

Continued from page 6

Chapter Two - The Birth and Growth of the Keetoowah Society

nized by him in 1854. [38] There is little doubt that not only did Evan Jones and Jesse Bushyhead meet with Black ministers within the Indian Territory, but that they were also quite accepting and even encouraging of their black brethren:

Agreeably to the suggestion in our last Report, Mr Jones, of the Cherokee Mission, visited the late Creek Station (Ebenezer's Canadian Mission) in September last and attended a Creek protracted meeting. He was received with great affection and joy, and preached several times by an interpreter. He had also the happiness of seeing four candidates baptised, one of whom was a Creek chief of respectability and influence. Mr. Jones reports the state of the people to be highly encouraging. The members of the church appear well, and the religious meetings are thronged, many of the congregation attending from a distance of twenty or more miles... "Religious meetings are conducted by two black men, both slaves. The oldest, Jacob, is ordained; the other called Jack, a blacksmith, acts as interpreter. They are allowed one day in the week to support themselves and their families in food and clothing; and these days they devote to the service of the church, hiring the working of their little corn and potato patches." [39]

Later that year, another Baptist minister visited the same mission and found a revival in progress with about one hundred people having been baptized by Pastor Jacob, "some of whom were white people and some were black, but most of them were Indians." [40]

Within Bushyhead's Flint Church itself, there is evidence not only of black membership dating back to even its foundation in Tennessee, but there is also considerable evidence of a black ministry. In the early 1840's, Minister Bushyhead became the center of a controversy because he was both an ordained minister and slaveholder, [41] though the situation was hardly as simple as the headline abolitionists made it out to be:

About the years 1840, or 41, Bro. B. purchased a Black man with his wife and child (by his own desires for the purpose of affording him an opportunity to become free). [italics mine]The man is a Baptist Preacher. As soon as he came home, Bro B. told him he must not consider himself any more as a slave but act faithfully as a free man. He furnished him with a horse to ride to his preaching places on sabbath days. This is the black man I have once or twice had occasion to allude to, having been called on several times to baptize hopeful converts, the evident fruit of the blessing of God on this man's labors. [42]

"Uncle Reuben," Jesse Bushyhead's slave, became a minister and preached to the slave communities in and around the Flint Church within the Cherokee Nation. Reuben's converts also became members of the church, "The colored persons baptized at this place are the fruits of the preaching of a Black man, a slave, who devotes his sabbath and frequently week [day] evenings to tell the love of Jesus to those of his own color, and God has blessed his labors." [43]

Bushyhead's slave became the center of a controversy within the Baptist

Church and precipitated the crisis that led to the "Great Schism" of 1844-1845. [44] Antislavery activists from the North, who had formed the American Baptist Free Mission Society in 1843, published in their Free Missionary magazine the following note, "Mr. Bushyhead, A Missionary among the Cherokee. He lives in a fine dwelling, has a plantation and several wretched human beings under his irresponsible power." [45] Bushyhead's status within the Baptist Church as one of the denomination's finest Native ministers was rocked by the scandal which drew even further attention to the struggle over slavery within the Cherokee Nation.

The missionary position, "between two fires," ended as a result of this controversy surrounding this disclosure; the Home Mission Board in 1844 was forced to reject the application of a slaveholding minister from Georgia as a missionary because, "When an application is made for the appointment of a slaveholder or an Abolitionist as such, the official obligation of the Board to act ceases." [46] In May 1845, at a convention in Augusta, Georgia, the Southern Baptist Convention was formed creating its own foreign and home missionary boards. The schism in the churches reflected the larger schism which was to come in later years. [47]

Yet, the schism was not only within the churches, it made its way into the Flint Baptist Church itself. In the Spring of 1858, the Southern Baptist Convention sent its first minister, the Reverend James Slover, into the Cherokee Nation. Slover took advantage of the fact that Evan Jones had expelled Cherokee slave owners from the church. Slover also well knew that the slave owners represented the wealthier class among the Cherokee, and that the churches associated with the Southern Baptist Convention could afford to pay native ministers quite well. Slover, by offering that the native ministers "set their own price," was able to attract away Young Duck (a deacon at Flint Church), David Foreman (ordained at Flint Church - a former interpreter in Valley Towns), and John Foster (dismissed for being a slave owner). Reverend Slover, who prided himself in being different from the "Jones Baptists," reportedly preached that "he owns one 'nigger' and would own more if he were able." [48]

However, there were some ministers who would not be won over to the Southern cause, regardless of the bounty offered by wealthy class. On one visit to the Creek Nation in 1857, Evan Jones and Pastor Lewis Downing of the Peavine Baptist Church ordained a free black by the name of Old Billy. Old Billy was warned by Creek slaveholders not to preach as a "Jones Baptist" would; the Southern Baptist missionary Henry Buckner stated that "Billy ought to have a hundred lashes" for his refusal to acquiesce to the Southern message. However, his congregation of Muscogean people -- African American and Native American, "told him to preach and they would protect him." Henry Davise, a Beloved Man among the congregation told John Jones, "If they whip that little nigger, they will have to whip me first." Henry Davise was ordained to the Baptist ministry at Peavine Baptist Church in 1860 that he could help Old Billy spread the

message of the gospel among the Creek Nation. [49] Though the Southern Baptists (and the Southern Methodists as well) had the money and offered many opportunities to those who would preach the pro-slavery gospel, many of the full-bloods were well aware the costs of such a discipleship:

It was so plain a case to see that these men were bought, that many turned away in disgust. Seeing that there were two denominations calling themselves Baptists, everybody was led to inquire into the difference between them, and set to examining the question to see who was right. Young men sprang up from obscurity and urged upon the people the sin of slavery, more clearly and efficiently than ever before. Many who were always opposed to it had their own sentiments more sharply defined in their own minds...The contributions of the Peavine church were larger than usual. [50]

Though the struggle was about slavery, it was about something deeper. In the minds of those people sitting in the pews at Peavine Baptist Church witnessing what was going on around them, larger questions arose. The person sitting next to them could be black; the person sitting next to them could be Christian; the person sitting next to them could be a didahnvwisgi. [51] Yet above all, they were human. And above that consideration stood the quintessential Cherokee value of the "beloved community;" this value proved to be one of the most important common denominators between the traditionalist community and the emerging Baptist churches.

A Peculiar Institution

It was about the time of removal of the Five Nations from the East to Indian Territory that another peculiar institution arose within the Southeastern Indians, and began to spread throughout the Indian Territory. J. Fred Latham describes this particular phenomena in The Story of Oklahoma Masonry:

A number of the Indian Chiefs and other leaders had received their Masonic degrees in Washington, D.C., while there on official business. They, with the officers and enlisted men in the Army taking them to Indian Territory were members of the Craft. Seemingly this was the first time that any considerable number of Masons were domiciled in this area.

The history of the Indian Territory, and indeed that of Freemasonry in the present state of Oklahoma, is so closely interwoven with that of the Five Civilized Tribes it would be difficult -- almost impossible -- and entirely undesirable to attempt to separate them. [52]

When English settlers first arrived upon the shore of the new world, the fraternal organization of Freemasonry was already a part of their cultural baggage. The appeal of Freemasonry in England, and its swift spread across the European continent following the establishment of the first Masonic Grand Lodge in 1717, appeared to stem from the harmony between the Masonic ideals of wisdom, strength, and beauty and the newer currents of

religious and political thought of the Enlightenment. [53]

The first Mason to live in America may have been Jonathan Belcher, former Governor of Massachusetts and New Hampshire, who was made a Mason in 1704. The first person to have been made a Mason in the United States may have been the governor's son, Andrew Belcher, who was made a Mason in 1733. In June 1730, the Grand Master of England appointed Daniel Coxe of New Jersey as the first Grand Master of the New World, but apparently Coxe was relatively disinterested in establishing the brotherhood in the New World. It was to American Henry Price that the organization of the first authorized Lodge in America is attributed at the Bunch of Grapes Tavern in Boston in 1733. [54]

However, Freemasonry was very popular among the colonists and spread very rapidly among the elite of the colonies, not just in what was to become the United States but also in Jamaica (1739), Barbados (1740), Haiti (1749), and throughout the Caribbean and Latin America. [55] Many of the founding fathers of the New World were involved in Masonry, and it might not be too great an exaggeration to say that the founding documents of the United States were heavily influenced by Masonic principles. Brother John Hancock was a Mason, as well as Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, Baron von Steuben, John Paul Jones, and Marquis de Lafayette. Many of the Generals of the Revolutionary Army, nine of the signatories of the Declaration of Independence, and thirteen of the signatories of the Constitution of the United States were also Freemasons. [56]

Freemasonry is commonly understood as a "secret society" within the contexts of the larger society, but it more appropriately referred to as a fraternal order. It is organized around selective membership, private rituals and ceremonies, and secret oaths and obligations. There are certain prerequisites that one must meet in order to become a Mason, somewhat of an elitism in the financial requirements of seeking membership, and a certain sense of "bourgeois morality and responsibility" in membership. [57] The secretive nature of Masonry is irritating to some non-Masons, who particularly dislike the exclusivity of the organization and feel "left-out" of something they would like to know or might want to become a member of. [58] Though there is great discussion as to how secret Freemasonry really is, there is some sort of satisfaction in belonging to an exclusive and secretive fraternal order.

The close associations of Masonic morality with Judeo-Christian traditions of morality have led some to come to see Freemasonry as a religion, though most participants claim that it is not. Though Masonry is religious, it is not a religion. [59] It is based upon thoughts, ideas, and concepts, and as such becomes a philosophy, but not a religion. It admits to membership men (and women in some countries) of all religious faiths. Without attempting to make men perfect, Masonry seeks to attain the greatest practical good. Masonry is not confined to persons of one religion, for good men are found in many reli-

gions. Only by circumstance of birth are persons under the auspices of a particular religion. [60]

Masonry spread so rapidly among the colonial population that by the early years of the nineteenth century, it was perceived to be a threat to the political and religious order of the United States. By 1800, there were nearly 20,000 Freemasons, many of whom were placed in the highest positions of political authority. The fact that an American apostasy -- Joseph Smith's Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints was closely affiliated with Freemasonry further contributed to the growing suspicion of Freemasonry. [61] The furor in 1826 over the supposed murder of William Morgan, who was said to have revealed Masonic "secrets," and the subsequent stonewalling of the investigation by New York political officials solidified anti-Masonic hysteria and led to the birth of Anti-Masonic political powers. However the controversy may have reflected upon Masonry, in the years preceding the Civil War, its growth burgeoned; between 1850 and 1860, its membership tripled to nearly 200,000 brothers. [62]

There was one group of people to whom the bonds of brotherhood did not apply. From the very beginnings of African American Freemasonry under the auspices of African Lodge #459 in Boston in 1775, white Freemasons have largely refused to accept Blacks into their lodges. In addition, they have refused to grant recognition to Prince Hall Freemasonry as being legitimate and equal in standing with white Freemasonry despite the fact that African Lodge #459 was chartered by the Grand Lodge of England. Freemasonic historian Albert Mackey ruled that African Lodge #459 was chartered legitimately, but that later jurisdictional problems and a period of dormancy during the Revolutionary war rendered the lodge "clandestine." [63] When asked about the issue of Negro Freemasons, Freemasonic historian Albert Pike declared in 1875:

There are plenty of regular Negro masons and Negro lodges in South America and the West Indies, and our folks only stave off the question by saying that Negro Masons here are clandestine. Prince Hall Lodge was as regular as any lodge created by competent authority and had a perfect right to establish other lodges, and make itself a mother lodge. I am not inclined to meddle in this matter. I took my obligation to white men, not negroes. When I have to accept Negroes as brothers or leave Masonry, I shall leave it. [64]

The distinction that white Masons made for African Americans was not made for Native Americans. As stated above, even before their removal to Indian Territory, Native Americans were initiated into the craft in places such as Washington, D.C., state capitols, or in their native homelands. Freemasonic lodges were formed in Charleston, South Carolina at Saint Paul's Parish between Goose Creek and the Stono River and in Savannah by Governor George Oglethorpe as early as 1736. [65] A lodge was also formed in North Carolina in 1754 under the auspices of the Grand Lodge of England; by 1796, the craft had spread from North Carolina to Tennessee. The first lodge in Tennessee

was located in Nashville and was chartered by the North Carolina Grand Lodge. [66] By the time of the removal of the Five Nations to the West, there were Grand Lodges in every state in which the Native Americans resided. [67] The fact that John Ross, the Chief of the Cherokee Nation, was initiated into the craft in Tennessee as early as 1827 implies that many lodges extended brotherhood to Native Americans.

J. Fred Latham, in The Story of Oklahoma Masonry, reports that not only were Native chiefs made Masons in the East, but that both the Native American leaders and the military officers that removed them during "the trail of tears" were Masons made the process of removal "more orderly." [68] General Winfield Scott, a Freemason, who presided over the removal of the Cherokee, gave explicit orders to pursue this distasteful activity with compassion:

Evry possible kindness...must therefore be shown by the troops, and if, in the ranks, a despicable individual should be found capable of inflicting a wanton injury or insult on any Cherokee man, woman, or child, it is hereby made the special duty of the nearest good officer or man, instantly to interpose, and to seize and consign the guilty wretch to the severest penalty of the laws. [69]

When asked by the leaders of the Cherokee Nation to postpone removal because of drought and sickness among the Cherokee, General Scott again showed compassion for his fraternal brothers. Negotiating with General Scott was Chief John Ross, a Master Mason in good standing with the Olive Branch Lodge of the Free and Accepted Masons in Jasper, Tennessee since 1827. [70]

Finally, when it appeared that his troops could not handle the process of removal as well as the Cherokee themselves, he acquiesced to a plea from Chief John Ross to allow the Cherokee to manage removal themselves. [71] When Andrew Jackson, former President and Former Grand Master of Masons from Tennessee, heard of Scott's brotherly relief, he wrote "I am so feeble I can scarcely wield my pen, but friendship dictates it and the subject excites me. Why is it that the scamp Ross is not banished from the notice of this administration." [72]

Upon arrival in the new territory, former members of the Lodges from the East began to organize the craft in their new home. A number of the ministers, merchants and military personnel were members of the craft and along with the Native American leaders who were Masons, they began to have meetings. These meetings moved from very informal social groupings into fellowship meetings where Masons met and enjoyed fraternal discussions. Applications for authority to organize lodges in several places were made, but urgent domestic problems prevented the satisfactory organization of lodges. According to J. Fred Latham, members of the craft took an active part in the stabilization of the community through the organization of law enforcement and through their activity in the political affairs of the Nation.

Continued in next month issue

Cherokees to hold membership drive

Date: Monday, May 30, 2005 10:03 AM

A field certification clerk from the Cherokee Nation is scheduled to be at the Cherokee Nation Muskogee Health Center from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Wednesday to assist Cherokees with applications for Certificate of Degree of Indian Blood cards and membership in the Cherokee Nation.

The center is at 1805 N. York St.

"Our goal is to make registration more convenient for Cherokees," said Lela Ummerteskee, tribal registrar. "We don't want people to have to come to Tahlequah to register themselves or their children. The application process is fairly simple, and application services and tribal citizenship are free. Citizenship is important because it provides easier access to tribal programs and services, and it is required to vote in tribal elections."

The main tribal registration office in the W.W. Keeler Tribal Complex in Tahlequah is open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

General information about application requirements: 456-0671, Ext. 2575, or (800) 256-0671, Ext. 2575.

This really sounds like a good thing. But we have a serious problem. In January 2004, I took my two nephews membership applications & their state certified birth certificate into the enrollment department, Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma tribal complex, Tahlequah, OK. It was a 3 hour trip one way. They took copies of the birth certificates and stated we had every things we needed for them to become tribal members. Well after 3 months we called and they stated they were being processed. Health issues came up for me so when I got better, I made it back down to the tribal complex. I went into enrollment and they told me they sent the applications back to them in the mail because they needed state certified birth certificates. I pulled out the same state certified birth certificates that I presented in January 2004.

I was told then, someone forgot to put the proper squiggle on the copy they took. As of May 2005 my nephews have never recieved their applicates back with the letter from the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma I was also told the they were just now processing April 2004 applications and that was in December 2004 when I was there.

So, you can see we have a problem in our tribal enrollment department. If they can't process the applications that was presented to them at the tribal complex, why are they doing these membership drives? Who are they signing up? Are they signing up selected individuals? If you have had this happen to your family, let me know.

franklin@cherokeobserver.org
Franklin McLain Sr.

Cherokee Translation courtesy of THE WHITEPATH FOUNDATION

The HIV / AIDS information booklet was translated into the Cherokee language by Mary L. Summerfield. Compiled by Marvin Summerfield. FOR:



THE WHITEPATH FOUNDATION
P.O. BOX 487
BLACKWELL, OK. 74631-0487
www.whitepath.org
write or call 1-580-363-5438

Send in your tax deductible donation to help provide this important information to over 10,000 Cherokees that still only read /write in our Cherokee language.
Copyright © 1992-2005 The Whitepath Foundation

Advertise in the Cherokee Observer helps us keep our Cherokee Language alive for our grand kids. Call today - 1-580-363-5438 or Email: editors@cherokeobserver.org