894. By this time, the western half of Indian Territory had been reorganized as "Oklahoma Territory," and the eastern half only remained more or less under Indian jurisdiction.

The Union Agency for the Five Civilized Tribes continued in operation at Muskogee and the Quapaw Agency served remnants of several western tribes evicted from their lands to the north. After the Civil War, plains tribes such as the Kiowa, Comanche, and Kiowa-Apache were settled in the Anadarko district. Members of each nation were enrolled by government census takers and apportioned individual allotments of tribal land at the turn of the century. Surplus land was opened to white settlement. In 1907 the Indian tribal governments and the western reservations were dissolved when Oklahoma and Indian territories joined to enter the Union as the new State of Oklahoma.

Today, most of the earlier sites of mission activity in this area lie deserted or have been turned to other purposes. In 1945, Tulsa oilman Thomas Gilcrease, himself of Creek descent, commissioned an artist by the name of Vinson Lackey to recreate on canvas the early settlements in Indian Territory. Lackey looked into old building plans, checked old records, and visited the sites of nearly every institution known to have existed in the territory. After several years, he succeeded in producing a series of reconstructed views representing more than one hundred military posts, governmental agencies, and Christian missions in early day Oklahoma. Together with his notes on the history of each of these places, Lackey's unique collection is now part of the Gilcrease Institute's extensive

inventory of materials documenting the history of the settlement of the trans-Mississippi West.

Among the Indian peoples, the missions proved a definite spiritual and national force. Their influence is still in evidence in many sections. Some continued to be supported largely or wholly by tribal funds in the years following the Civil War and each tribe sponsored its respective schools and academies. The Chickasaws sent their children to Bloomfield and Wapanucka mission schools to be educated under the supervision of the Reverend Hamilton Ballentine. New Hope Seminary at Skullyville, supported jointly by Methodist and Chickasaw funds, remained in operation until fire destroyed its buildings in 1896. New Spring Place, built by Moravian minister Miles Vogler in 1841, was rebuilt after the Civil War and is today a Danish Lutheran school. Dwight Mission, near the present Sallisaw, Oklahoma, also had a long and active existence and is yet a Presbyterian meeting place.

The stone church at Wheelock stands today as it did when first built under the direction of the Reverend Alfred Wright in 1846. Gone are Clear Creek Mission established by Ebenezer Hotchkin and Pine Ridge by Cyrus Kingsbury who served the cause of missions in the Indian nations until his death in 1870 at the age of eighty-four. Co-worker with Kingsbury was Cyrus Byington, founder of Stockbridge and Goodwater missions, who remained on his farm in Indian Territory during the War Between the States completing his Choctaw dictionary.

During the last three quarters of the nineteenth century, more than 200 missionaries from the United States served the Indians in Indian Territory. Their wives and others who came to serve as teachers numbered more than 450. The number of Indians who were converted as a result of their efforts is difficult to estimate today, but the importance of the influence which the mission

Top left is a picture of St. Mary's Mission by Montana artist, Olaf Seltzer, as it probably appeared in the late 1840's. Center illustration of Indian Women Making Sofke, by the late Acee Blue Eagle, depicts domestic occupations among the Civilized Tribes following their resettlement in Indian Territory. At bottom, Oklahoma artist, Charles Banks Wilson, has described a scene from contemporary Indian life, in this case a modern day "pow wow." Descendants from nearly all the original Indian nations in America make their homes in Oklahoma.

schools exerted cannot be over emphasized. The manner in which they pressed civilization upon the native tribes often is criticized today; yet the lot of the aboriginal American might well have been worse than it was but for the presence of the missionaries, with only the equivocal policies of a distant Congress to protect his person and his interests in the days of this nation's swift progress westward.

To be sure, it was some time after mission settlements existed throughout the West before the

Indian came to be respected as a fellow man by his white associates. Nevertheless, the mission schools and churches must be accorded the lion's share of the credit for having helped the dispossessed tribes to prepare themselves for the inevitable changes that overcame them and to make the adjustments they were forced to make in order to survive the Anglo-American conquest of the western half of the continent.

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Ichohomines, (qui olim regis Powhatanis subditi fuerat, jam diu autem illius imperium excusserant) posteaquam pacem inter regem ac Anglos coaluisse intellexerunt: statim legatos cum donis ad Anglos ablegarunt, qui se Jacobi Regis subditos fore stipularentur. Itaque homagio praestando dies dicitur, totumque id negotium capitaneo Argoli cum 50. armatis committitur. Is summa cum reverentia, variisque donis liberaliter ab eis exceptus, ac storea infidens, procerum corona circumseptus pacis articulos promulgavit; quos cum unanimi consensu adprobassent, juramentum fidelitatis ab omnibus & singulis est praestitum. Finito colloquio Capitaneus primores plebis, aliquot cupri laminis aliisque merculis donavit, quas illi grata mente accipientes, Capitaneo vicissim ferinas carnes, gallinas indicas, recentes pisces, storeas, aliaque id genus dona obtulerunt.

Illustration reproduced inside front cover of this issue of the American Scene taken from dealer's collection of original plates by Amsterdam engraver, Theodore DeBry (printed between 1590 and 1602 after watercolor

sketches by John White). Another engraved scene attributed to DeBry is also reproduced above describing the early English colonists' first encounter with the Powhatans of the Virginia coastal area.