

‘The Friends’ Establishment in Kansas Territory. Personal recollections of Wilson Hobbs, M. D. among the Shawnee Indians from November 1850 to November 1852’ from the *Transactions of the Kansas State Historical Society, 1903–1904. (Topeka, KS, 1904).*

The establishment or mission consisted of about 250 acres of fine fertile prairie, rising to the southward of Turkey creek valley, enclosed and divided into suitable fields, with a thriving young orchard of fruit-trees. The mission house consisted of a story and a half frame, set upon a stone wall, on a hillside, so that the excavation formed a basement. This building stood north and south in its greatest direction. In the basement was a large kitchen, a large dining-room, a pantry, and a cellar. In the central portion of the second story were the offices and living-rooms of the officers – in the north end was the schoolroom and collecting-room for the boys, and in the south end the sewing- and work-room for the girls. The upper half-story was devoted entirely to sleeping apartments. The barn was a poor concern, but a good one was built soon after my time there. A most excellent spring was near by, a few rods north of the home; this doubtless determined the site for buildings. The farm was well supplied with utensils for working it, and with horses, cattle, hogs, and domestic fowls. The house was very plainly furnished, with only such furniture and conveniences as were absolutely necessary for comfort and business.

The school when I took charge of it consisted of about forty children, all of whom were Shawnees but one, who was a Stockbridge. These were fed, clothed and educated entirely at the expense of the church. They were received without preparation, and came ragged, covered with filth and vermin, with long hair, and the habits of uncivilized life upon them, and with no knowledge of the English language.

The service to a new pupil was to trim his hair closely; then, with soap and water, to give him or her the first lesson in godliness, which was a good scrubbing, and a little red precipitate on the scalp, to supplement the use of a fine-toothed comb; then he was furnished with a suit of new clothes, and taught how to put them on and off. They all emerged from this ordeal as shy as peacocks just plucked. A new English name finished the preparation for the alphabet and the English language. The children were not allowed to speak the Shawnee language among themselves except when absolutely necessary. The object of this rule was to force the knowledge and use of the English upon all as soon as possible. Our school-books were all in this language.

Our people never made a translation into the Shawnee tongue. Doctor Barker, superintendent of the Shawnee Baptist mission, translated the New Testament scripture into the Shawnee tongue, and printed the book himself, but I think it did very little service. It could only be read by those who had been taught in the schools, and these had all been taught in English.

The progress made by the children in learning was very fair. Except on Saturday and Sunday, they were kept in school six hours each day.

When not in school, it was my duty to have the boys at such work about the house or farm as was needed to be done, and the girls were under the care of my wife in the sewing room, except such as were detailed for dining-room and kitchen work. The fact is worthy of observation that the boys did not like to work, and the hardest part of my duty was to keep them at it. Besides this, it took a great stretch of forbearance on the part of their parents and Indian friends to be pleased at seeing them work. An Indian man must make a great stride toward civilization, yes, in civilization, before he can crown labor with his respect.