

Slide 1: Early Chickasaw Education

“When you think of Chickasaw education, mainly schools, what comes to mind? Do you think of uniforms or a typical classroom setting? Do you picture something from this century or the 19th century?”

Even if you are not familiar with the Chickasaws’ education, you still have an image that comes to mind. Let us look back and see how education for Chickasaw people differs from general education today, and how they have adapted to an ever-changing world.

[Give the students a few minutes to read the quote on the screen. Once they have read the quote discuss their thoughts. Before beginning the presentation ask the students questions and see what they know in general and based upon the quote they just read.]

What does it mean to be civilized from the European perspective?

Who decides who is civilized and who isn’t?

From what you know about Native Americans living in North America before Europeans arrived, were they civilized, and if so, by whose standards?

[After the discussion, move on to the next slide and cover terms they will see throughout the presentation.]

Slide 2: Introduction

Terms you will see throughout this presentation and need to be familiar with:

Mission schools are run by missionaries in places that education is unavailable; the children remain at a disadvantage. At these schools, the Bible and other religious ethics would be taught.

Missionaries are sent to do religious work or ministries of service such as providing education or literacy, etc.

Assimilate/assimilating/assimilation is often referred to as cultural assimilation, meaning to absorb into another culture.

Civilized is to bring to a point of social, cultural and moral growth considered to be more advanced.

Early Missions Among Native Peoples: Upon first contact with Europeans, the native tribes were sought after so missionaries could “tame” the “heathen” Indians. Beginning in the 16th century, Spanish explorers tried converting native people. In the 1730s, Moravian missionaries tried to convert the Creeks in Georgia before leaving and ministering to the Cherokees and Creeks in North Carolina. As one can see, so far these missions have failed, but not from a lack of trying.

“What is the key for these missionaries to become successful in establishing churches and schools among the native people? Who do the missionaries need to target in order for this to succeed and win over all of these tribal nations?”

With the movement of Europeans into these different areas of tribal lands, the European men would begin to inter-marry with the native women, producing children of mixed-blood. Finally, the Presbyterians arrive around 1804 and establish a school among the Cherokees.

Reverend Joseph Bullen: “When do these missionaries begin to move into Mississippi and seek out the leaders of the Chickasaws?” In 1799, Reverend Joseph Bullen, a Presbyterian missionary from New York, came into Chickasaw territory with his son accompanying him hoping to build a school among the Chickasaws. Reverend Bullen met with the tribal leaders, James and Levi Colbert and Wolf’s Friend, also known as *Ugala Yacabe*. He explained to them his mission of wanting to establish a school. The leaders seemed to approve of this and Wolf’s Friend, wanting his two sons educated, brought them to live with the missionary. According to Caroline Leola Davis, Bullen had two deacons with him that were soon building a mission school. However, there was some sort of dispute with the deacons that halted the mission and they were all asked to leave. As a result of the dispute, the mission of Reverend Bullen failed. It would be 15 years before a school would be established among the Chickasaws.

Civilization Act: The desire for schools and the children to be educated could be heard throughout the Choctaw, Chickasaw and Cherokee nations. This however, still concerned the missionaries not because of the desire for schools but because of the unsuccessful conversions. In March of 1819, the government issued the Civilization Act that would

allow the “president to employ capable persons of good moral character, who would teach Indians the mode of agriculture suited to their situation and teach their children reading, writing and arithmetic.”

Before Missions and Missionaries: You may be asking yourself what was a typical Chickasaw education like before missionaries came into the territory. Pre-teen to teenage boys were often sent to some of the elder, wiser men living in the village. Here they would be trained in the skills needed to ensure their success as a hunter and warrior. Some of the training they would encounter would be swimming, running, jumping, wrestling and using a bow and arrow.

“How different do you think it would be to go from a traditional Chickasaw way of learning to a more structured, European missionary style of learning?”

“What do you think was the importance of the latter education during this time?”

Slide 3: Presbyterian Synod of South Carolina and Georgia

Mission of the Synod: In 1819, the Presbyterian Synod of South Carolina and Georgia decided they were going to establish a mission among Native Americans to the west of their borders. Their purpose for forming this society was, “That it is expedient to form a society for the purpose of sending gospel to the destitute within our bounds in South Carolina and Georgia and for promoting the civilization and religious instruction of our aborigines.”

Thomas C. Stuart and Rev. David Humphries: In 1820, Thomas C. Stuart and Reverend David Humphries were sent out among the Creek, Choctaws and Chickasaws in search of a place to establish a mission school. They arrived first among the Creeks who immediately denied their proposition. Next they set out for Chickasaw country.

Arriving in Chickasaw Country: Stuart and Humphries came upon the home of a Chickasaw, Levi Colbert (an early leader of the Chickasaw Nation) where they explained to him their desire to establish a mission and school. Levi told them of a ball game that was to take place at his brother George Colbert’s home that was some 25 miles west near the Natchez Trace and at this game all of the other tribal leaders would be in attendance. Upon arriving at George Colbert’s home, without knowing it, they would witness a piece of Chickasaw history.

According to Dawson Phelps in his article “The Chickasaw Mission,” he says that missionaries were more interested in converting the Chickasaws than in educating them, and that is apparent from a perusal of their writings.

Other than to assimilate native peoples, why else do you think it was more important for missionaries to convert rather than educate?

Do you think many tribes saw this as an opportunity to learn and ensure a stronger future for their tribe?

Slide 4: Meeting with Chickasaw Leaders

George Colbert's Home: The piece of history that Stuart and Humphries would witness was a young leader taking his position as leader for the Chickasaws for the first time; this was believed to be Ish-te-ho-to-pa. Soon after, the missionaries would have their turn to address the Chickasaw Council.

Chickasaw Council Meeting: On June 22, 1820 the two explained their plans to establish a mission to the Council just as they had explained to Levi Colbert. After hearing their proposal, the Council accepted. They saw the importance in educating their own as a way to compete in this ever-changing world.

Why do you think the council readily accepted this proposal? Do you think they knew how important it was for their children to be educated in this new foreign world to ensure their survival?

Agreement: Before anything else went further, the Chickasaws wanted a mutual agreement, so there were no misunderstandings, and the missionaries would not take their lands for use as private property. A copy of this agreement was then given to the Indian Agent.

Location of the school: Now came the task of finding a location for the school. Stuart and Humphries ended up on the "Tombebee" or Tombigbee River. They abandoned this location and headed for the Natchez Trace where they found a great location situated just four miles northeast of the Chickasaw Agency and six miles south of the current city of Pontotoc. With permission from the Chickasaws to establish a mission and a location found, the two missionaries headed back to South Carolina and reported their findings to the Synod.

Report: The Synod authorized the mission for the Chickasaws and enough staff to meet the rules set forth by the Indian office. In their report, the missionaries were quite taken with the Chickasaws calling them, "friendly, hospitable people, open in their manners, and free from that timidity in the presence of white people."

The photograph was taken at the tavern site of George and Saleachy Colbert where Mr. Raymond Doherty (can be seen in the green shirt) currently resides. The exposed brick in front of the house is believed to be the original brick from the Colbert tavern.

Slide 5: Thomas C. Stuart to Mississippi

Commitment: Upon the Synod's authorization and approval for the mission among the Chickasaws, Thomas C. Stuart wanted to become their permanent missionary.

Why do you think Stuart wanted to become the Chickasaws' permanent missionary? Was it their willingness and automatic acceptance of the mission? Or could it have been their hospitality to these white men that set forth this motion, or maybe it was the possibility of a high salary?

The salary idea is highly unlikely since they received no salary other than their food and clothing. December 12, 1820 or somewhere within a few days of this date, Stuart was officially ordained and began his trek out to the Chickasaw territory.

Arrival: After almost six weeks, he arrived and wasted no time in getting to work on clearing out the land and constructing all needed buildings for what was to be a large boarding school. He would name this school Monroe Mission, thought to be named after the current President Monroe at the time.

Building the School: This work took almost two years to complete. During the spring of 1822 Reverend Stuart opened the school to serve the people living within its neighborhood until the school was ready to accept boarders. In one description of the mission, Julia Doggett Harris recalls, "it was a diminutive room not over 16x16, built of poles...only one window in the east. This window was a hole cut through the logs and closed with a clap-board held by hinges made of leather and raised from the inside...dirt and stick chimney with a large open fireplace."

Slide 6: Establishing Monroe Mission

Visiting Widower: Stuart visited with a widow before the school opened. She had two children, a boy and girl that were of school age. He asked if she would send them to school. The woman said she was unable to do so due to being poor and not having any suitable clothes for the children to wear. The Reverend had supplies with him and offered to supply them with the clothes. She then stated she wouldn't have any food to send with them for dinner. Once again, the Reverend took the responsibility to supply their dinner. These two children became known as William H. Barr and Mary Leslie and were the first Chickasaws to be educated at Monroe Mission. In 1823, Monroe Mission was officially open.

Opening of Monroe: At the opening of Monroe, the district chief, Samuel Sealy, was on hand to give an official speech and enroll his son. Monroe Mission officially enrolled more than 50 boys and girls. At first, the majority of the students attending Monroe were "half-breeds." Soon enough, full-blooded Native American students would increase, and within five years of opening, 81 students enrolled.

Curriculum: The Lancastrian method of teaching was used in which usually the older student(s) assisted the younger. Boy and girls from ages six to 16 were enrolled and quickly made great progress.

In 1824, an extract from a letter written by Stuart to Rev. Hugh Dickson was published in the Boston Recorder and Telegraph. Stuart states, "I am puzzled to know how the rumors that we were likely to be broken up could have reached you... I believe I can truly say we are in a more prosperous situation than we have ever been before... our school is becoming very interesting. The children make rapid progress. The natives manifest their wanted friendship and all things appear encouraging."

Enrollment: Within a year of opening they began limiting the number of students enrolled due to the increase in applicants.

Why was there a sudden increase in enrollment? Could it be due to families seeing this way of life as a means to adapt to ensure their children's futures?

Slide 7: Monroe Church

In 1823, Reverend Hugh Dickson, representative of the Presbytery of South Carolina, came and established a church at Monroe on June 7 with seven members. Records are available of the Monroe Church minutes that show from the years 1823-1831 (when it was a member of the North Alabama Presbytery) 151 persons were baptized and 104 were church members. This would include the neighborhood of Tockshish.

July of 1828, Cyrus Byington, missionary to the Choctaws, came to Monroe and gave a sermon in Choctaw that was “well understood by the Chickasaws.” Byington understood the importance of learning and creating a reader in Choctaw since it was a way he could better communicate with the citizens of the tribe. Plus, in future years having the language written would be a tremendous help in preserving the language.

Future governor of the Chickasaw Nation, Cyrus Harris, and his grandmother Mollie Gunn, were members of Monroe church.

The Mission closed in 1828 due to Stuart’s failing health and his return home to South Carolina. During this time, operations of Monroe were combined with Tockshish. Upon Stuart’s return in 1830, Chickasaw morale was very low due to negotiations of removal. At this time Monroe Church had 100 members, half of which were natives and included Martyn area members.

This photograph is of the current Monroe Church just south of Pontotoc, Mississippi and located a few miles from the original location of Monroe.

Slide 8: Monroe Church

These images are of the side exterior wall of the current Monroe Church. While we were looking around, Mitchell (Mitch) Caver suggested that these rocks may be remnants from the original Monroe Church that they have incorporated into the new building.

Slide 9: Monroe Church

These images are of a baptismal bowl and were provided by Mitchell (Mitch) Caver. The image on the left is a pewter baptismal bowl found in 1971. The image on the right is the engraving found on the bowl. The engraving is an American eagle holding a shield; Mitch has found this to be very similar to the Danforth mark (Danforths were pewter smiths beginning around 1770s).

It is very likely that this baptismal bowl was used to baptize many Chickasaws.

Slide 10: Need for More Schools

Chickasaw Council Meeting: With the need for schools rising, the Chickasaw Council decided to take action and appropriated \$5,000 of tribal funds to construct more schools and allocated \$2,500 per year from their annuity in order to support the schools. Because of this action in taking charge and leading the way to ensure more schools were provided to educate their children, the leaders were very much interested in maintaining an education program. This also allowed the Council to supervise the missionary while making sure the missionaries were providing a quality education to their children. Often times they would have to endure criticism due to the Council's concerns with the focus of the education being more on preaching and conversion with very little attention given to the educational needs of the children.

Why do you think it was important for the tribal council to supervise the education of their children?

Tockshish Mission: opened two miles north of Monroe in 1824. This was much smaller with an average of 20 students throughout its time in operation.

Martyn Mission: although not located directly on the Natchez Trace, this mission was opened at the Pigeon Roost location near what is now Holly Springs. The clearing of the land and construction began in 1825; at the opening in 1826 they had 24 students and eventually 30 within two years.

Caney Creek: The last school established was a little further away in Caney Creek, Alabama, some 40 miles from Chickasaw settlements. Caney Creek opened its doors in 1827.

Why open a school this far away?

In the experience of the missionaries, they realized an isolated location was necessary. It ensured greater success for the students if they were away from relatives who could have a negative impact on their "conversions." As with the other schools, enrollment was limited, and with a limit of 25 they soon found a need to increase to 35. During its time of operation, Caney Creek never saw any vacancies. As one student left, another was waiting to take their place.

Slide 11: Map of Schools

The map located on this page shows the location of all four mission schools. You can see approximately where they were located to current cities/towns and how close they were to the Natchez Trace.

Slide 12: Cumberland Presbyterian

Reverend Robert Bell: Going back to 1819, while Stuart and Humphries were visiting with the Chickasaw Council, the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in Tennessee wanted to send missionaries into the Chickasaw territory as well. In a meeting held by the Cumberland Synod, it was mentioned that two other missionaries had brought a Chickasaw man back, and he was staying with one of the missionaries and attending school making supreme progress in his education. With that being said, a plan was developed to establish a school among the Chickasaws that would combine instruction in letters and religion with domestic agricultural and mechanical pursuits.

Bell's Agreement: It is also said that after James Colbert showed Bell the agreement the Council made with the two missionaries, Stuart and Humphries, Bell drafted his own agreement similar to the one he was shown. On September 11, 1820 articles of an agreement were entered in by the Reverends Samuel King, Robert Bell and James Stewart as representatives of the Cumberland Presbytery Board of Missions along with leaders of the Chickasaws.

Cotton Gin Port: In 1820 at Cotton Gin Port a temporary school was set up inside of Chickasaw leader Levi Colbert's home while the buildings were constructed about three miles south of Cotton Gin Port, with one branch connecting Pontotoc with the Natchez Trace. This school would be called Charity Hall. It would sit on about 30 acres, contain a "log classroom, rooms for students, outbuildings, mission farm used to teach boys American agricultural methods and girls would learn spinning, weaving, and other domestic activities." There were 21 students the first year of opening and they were quite skillful in learning. By 1824, 31 students were in attendance as well as 14 teachers who were there to connect with all individuals associated with the mission. Progress was being made among the students; many were reading and writing or successful in arithmetic.

In Bell's Communications, he complains of the lack of money received for supplies. Many of the members were indifferent to the cause and even opposed it. One appeal to the church came from William Harris, "will you aid in bringing them from under the gloom of heathen darkness by giving in some of the abundance with which you have been blessed, in money, school-books, or country-cloth suitable to clothe the naked children of the woods?"

In this statement you can see how many viewed the Native Americans at this time, and why they believed it necessary to assimilate and convert them to Christianity.

Slide13: Colbert Brother's home site location in relation to Charity Hall

On this map, you can see the home site of Levi Colbert where Robert Bell set up a temporary school and also where Stuart and Humphries, upon arrival, came in contact with the first Chickasaw. The point where Cotton Gin Port was located and soon where Charity Hall was established is visible on the map. The location of the George Colbert home site where the two missionaries, Stuart and Humphries, traveled to and gained permission to establish the first mission school in the Chickasaw Nation that became known as Monroe Mission, is also located on the map.

Slide 14: Flourishing Missions

Success: For a while the mission schools were flourishing, bringing in students, teaching them to read, write, spell, etc.

What more could the missionaries do to “Americanize” these children?

Additional Schooling: Families began sending their children to have additional schooling, this time out of state. Hearing of the successful Choctaw schools, the Choctaw Academy was perhaps one of the most important schools the Chickasaw boys were sent to. Just because families were sending their children away for education doesn't mean they were casting them off, rather they saw it as an opportunity for their children to grow and flourish just the way the schools were flourishing.

Choctaw Academy: There were anywhere from 200 to 300 Native American boys. Levi Colbert made arrangements with Thomas L. McKenney to send his son, Daughtery, there. With Chickasaws wanting to educate their children, an appropriation was made; this would allot \$3,000 of the Chickasaw annuities for the purpose of education at the Choctaw Academy. There were 11 Chickasaw boys sent and upon arrival their Native American names were changed. Caney Creek, the Chickasaw mission school was said to do so as well. Other methods of educating the Native American children began to take shape. Caney Creek head, Mr. Wilson, began placing children in the homes of white families, this way they would learn English. The children learning to speak English found it impossible to retain because they were among other Native American students who spoke in their native language.

Slide 15: Decline of Missions

Push for Removal: Around the 1830s, the interest in mission schools began to decline, and in 1834 the mission was given up. This was all due to the government's push for removal of the Native Americans to the west of the Mississippi River into Indian Territory. With this looming in the air, it's no wonder that morale was so low and the education initiative began to fail. The government pushed for teachers to go and explore the new country. They would reimburse for construction of schools in the west, so many of the Native Americans wouldn't feel they were losing out on investments made into building the schools in Mississippi. You can see how removal would cause a major blow to the efforts of the Presbyterian Indian missions. The National government only paid the American Board less than \$5,000 for property. The Presbyterian mission work started out strong but came to a most unfortunate end. The work was slow, but with the interest of the Native Americans in the churches and schools it gave hope for the future. After removal, mission work would be renewed in Indian Territory, but many years would pass before this would occur.

Treaty of Pontotoc: With the signing of the Treaty of Pontotoc in 1832, the Chickasaws ceded all their lands east of the Mississippi and soon would begin the long journey to a new home in the west. Some of the missionaries who stayed committed to the tribes followed them to the west, however that is not to say the ones who stayed behind weren't as committed. Reverend Thomas C. Stuart was one who remained in Mississippi.

Slide 16: Indian Territory

Stuart Visits the Chickasaws: Stuart made the trip to Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma) after removal to visit the new Chickasaw homelands. In one particular visit, he was able to see how advanced the Chickasaws had become as evidenced by the clothes they wore to the lifestyles they had adopted. This didn't mean they were any less Chickasaw. They were just making a stronger home and future for themselves. Stuart was also able to witness yet another pivotal moment in Chickasaw history, the inauguration of the first elected Chickasaw governor, Cyrus Harris. Harris was also a former student of Monroe Mission as were six of the senators. The speaker of the house was a former Martyn Mission student and another senator was a former student at Caney Creek. Despite Stuart's feeling of not having very much success in the way of education and civilization in Mississippi, he was able to see the advancements of the tribe in their new homelands. Even more remarkable than that, it was the former students of mission schools who were making headway in the new home and became prominent leaders of the Chickasaw Nation. Even though they may not have had a traditional Chickasaw education, this did not make them any less Chickasaw nor did it make them stray far from their tribe, but it made them stronger leaders and citizens for the betterment of their tribe.

Exercise for students: Have the students write a journal entry as if they were a student at a mission school during this time. Afterwards allow the students to share and discuss their perspectives in class.