

Chapter 01

“A noble edifice . . . away out there”

1839-1865

Dressed in their Sunday best, hundreds of Cherokees assembled at Park Hill, Indian Territory, on Wednesday, May 7, 1851, to dedicate their new female seminary building. The culmination of more than a decade of planning and effort, the school and its male counterpart, about three miles away in Tahlequah, completed an educational system the Cherokees had reestablished in Indian Territory after a journey called the “Trail of Tears” from the southeastern United States. For more than half a century, the two seminaries enabled Cherokee youth to complete high school within the boundaries of their new nation in the West. In 1909, the female seminary building, rebuilt in Tahlequah in the late 1880s, was acquired by the new state of Oklahoma for the training of public school teachers. Many students who had attended the female seminary continued their education in the same building after it became the home of Northeastern State Normal School.¹ The legacy of Cherokee learning became part of the tradition of the new state school as it evolved from a normal to a state teachers college and eventually a state university. When Northeastern State University commemorated its centennial as a state school the old Cherokee high school building, renamed Seminary Hall, remained the center of the university campus and represented a physical link to the Cherokee Female Seminary, which trained young women in the Victorian era.

Queen Victoria had been on the throne of England only two years in 1839 when the Cherokees completed their Trail of Tears to Indian Territory. Long before their removal, the Cherokees had come to value education. When Moravian missionaries were first allowed in the Cherokee Nation at the beginning of the 19th century,

¹ A normal school is an institution that provides training for prospective teachers. Early in the nineteenth century, the French established *écoles normales*, the first of which were designed to provide two years of training primarily for teachers who were expected to teach and maintain the norms, or rules. In 1839, Horace Mann, secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education, and others devoted to the improvement of educational standards established the first normal school in the United States at Lexington, Massachusetts. Similar schools spread quickly throughout the United States. By the 1920s the term had become archaic and is now seldom used.

they were required to provide schools for tribal children. In fact, they were told that if schools were not established within six months, they would be expelled. The Cherokee Treaty of 1828, which granted the western branch of the Cherokees the area that became northeastern Oklahoma, required that the United States government provide annuities for ten years for the establishment of schools and appropriate additional funds for the purchase of a printing press “to aid the Cherokees in the progress of education.” The Treaty of New Echota of 1835 removed most Cherokees from their eastern lands and required the federal government to add more than \$150,000 to tribal accounts to create a permanent school fund for the support of “common schools and such a literary institution of a higher order as may be established in the Indian country.”²

Despite the upheaval and hardship of removal, within four years after the Trail of Tears, the tribal council had established eleven common schools throughout the new nation. Within a decade that number doubled, but the schools offered only the educational basics, little more than the “Three Rs.” Cherokee families who had higher educational aspirations for their sons and daughters had to send them beyond the boundaries of their nation. For that reason, in 1846 the tribal council voted to establish two non-sectarian seminaries—high schools—within the Cherokee Nation “in which all those branches of learning be taught, which may be required to carry the mental culture of the youth of our country to the highest practicable point.” In his annual message of 1847, Cherokee Chief John Ross informed the council that both buildings “had been contracted for and work is now going on.” Two years later he reported the “work on the buildings was in a state of forwardness and they will soon be ready for occupancy.”³ Apparently that report was optimistic, for Ross’s 1850 annual message contained no mention of the seminaries’ progress, and it was not until the spring of 1851 that they were finally completed.

Unlike the boarding schools of the other tribes, these institutions were not staffed by missionaries, but rather teachers hired by the

² William G. McLaughlin, *Cherokees and Missionaries, 1789-1839* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1995), 35-53. Charles J. Kappler, comp. and ed., *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904), 2: 290, 443-44.

³ Report of Pierce M. Butler, 30 September 1843, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1843*, 413-18. Report of James M. Payne, 23 August 1853, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1853*, 116-18. Annual Message, 4 October 1847, and Annual Message 1 October 1849, John Ross, *The Papers of Chief John Ross*, ed. Garry E. Moulton (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1984) II, 323-24, 333. *Cherokee Advocate*, 27 July 1878, 1.

tribal government. A site a mile-and-a-half southwest of the tribal capital in Tahlequah had been selected for the male seminary, and the women's facility was built at Park Hill, about three miles south of the capitol building. The identical, three-story brick structures with spacious verandas supported by Doric columns were the first large buildings in Indian Territory. Each cost about \$60,000.⁴

The year before the schools admitted their first classes, Cherokee representatives David Vann, tribal treasurer, and William Potter Ross, the chief's Princeton-educated nephew, visited New England seeking teachers for their new schools. Thomas Van Horn, a graduate of Newton Theological Seminary, and Oswald Woodford of Yale were hired to staff the male seminary. The Cherokee representatives also visited Mount Holyoke in South Hadley, Massachusetts, where Sarah Worcester and Ellen Whitmore were recommended by the acting principal Mary Chapin. Born in 1828 in New Echota, Georgia, where her father Samuel Worcester was a missionary to the Cherokee, Sarah was completing her third and final year at Mount Holyoke. Also born in 1828, Ellen Whitmore from Marlboro, Massachusetts, was in the second year of the school's three-year program.⁵

The Cherokees not only acquired their first faculty for their female seminary from Mount Holyoke, they also used the Massachusetts school as a pattern for the institution they established at Park Hill. Founded by Mary Lyon, a classmate of Sarah Worcester's mother, Mount Holyoke pioneered in the education of women. The school she established in South Hadley in 1837 differed from finishing schools, which provided post-high school training for women before the Civil War. Mount Holyoke offered a solid educational foundation similar to that available to men who attended college. Miss Lyon developed a curriculum and philosophy of education her students carried literally to the four corners of the world. Many young women who became principals and teachers at the Cherokee seminary borrowed heavily from the Mount Holyoke method when they began teaching at Park Hill.⁶

⁴ Carolyn Thomas Foreman, *Park Hill* (Muskogee, Oklahoma: The Star Printery, Inc., 1948), 78-80.

⁵ Lola Garrett Bowers and Kathleen Garrett, eds., *The Journal of Ellen Whitmore* (Tahlequah, Oklahoma: Northeastern State College, 1953), 11.

⁶ Raymond Schuessler, "It All Began with Mary Lyon," *NRTA Journal*, March-April 1978, 13-15. Althea Bass, *Cherokee Messenger*, Paperback Ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), 277. Althea Bass, *A Cherokee Daughter of Mount Holyoke* (Muscatine, Iowa: The Prairie Press, 1937), 5-9.

The day the representatives of the Cherokee Nation visited Mount Holyoke, Ellen Whitmore wrote friends seeking advice.

Today I have seen (at the request of the teachers) two gentlemen from the Cherokee nation. They are in search of teachers for a new Seminary to be established there. The school is to number but 25 the first year. It is free-supported by government—the girls are to be selected from the common schools and pass an examination before entering. The course of study is to be four years. Twenty-five are to be added each year so the established number will be one hundred. They wish at present only a principal and an associate. Sarah Worcester daughter of the missionary among the Cherokees is recommended as principal and myself to be associate. The salary for the principal is \$800, for the associate \$600 per year besides board. This is the plain statement of the case. It is by no means certain that they will wish us to go. They are looking around and will select from those recommended. They returned to Washington today and will write to Miss Chapin in a few days and inform her of their decision. In the meantime they wished me to think of it and consult any friends and be prepared to decide as soon as I hear from them.⁷

On June 19, 1850, the two tribal representatives wrote from Washington, D.C., to Miss Chapin, “Should you think Miss Worcester and Miss Whitmore suitable, we are willing to take them, it being agreeable to themselves.” Twenty-two-year-old Ellen Whitmore was selected as the first principal teacher for the female seminary, and Sarah Worcester was chosen as her assistant.⁸

The two young women met William P. Ross in Philadelphia on October 3, 1850, and departed for the Cherokee Nation the next morning. Sarah Worcester’s 1847 journey from Park Hill in the Cherokee Nation to South Hadley and the trip of the two young women to the Cherokee Nation in 1850 were odysseys beset with uncertainty and danger. Both left colorful, first-hand accounts describing the arduous nature of travel in mid-nineteenth century America. Railroads had not crossed the crest of the Appalachians; riverboats, at the mercy of the weather and water level, were dirty, crowded, and undependable, and coach travel was physically and emotionally taxing.⁹

Sarah Worcester had lived most of her life among the Cherokees and was aware of the cultural strides made by the tribe, but Mr.

⁷ Ellen [Whitmore] to Friends, before August 1859, handwritten letter, Cherokee Historical Society Archives, Park Hill, Oklahoma.

⁸ Bass, *A Cherokee Daughter of Mount Holyoke*, 14.

⁹ Lola Garrett Bowers and Kathleen Garrett, eds., *The Journal of Ellen Whitmore*, Tahlequah, Oklahoma: Northeastern State College, 1953. Bass, *Cherokee Messenger*, 278-85.

Woodford apparently believed he had been employed by a backward people, unaware of the white man's industrial and agricultural advances. He took corn as a gift to the tribe and was amazed to find that even the full bloods harvested more than enough of the crop to meet tribal needs.¹⁰

After six weeks of taxing travel, Ellen Whitmore and Sarah Worcester reached Park Hill on Wednesday, November 13. Since the teachers arrived in late 1850, months before the schools opened, they found lodging in the Park Hill area. Mr. Woodford stayed in the palatial home of John Ross, Rose Cottage, a southern plantation that rivaled the fictional Tara in splendor. The estate's rose-lined lane, tilled fields, blacksmith shop, dairy, stables, and extensive slave quarters amazed the incredulous prospective teacher. In January 1851, he wrote his parents, "I am well, fat and enjoying myself nicely at the chief's. We live in luxury & splendor & refinement. The furniture (for the seminaries) don't come yet as the water has not risen enough. We shall not begin probably within five or six weeks."¹¹

After the trip from Massachusetts, Miss Whitmore, who stayed at the home of the Worcesters, recorded her first impression of the new seminary in her journal. "I can see the building from the piazza of this house. . . . It is a beautiful brick building with pillars on three sides of it and presents a fine appearance from here."¹² Augustus W. Loomis, a missionary who visited Park Hill in the 1850s, recorded his impression of the building.

We visited the Female Academy—a large handsome, well-finished brick building. One almost wonders what such a noble edifice is doing away out there. From the top of it we saw the Seminary for young men, two miles distant. Each had a boarding department, with three or four teachers. The buildings were erected, and the schools supported out of their school fund.¹³

Final work on the two seminary buildings was not completed, and the furnishings were not ready until the following spring. The

¹⁰ Devon Mihesuah, "Out of the 'Graves of the Polluted Debauches': The Boys of the Cherokee Male Seminary," *American Indian Quarterly* 15 (Fall 1991): 505.

¹¹ Ibid. Maggie Culver Fry, ed. and comp., *The Female Seminary Years: A Cherokee National Anthology* [Claremore, Oklahoma]: Rogers State College Press, 1988), 27-28.

¹² Ellen [Whitmore] to her brother, 13 November [1850], handwritten letter, Cherokee Historical Society Archives, Park Hill, Oklahoma.

¹³ Augustus W. Loomis, *Scenes in the Indian Country*, 269. in Grant Foreman, *Advancing the Frontier, 1830-1860* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1933), 317.

Cherokee council authorized the admission of twenty-five students to the first session of both seminaries. Prospective students were required to take an examination in reading, spelling, grammar, arithmetic, and geography. Those who passed were educated at tribal expense.

On May 6, John Ross, Cherokee officials, and interested citizens formally dedicated the male seminary near Tahlequah; a twenty-piece military band from Fort Gibson began the ceremony with “Hail Columbia.” Among the invited guests were Samuel A. Worcester, Dr. Elizur Butler, and Evan Jones, all missionaries long associated with the Cherokees. The only important Cherokee official not present was William P. Ross, who was in the nation’s capital on tribal business. The occasion was festive, and one account reported, “We never before saw the old Chief so cheerful, so happy, and so full of hopes for the future.” The following day Ross and other officials and guests moved to Park Hill for similar ceremonies at the female seminary.¹⁴

The May seventh date was chosen by the people of the nation to commemorate the opening of both institutions. From the early 1850s, students, members of the community, and later graduates and former students gathered on the seminary grounds or nearby to celebrate that momentous day in 1851 when the Cherokees ignited the lamp of learning in the wilderness. Class work began the following Monday, May 12, 1851. Ellen Whitmore’s journal provided a glimpse of life at the female seminary a few days after its dedication.

Sabbath, May 11th. Services in the school room commenced at 11 o'clock. Mr. Ross and family were here. Monday, May 12th we commenced recitations, found the young ladies interested and lessons learned well! told them they must arise and retire promptly. . . . I have taken the history, one class in grammar, two in arithmetic and the reading. Sarah has the writing, botany, one class in grammar, one in arithmetic and singing.¹⁵

In both seminaries most students who passed the exams came from affluent, mixed-blood homes. In fact, old photographs in the

¹⁴ *Cherokee Advocate*, 5 May 1880 [references to the *Cherokee Advocate* without page numbers were taken from Books Two, Three, and Four of the *Cherokee Advocate* Newspaper Abstracts, ed., Dorothy Tincup Mauldin (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oklahoma Yesterday Publications, 1991)]. Grant Foreman, *Five Civilized Tribes* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1986), 408-10.

¹⁵ Ellen Whitmore, *The Journal of Ellen Whitmore*, Lola Garrett Bowers and Kathleen Garrett, eds. (Tahlequah, Oklahoma, Northeastern State College, 1953), 20.

archives of Northeastern State University reveal that most of the seminarians looked and dressed like young white men and women. Most studies of the Cherokees' two seminaries agree that both provided an exceptional level of education for an area that was still part of the nation's frontier. The male seminary educated several generations of business, professional, and governmental leaders, and the female seminary trained a corps of teachers who transmitted their learning to several generations of Cherokee children and later to white students in the new state of Oklahoma.

Many of the seminary students, the boys in particular, found the regimen of the school restrictive. Some rebelled, and the teachers were hard pressed to keep them in line. The mandatory abstinence pledges all the boys were required to take at Cherokee Temperance Society meetings were frequently violated despite the recording of black marks, suspension of privileges, and expulsions.¹⁶

Maintaining discipline at the female seminary may have been a little easier, but neither the Mount Holyoke regimen instituted by Ellen Whitmore nor the demanding curriculum could totally suppress the youthful exuberance of the female seminary students. Two young ladies decided to initiate their "greenhorn" principal by dressing up as wild Indians. Miss Whitmore commented that they "succeeded very well in carrying out their farce." Although the two girls may not have realized it, they established a precedent for pranks that continued into the twentieth century.¹⁷

The greater difficulty in maintaining discipline at the male seminary, at least in the early years, was reflected in the schools' graduation rates. At the end of four years, the male seminary graduated only five students, while twelve women earned degrees. Creek missionary William S. Robertson, who visited Park Hill frequently before the death of Samuel Worcester, his father-in-law, commented on the behavior of the "ungoverned rude set" and believed the "future prospects of the Nation are dark indeed if their youth are not better governed."¹⁸

Miss Whitmore faced other problems familiar to educators in the twentieth-first century--dropouts and a lack of financial support. In October, shortly after the beginning of the second term, she wrote:

¹⁶ Devon Mihesuah, "Out of the 'Graves of the Polluted Debauches': the Boys of the Cherokee Male Seminary," *American Indian Quarterly*, 15 (Fall 1991): 506-07.

¹⁷ Ellen Whitmore, *The Journal of Ellen Whitmore*, 20.

¹⁸ Mihesuah, "Out of the 'Graves,'" 506-07.

It is now a week since the new term commenced and as yet there are only half my number here[;] this is very annoying indeed. . . . Two of my loveliest girls are not coming back at all--and one little miss about fifteen thought being at boarding school three months was quite sufficient . . . and is married. She will regret the foolish step one of these days.¹⁹

A month later, Miss Whitmore wrote her future mother-in-law in Massachusetts that the school's enrollment would be doubled at the beginning of the next term. She continued, "unless the Directors are more active in making arrangements to procure furniture for them--they cannot come--I make no pretensions to any great energy, . . . but I should like to push some of these big lazy men a little."²⁰ Miss Whitmore's tenure was short. In March 1852, she informed John Ross that she planned to resign as principal and marry a young man from New England. In a letter dated March 16, 1852, to Mary Chapin at Mount Holyoke, she asked for assistance in finding a replacement. She wrote:

I would not advise one to come who has had little or no experience or one who is very young, for it is a responsible situation, and one of course by no means free from trials. . . . The situation is, I think a desirable one in every respect. The salary is large, being eight hundred dollars a year--the school is pleasant--the country delightful--the society of the neighborhood of a superior order, and the religious privileges good.²¹

On June 17, 1852 Ellen Whitmore married Warren Goodale at Rose Cottage, the residence of Chief John Ross at Park Hill. On February 15 of the following year, Sarah Worcester, who taught at the seminary another year, married Dr. Daniel Dwight Hitchcock, the son of missionaries to the Cherokees. Neither of the female seminary's first faculty members lived long. Ellen Whitmore Goodale and her husband worked as missionaries among the Polynesians in Hawaii, where she died in 1861, just ten years after she began her duties at Park Hill. Sarah Worcester Hitchcock remained with her husband in Indian Territory, but died in 1857, just four years after her marriage.²²

¹⁹ [Ellen Whitmore] to Mrs. G[oodale], 8 October 1851, Archives of the Cherokee Nation, Cherokee National Historical Society, Park Hill, Oklahoma.

²⁰ Ellen [Whitmore] to Mrs. Goodale, 21 November [1851], Archives of the Cherokee Nation, Cherokee National Historical Society, Park Hill, Oklahoma. Foreman, Park Hill, 84.

²¹ Ellen R. W. To Miss Chapin, 16 March 1852, in Whitmore, *The Journal of Ellen Whitmore*, 21-25.

²² Whitmore, *The Journal of Ellen Whitmore*, 27. Carolyn Thomas Foreman, *Park Hill*

Although Ellen Whitmore Goodale was not there to witness the culmination of three terms of academic work, in early August 1852, public examinations were conducted at Park Hill for forty-six seminary girls. Dressed in white with pink sashes, the students demonstrated their mastery of the subjects they had studied in a daylong series of oral examinations. William S. Robertson, a missionary in the Creek Nation who witnessed the exams, wrote, "They were a credit to their teachers & their Nation may well be proud of them."²³

The schedules of the first several exams have not been located, but a hand-written program of the 1855 public exam in the Alice Robertson Collection of the University of Tulsa Library reveals the nature of the students' training.²⁴

"Order of Exercises for Examination Day Aug 1, 1855 Devotions 7¼ - 7½			
	h	m	
Geography	7	30	7 50
Latin	7	50	8 15¼
Arithmetic	8	15	9 00
Rhetoric	9	00	9 30½
Geometry—Star of Twilight	9½	10¼	Abou Ben Adem (<i>sic</i>)
Physiology	10	11¼	" Avery " Ross
	Recess 11.5		
Algebra	11	12.20	" Raymond
Intellectual Philosophy	12	20	1 " Avery
	Dinner 1½		
Nat. Theology	1½	2¼	"Merry Goes the Time" " Raymond
Evidences of Christianity	2¼	3	Music " Avery
	We plough the fertile meadow Paper—& Marks 3¾ Singing—I'm going home" ¹⁴		

Oswald Woodford, assistant teacher of the male seminary, sent the Cherokee agent, George Butler, a report on the condition of his school. Both seminaries had closed their first term in early August

(Muskogee, Oklahoma: The Star Printery, Inc., 1948), 82, 84-85. "Hitchcock, Daniel Dwight," *Amherst College Biographical Record: Class of 1844*, 10 August 2000 <http://www.amherst.edu/~rjyanco94/genealogy/acbiorecord/1844.html> (27 November 2006). "Ellen R. Whitmore," *Springhill Burial Grounds* <http://freepages.history.rootsweb.com/~historyofmarlborough/springhilla-k.htm> (27 November 2006).

²³ Foreman, *Park Hill*, 81-82.

²⁴ Althea Bass, *A Cherokee Daughter of Mount Holyoke* (Muscatine, Iowa: The Prairie Press, 1937), 19-20.

1851, after completing only thirteen weeks of a term that was supposed to be twenty. The danger of continuing through the “hot and unhealthy months” was cited as the reason of ending the term early. Like its female counterpart, the Tahlequah school admitted twenty-five boarding pupils as well as several day students. Those selected had to write “good examinations,” although Woodford observed, “it was found necessary to give the word ‘good’ considerable latitude.” The students ranged in age from fourteen to twenty-one. Woodford commented, “Most, to be sure, more properly belong to the white race; though a few are entirely or chiefly Indian, and in all traces of Indian blood may be discovered. Some of our best scholars are those most thoroughly Indian.”²⁵

The Yale-educated instructor was restrained in his description of student progress during the first two terms and mentioned that the faculty’s most essential desire “is a more thorough awakening of a scholarly enthusiasm.” In addition to subjects taught to the female students, the boys also took French and Greek. Fifteen boys enrolled in classes in instrumental music on the violin, flute, and clarinet. Students at the male seminary organized a literary society called the Sequoyan Institute, which held weekly debates. The school’s library of religious, historical, biographical, scientific, and literary works was small, but expanding because of gifts from publishers and other donations. On Sundays, visiting ministers usually conducted religious services at the seminary, and an hour was devoted to Bible study. Woodford concluded, “the present prospects of the seminary seem to be eminently encouraging.”²⁶

Although the first term ended early, Chief John Ross was pleased by the progress demonstrated by the students. In his annual message he reported, “The examination of the pupils . . . evinced thoroughness in the branches they had studied, which reflects credit on the teachers for their care and skill, and on the students for their diligence and attention. I add, with unmingled pleasure, that the deportment of the young ladies was in a high degree gratifying and satisfactory.”²⁷ Ross’s failure to comment on the conduct of the male students lends credence to reports that their deportment was less commendable than the students of their sister institution.

²⁵ O. L. Woodford, Assistant Instructor, to George Butler, Esq., United States Agent for Cherokees, 19 September 1852, in *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1852* (Washington : Government Printing Office, 1852), 119-20.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Annual Message, 5 October 1851, Ross, *The Papers of Chief John Ross*, II, 358.

The duty of the seminary teachers extended beyond the classroom; they participated in most extracurricular activities and enforced the rules of conduct day and night. They were not responsible for the non-educational administration of the seminaries. The Cherokee Nation hired stewards to maintain the buildings and grounds, provide meals, and oversee the laundry and other routine administrative services. Married men were appointed to the position, but their unpaid wives assumed much of the responsibility for attending to the needs of the students. The first steward of the female seminary was Dr. Elizur Butler. The fifty-seven-year-old medical missionary also served as the seminary physician and conducted religious services on Sundays. Over the years periodic epidemics threatened the health of the students at both seminaries, but in the first five years of its operation under Dr. Butler's supervision, no student died while attending the female seminary.²⁸

Harriet Johnson of Sturbridge, Massachusetts, who had taught at several Massachusetts schools including Mount Holyoke, accepted the position as principal teacher at the Cherokee Female Seminary and assumed her duties after the departure of Mrs. Goodale in the summer of 1852. Older and more experienced than the first principal, Johnson continued the academic regimen established by her predecessor as the school continued to expand. Oswald Woodford resigned his position at the male seminary at the end of the first year to return to New England to attend Andover Theological Seminary. He was replaced by Franklin S. Lyon of the University of Rochester, New York.²⁹

Despite Ross's optimistic assessment of the future of the seminaries, retaining qualified faculty remained a problem. After serving as principal of the female seminary for a year, on October 5, 1853, Harriet Johnson married Mr. Robert McGill Loughridge, a missionary to the Creeks who had established Kowetah Mission. In 1853, the Cherokees hired another graduate of Mount Holyoke to serve as the third principal teacher at the female seminary; Pauline Avery of Conway, Massachusetts, had graduated from Mount Holyoke in 1850 and taught there two years before accepting the position at Park Hill. In a letter in late December of that year, Sarah Worcester reported that the new principal was well liked, but "some

²⁸ *Cherokee Advocate*, 14 March 1884.

²⁹ Annual Message, 4 October 1852, Ross, *Papers of Chief John Ross*, II, 378-79. Virginia McLoughlin, "Establishing a Church on the Kansas Frontier; The Letters of Rev. O. L. Woodford and His Sister Henrietta, 1857-1859, *Kansas Historical Quarterly*, 37 (Summer 1971): 153.

of the girls have made a good deal of trouble this term.” Avery remained principal teacher for two years. To replace Sarah Worcester and to handle the growing enrollment, Cherokee officials hired two additional teachers for the 1853-54 school year, Charlotte E. Raymond and Eliza Jane Ross. Raymond was from Connecticut and had been educated in Philadelphia. Ross, the niece of the principal chief, had attended Cane Hill School in Arkansas before spending four years at the Bethlehem Female Seminary.³⁰

Apparently, educating Cherokee boys presented a greater challenge than that faced by the teachers of the female seminary. Franklin S. Lyon, principal of the male seminary in 1854, mentioned the ordeal through which new enterprises pass. By the beginning of the third year, enrollment should have been approximately seventy-five, but in September the school had only forty-five students, including fourteen admitted for the current year. Students tended to be concentrated in the basic courses, with only six enrolled in Greek and two in trigonometry. An additional instructor from an Eastern college was expected to arrive by the beginning of the next term, which Lyon hoped would enable the faculty “to accomplish more for the improvement of the young men intrusted to our care.”³¹

The seminaries were oases of refinement and learning on an otherwise raw frontier. In fact, Park Hill, the home of the female seminary, Samuel Worcester's mission and printing press, and the elegant mansions of the tribal leaders had earned a reputation as the “Athens of Indian Territory.” Given the 19th century philosophy of education for non-white minorities, the curriculum at both institutions was unusual. Neither school taught vocational subjects that were emphasized by boarding schools operated by the Bureau of Indian Affairs later in the nineteenth century. But neither did they teach Cherokee history, culture, or language.

Students were kept abreast of current events, including the tribe's relations with the federal government, as well as intra and intertribal affairs. Standards at both institutions were rigorous, and the students' days were strictly structured. The curriculum of the male seminary, which included eight semesters of English, mathematics, science, foreign language, and history and social

³⁰ Pauline Avery, Principal, Charlotte E. Raymond, and E. Jane Ross, Assistants, to Mr. George Butler, Cherokee Agent, 8 September 1854, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1854*, 123-24.

³¹ F.S. Lyon, Principal of Male Seminary to Mr. George Butler, Cherokee Agent, 5 September 1854, *Ibid.*, 122-23

studies, would challenge college students in the twenty-first century. While not as rigorous, the female seminary offered a demanding academic curriculum. It was certainly not the typical "finishing school" that stressed genteel domestic arts so common for proper young women in Victorian America.³²

At the close of the winter term in February of 1855, the seminaries graduated their first students. Twelve women had completed their high school degrees, but only five men earned diplomas at the same time. Oswald Woodford, who returned to the Cherokee Nation as principal of the Tahlequah school, reported that the "classes have been thinned out more or less every term, by expulsion and voluntary withdrawals." In August 1855, at the end of her second year as principal teacher, Pauline Avery reported, "a marked improvement, both in deportment and application to study, during the past year."

The enrollment at the female seminary had reached a high of sixty, but the average attendance was fifty-five. Unchanged from the previous year, the curriculum embraced "the studies usually taught at higher seminaries in the United States." The male seminary's enrollment remained smaller than the Park Hill school's with forty-six residents students, including three graduates. Like the female seminary, the faculty of the Tahlequah school included three graduates of Eastern colleges. Principal Woodford outlined his school's curriculum for the entire four-year course of study.

Resident Graduates—Latin, Virgil; Greek, Xenophon's Anabasis.

First Class—Geometry; Latin, Caesar; Intellectual Philosophy; Rhetoric, Newman's.

Second Class—Latin, Arnold; Geometry; Natural Philosophy.

Third Class—Elements of History, Worcester; Algebra; Cutter's Physiology; Book-keeping; Latin commenced.

Fourth Class—Green's Analysis of the English Language; Greenleaf's Arithmetic; Mitchell's Geography; Reading; Russel's Elocution; Penmanship.

Daily exercises have been had in declamation, and frequent exercise in English composition.³³

³² Bobby Ross, Jr., "Four-Core' Plan Considered," *Daily Oklahoman*, 20 February 1998.

³³ Mcloughlin, "Establishing a Church on the Kansas Frontier," 153. O.S. Woodford, Principal, to

Records of the antebellum period of the seminaries are meager. Both schools produced literary journals that provide insight to the students' lives and the impact of the instruction they received. The male seminary publication was *The Sequoyah Memorial* and its female counterpart was *A Wreath of Cherokee Rosebuds*.

Bringing knowledge to the frontier was neither easy nor inexpensive. Teachers employed by the Cherokees traveled two thousand miles to their classrooms. Sending a child away to high school was an emotional and an economic hardship for many citizens of the tribe; and even getting textbooks proved difficult in 1855 when low water in the Arkansas River delayed a shipment for ten months.³⁴ Nonetheless, the impact of the seminaries was obvious within a few months after the graduation of the first class in 1855. In his annual report in August of that year to the agent to the Cherokees, the tribal superintendent of common schools noted:

We now have in our employ twelve teachers of our own nation, most of whom are graduates of our institutions. They are far better qualified for the task than those obtained in former years from the "borders." By next year I believe that we can supply our schools with teachers of our own.³⁵

His optimism was premature. In 1854, drought and poor harvests caused the nation's debt to soar. Within two years the Cherokee school fund was exhausted, and other income was insufficient to support both the common schools and the seminaries. In his annual report to the superintendent of Indian Affairs, Agent Butler, declared, "The educational facilities of the nation appear to be in jeopardy."³⁶

The two seminaries were not endorsed by all members of the tribe. The superintendent of Cherokee Public Schools criticized the six to eight hundred-dollar salaries of the teachers at the seminaries claiming, "that a teacher of a common school, who works harder and

George Butler, Esq., Cherokee Agent, 11 August 1855, and Pauline Avery, Principal of the Cherokee Female Seminary to George Butler, Esq., Cherokee Agent, 2 August 1855, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1855*, 131-32.

³⁴ Foreman, *Park Hill*, 101.

³⁵ H.D. Reese, Superintendent Common School, Cherokee Nation, to Colonel Geo. Butler, Agent for Cherokees, 10 August 1855, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1855*, 131-32.

³⁶ Mihesuah, *Cultivating the Rosebuds*, 45. George Butler, Cherokee Agent to Doctor C.W. Dean, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Fort Smith, Ark. 10 September 1856, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1856*, 137.

does more immediate good, is entitled to at least half that pay." He also questioned the value of the seminaries that produced scholars with an "aversion to labor" and emphasized the importance of the common schools in providing the educational basics to children throughout the nation.³⁷

John Ross did not share the superintendent's views. In his annual message in October of 1856, the Cherokee Chief informed tribal lawmakers, "the school fund must be promptly increased, or the means of Education at once curtailed. In plain words the duty and responsibility now rests upon you either to provide more money or cut off and destroy the facilities eagerly sought after by our common constituents." Despite Ross's plea, critics of the seminary persuaded the tribal council to spend available revenue on the common schools. Consequently, neither seminary was able to open for the fall semester of 1856.³⁸

Pauline Avery, principal of the female seminary from 1854 to 1856, and Oswald L. Woodford, principal of the male seminary during the 1855-56 school year returned to New England at the end of the academic year. They were married in November 1856 and moved to Kansas Territory in an effort to prevent the establishment of slavery there. Charlotte Raymond was appointed principal of the female seminary after the departure of Avery, but the failure of the council to provide funds for the tribal high schools left her without students.³⁹

In his 1857 annual message, John Ross anguished over the closing of the schools and urged the tribal council to devise plans to reopen them. Two years later, the Cherokee leader pointed out that the schools of the Cherokee Nation were "almost entirely under the instruction of Native Teachers," which he argued, "shows the valuable results obtained from the High Schools . . . and furnishes an argument unanswerable, why they should be put into operation . . . without further delay." Despite the logic of his argument, the seminaries remained closed, but in November the National Council appropriated funds to provide care for the two buildings. The legislators also created a temporary board of directors for the

³⁷ Abstract of the annual report of W. A. Duncan, Superintendent of Pubic Schools, to the National Council attached to a letter from W.A. Duncan to George Butler, Esq., Cherokee Agent, 24 September 1856, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1856*, 140-43

³⁸ Annual Message, [6 October 1856, Ross, *Papers of Chief John Ross*, II, 395-99. Mihesuah, *Cultivating the Rosebuds*, 45.

³⁹ Foreman, *Park Hill*, 94 and 102. McLoughlin, "Establishing a Church on the Kansas Frontier," 153.

schools with the power to open them when adequate funds were acquired.⁴⁰

Although the nation's financial problems remained vexing, in February 1861, members of the National Council appropriated enough money to reopen the female seminary on a co-educational basis. Although the school remained tuition free, only thirty-one students enrolled; many of those attending were younger than high school age. Charles M. Delano, a forty-nine year old Ohio native married to a Cherokee, was appointed superintendent of the female seminary, and Joshua Ross, nephew of the chief, was appointed principal. The school's first male principal was an 1855 graduate of the male seminary with additional training at the Ozark Institute in Arkansas. Assisted by his wife, Virginia, Ross, presided over a five-month term before financial problems and the Civil War closed the school for a decade.⁴¹

Not long after the female seminary's 1861 session ended, the Cherokee Nation was plunged into the white man's Civil War. The conflict was more divisive and destructive in the Cherokee Nation than in the Shenandoah Valley or Georgia, for the tribe not only took sides in the nation's conflict, but the Cherokees also fought a bitter civil war of their own. Although the Trail of Tears looms larger in the history of the Cherokees, the Civil War was more disruptive and traumatic to the tribe than forced removal. Most of the progress made by the tribe since the Trail of Tears was wiped out, and the Cherokees had to start over, divided by internal dissension that may have been more insidious than the problems they faced after removal. Used as warehouses, hospitals, and even stables during the Civil War, the seminary buildings were in shambles when the conflict ended.⁴²

⁴⁰ Annual Message, 5 October 1957, 3 October 1859, and 4 October 1860, Ross, *Papers of Chief John Ross*, II, 404-10, 420-27 and 449-52. Foreman, *Park Hill*, 114.

⁴¹ Mihesuah, *Cultivating the Rosebuds*, 47. Foreman, *Park Hill*, 131. S. W. Ross, interviewed by Elizabeth Ross, 23 March 1938, *Indian Pioneer Papers*, Vol. 98, 320.

⁴² Foreman, *Park Hill*, 146. N.B. Johnson, "The Cherokee Orphan Asylum," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 44 (Autumn 1966): 278.