"Behold Me and This Great Babylon I Have Built": The Life and Work of Sophia Sawyer, 19th Century Missionary and Teacher Among the Cherokees

Teri L. Castelow
"BEHOLD ME AND THIS GREAT BABYLON I HAVE BUILT":
THE LIFE AND WORK OF SOPHIA SAWYER,
19TH CENTURY MISSIONARY AND TEACHER
AMONG THE CHEROKEES

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ABSTRACT

Sophia Sawyer (1792-1853) was born and educated in New Hampshire and Massachusetts. She was a strong-willed and independent woman who turned to teaching as a means of support after the death of her parents. At age thirty-one, she joined the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions and was stationed at the Brainerd Mission in Tennessee. Sawyer exemplifies the first generation of women to receive an academy education and become teachers themselves. This dissertation will examine the structure and environment of the schools in which Sophia Sawyer, missionary educator of females and Native Americans, taught the Cherokee students in the missions of Tennessee and Georgia, 1823-1836, and later in the Fayetteville Female Seminary, 1839-1853. In the large number of letters written to, by, and about Sophia Sawyer and her work among the Cherokees, it is revealed that she was a religious and pious person who felt a calling to Christianize and educate the Cherokees. She also displayed considerable respect for their culture, something which is often overlooked in many histories of White/Native American encounters. Sawyer appears to have cared deeply about her students, and the techniques that she used reflect this depth of feeling. The existing written opinions of her are either very positive or very negative, but even her detractors respected her commitment to education. Cherokee leaders such as John Ridge recognized this dedication. It is possible they held Sawyer in such high esteem because of her ability to look beyond the stereotypes held by many other missionaries about Indians. She created a classroom atmosphere which encouraged but challenged the students to learn English, as well as subjects similar to those taught in schools for Anglo-American children. That Sawyer was able to accomplish this with few resources and textbooks is an accomplishment worth examining in light of our modern concern about multi-cultural education.
Figure 1 – Picture of Sophia Sawyer from 1861 Diploma from Fayetteville Female Seminary. Used with permission from Shiloh Museum of Ozark History, Springdale, Arkansas.
INTRODUCTION

“She is a lady of fine feelings and susceptibilities of mind, & in the providence of God, unsupported & uncherished by any relations in this world, because those who might have dearly loved her as she deserves, are not now in the land of the living; she enjoys our keenest sympathy, & ought to be supported by the approbation of the Board.”

The Life of Sophia Sawyer

This dissertation will examine in detail the personal, political, and social factors that led Sophia Sawyer (1792-1854) to dedicate her life to teaching Cherokee Indians. Sawyer was a young woman who grew up in New England in the early 1800s. She exemplifies the first generation of women to receive an academy education and become teachers themselves. However, Sawyer answered the call to become a missionary among the Cherokee of the Southeast. As such, she was involved in the attempts to religiously and culturally socialize Native Americans into the mainstream of American culture.

The early life of Sophia Sawyer is typical of other young women of this era. She was born on May 4, 1792 in Fitchburg, Massachusetts, the daughter of Abner and Betsey Sawyer. Around 1797 the family moved to Rindge, New Hampshire, and by 1814 Sophia Sawyer began attending a nearby coeducational academy, New Ipswich Academy. However, it was when she transferred to the Byfield Female Seminary in 1820 that Sawyer was exposed to new ideas about the importance of education for women. Byfield Female Seminary was organized by Joseph Emerson in 1818, and Emerson was a promoter of the missionary cause for women. Sophia Sawyer was inspired by Emerson to apply as a missionary teacher for the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions (ABCFM).

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1 ABC 18.3.1, Vol. 8. John Ridge to David Greene, 24 July 1834.
Sawyer began her missionary career in Tennessee where she soon experienced obstacles on the part of her supervisors regarding her ideas about how her students should be taught and their capabilities. Sawyer became more than a teacher to the Cherokee children. She became an advocate on their behalf when the male superintendents did not think them capable of learning difficult subjects. As a woman who had experienced subordination herself, she became sympathetic to the subordination of the Cherokee and formed a bond with them. In fact, Sawyer found one of the few arenas in the mid-nineteenth century where it was acceptable to be a strong woman. She continued teaching in mission schools in both Tennessee and Georgia for thirteen years, and was witness to some of the important events of the time in terms of the relationship between the Cherokee Nation, the State of Georgia, and the United States government. For example, members of the Georgia Guard entered her school one day and attempted to arrest her for teaching two slave children, which was against Georgia law but not against Cherokee law. Also, when Samuel Worcester and two other missionaries were arrested in Georgia for refusing to take an oath of loyalty to the state, Sawyer was living with the Worcester family.

Other notable educators, such as Mary Lyon and Zilpah Grant, were motivated by Joseph Emerson’s teachings to go forth and create their own schools for the education of young women. Sophia Sawyer was also concerned about improved education for girls, Cherokee girls in particular. The attitude of her male superiors was an irritation for her because she felt her girls could perform as well as white girls. Her continual push for excellence with her students was one of the things that caused the Cherokee to accept her. They saw that she was not going to treat their daughters, or sons, differently than white children.

When removal began to be an imminent reality, Sawyer stayed and lived with the Cherokee, even after most missionaries had left the Cherokee Nation. Sawyer especially bonded

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4 ABC, 18.3.1, Vol. 8, Sophia Sawyer to David Greene, 20 January 1832. Parins, 14-17, 20. ABC is another abbreviation used in the collection of the ABCFM papers that refers to American Board of Commissioners. Hereafter it will be cited as ABC.
with some of the Cherokee leaders and was one of the few Anglo-American missionary teachers identified as desirable as teachers by the Cherokees themselves. John Ridge, one of the prominent members of the tribe, requested himself that she be allowed to relocate to the newly established Indian Territory in what is now mainly Oklahoma when the Cherokees were finally forced to leave their land in the Southeast.5

Sawyer became the only woman missionary to serve as an independent teacher among the Cherokees while still receiving support from the Board. She was able to accomplish this because of the mutual respect she shared with the Cherokee. Her willingness to stay with them after other missionaries left and to go with them to the new territory are evidence of her deep bonds with them. Sawyer went to live with the Ridge family in 1837 and remained there for about two years when she again witnessed the problems of the Cherokees. In the summer of 1839, members of an opposing faction within the Cherokee tribe assassinated John Ridge. A few days later, Sawyer went to Fayetteville, Arkansas with his widow and children where she lived with the family and was a source of strength for them in their grief.6

Another skill taught by Joseph Emerson was the solicitation of support from a community for the funding of schools. Lyon and Grant both used these skills with great success, but Sophia Sawyer applied them in a somewhat different circumstance. When she ultimately moved to Fayetteville, Arkansas, Sawyer was able to use her training to open the Fayetteville Female Seminary which taught both white and Cherokee young ladies. She was able to convince this frontier community to allow Native Americans to be taught in the same school as whites, probably because she provided a New England style education that was modeled after schools like Mount Holyoke. Because of her skill as a teacher and administrator, Sawyer’s school became well respected in both Fayetteville and the state of Arkansas. Despite attempts by others to establish competing institutions, Sophia Sawyer was able to expand the school. In fact, Sawyer had so impressed the residents of Fayetteville that one of the more wealthy families, the Walkers, donated land for a new school building. When she created a school in 1839 that was

open to both white girls and those of Cherokee descent, it was her way of helping them gain acceptance in the white southern community.  

Sawyer directed the Fayetteville Female seminary until her death in 1854 from tuberculosis. She was obviously a strong-willed and independent woman who turned to teaching as a means of support after the death of both of her parents. The existing written opinions of her are either very positive or very negative, but even her detractors respected her commitment to education. In fact, contemporaries of Sawyer commented that it was her influence on the development of education in and around Fayetteville that led to the city’s selection for the site of the University of Arkansas.

**Review of Literature**

This study of Sophia Sawyer’s life and work lies at the intersection of three fields of American History: the history of education, Women's History, and Native American History. As a young woman growing up in New England at a time of educational expansion for women, her experiences offer an eyewitness account of the difficulties that many young women had in securing this education. Sawyer's decision to become a teacher provides insight into the reasons that young women of similar background also followed this career path. Her experience as a missionary teacher also provides a glimpse into the Native American schoolroom. In addition, Sawyer was a witness to key events in the controversy surrounding the removal of the Cherokee tribe from their land in Georgia and Tennessee.

Educational historians have written about the expansion of education for women and the increase in the number of women teachers in the early nineteenth century. In 1983, Carl Kaestle published *Pillars of the Republic: Common Schools and American Society, 1780-1860*, which details how the development of schooling in the United States was linked to early nationalist goals. Kaestle describes this work as a reinterpretation of the origins of the common school.

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system as well as the “popular resistance to that reform.”9 The first five decades of our country’s existence included a rapid growth in the enrollment in public schools. Kaestle describes the tension that existed due to the desire to centralize the growing number of schools in a climate which encouraged local control of other public institutions. The author posits that the fledgling country eventually accepted centralized common-school systems because of the population’s devotion to a republican form of government, the preeminence of Protestant ideals, and the growth of a capitalist economy. The leaders of the common school movement suggested that centralized schools could be utilized “to integrate and assimilate a diverse population into the nation’s political, economic, and cultural institutions.”10

Included in this study is information about how education became increasingly available for girls, especially in the Northeast, as early as the 1760s, which led to a "substantial rise in adult female literacy in the Northeast between 1780 and 1850."11 Kaestle also outlines how education for girls came to emphasize their domestic roles as opposed to education for boys that emphasized academic learning. Kaestle's work provides a framework for the examination of Sophia Sawyer's own education and the schools in which she taught.12

A pivotal work in the area of female education is In the Company of Educated Women: A History of Women and Higher Education in America (1985) by Barbara Solomon. This research provides a broad outline of the development of the availability of higher level education for women in the United States. Solomon describes this book as “a history, not of institutions but of generations of women: those who hungered for education, those who fought for it, and those who took it for granted.” The author also describes this work as an exploration of “the interaction of women’s aspirations with outside forces that both hindered and helped women in the sphere of education.” There were several forces that contributed to the admission of women into institutions that provided higher education. The growth of industry, the drop in the number of children being born, and the increase in the availability of formal education for children all contributed to the entrance of women into higher education. However, there were concerns

10 Kaestle, ix-x.
11 Kaestle, 28.
12 Kaestle, 86-87.
among the populace that educated women would abandon their traditional role in American culture.\textsuperscript{13}

The scope of this work covers a much broader time period, 1800 to 1944 and beyond, than is necessary for research into the education and teaching of Sophia Sawyer. However, the early chapters provide information relevant to Sawyer. For example, Solomon provides a description of the experiences of Mary Lyon and Zilpah Grant and their time at Joseph Emerson's Byfield Seminary, which was also attended by Sophia Sawyer. Solomon provides context as to why Emerson played such an important role in the lives of his students. In addition, Solomon describes the growth of academies and seminaries that came to be available to women in the early 1800s, including their structure and curriculum, which is relevant to an understanding of the structure of Fayetteville Female Seminary.

Another important work in the area of women's education is \textit{Women's Work?: American Schoolteachers, 1650-1920} (2001) by Joel Perlmann and Robert Margo. The significance of this study in terms of Sophia Sawyer is that Perlmann and Margo examine the feminization of teaching. They examined various extant records to attempt to determine literacy rates of women and how and when women began to predominate as teachers. According to their work, over the period from 1730 to 1820 girls in New England were more able to gain some sort of education in a local school. This achievement made women more available to teach in schools, especially when men began to be attracted to more lucrative careers. Another development after the Revolution was the idea that women's natural sphere was in the home and with the family. An extension of this made it more acceptable for women to become teachers outside of the home because teaching was seen as a nurturing role similar to motherhood. Perlmann and Margo's research is relevant to Sophia Sawyer's life because it helps explain why education was accessible to Sawyer and why teaching was available to her as a career.

The education of Native Americans was shaped by the changing opinions of the whites with whom they shared the continent. Historian Robert Berkhofer produced \textit{The White Man’s Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present} as a means of examining how images of the first Americans have both remained constant and fluctuated over the course of their interaction with the white man. European Americans shared a common goal in terms of the

Indian: “the spread of Christianity through the conversion of the heathen.” It became impossible for Europeans to rationalize the extermination of the “Noble Savage” so they had to create the ideal of the “bad Indian” in order to justify their treatment of the natives they encountered.\(^\text{14}\)

As the number of English colonists in North America grew, white policy makers began to delegate the responsibility for conversion of the heathen natives to Protestant missionaries. According to Berkhofer, the new United States government had two main goals with regards to the Indians: “the extinction of Native title in favor of White exploitation of native lands and resources and the transformation of native lifestyles into copies of approved White models.” The main justification for the seizing of Indian land was that civilized men were farmers, and if the Indians would become civilized they would not need all of their land. However, it was important for the United States to act with honor, and, according to Berkhofer, “expansion could be achieved with honor if the United States offered American civilization in return for native lands.” White Americans believed that once the Indians were exposed to farming methods they would see it was a superior way of life and adopt it as their own.\(^\text{15}\)

The study of Native American education has been closely tied to the study of missionary involvement with Native Americans because missionary groups were some of the first to provide formal schooling for Indians. In 1960, Bernard Bailyn published *Education in the Forming of American Society*, which Margaret Szasz calls “a seminal work…[that] encouraged the adoption of a broad interpretation of education…[and] challenged students to adopt a new approach.” Bailyn proposed that American education “has proved in itself to be an agency of rapid social change” and “it has contributed much to the forming of national character.” Looking back to the colonial period, Bailyn described how settlers “launched the first campaign of missionary education in British America” as a means of homogenizing society and “reconciling the differences by converting the native Indians to civilized Christian living.” However, Bailyn wrote in his bibliographical essay that there was much work left to be done in the area of missionary efforts to educate Native Americans, especially during the seventeenth century. Bailyn also called for more investigation into why the attitude of the British changed from one of benevolence to one of “savage hostility and [has failed] so completely to restrain the force of

\(^\text{15}\) Berkhofer, 132, 135, 144, 150.
racial warfare.” A study about Sophia Sawyer is one component of the type of research suggested by Bailyn.\textsuperscript{16}

Robert Berkhofer investigated a later period of missionary efforts to educate Indians in *Salvation and the Savage: An Analysis of Protestant Missions and American Indian Response, 1787-1862*. To the missionaries, education was a means of converting Indian children to Christianity, thus saving the entire race from its savage customs. These schools used the same type of techniques utilized in the common schools of New England, such as rote memorization, recitation, and public examinations. The schools were taught in English in order to further acculturate the Indian children with white culture, and the children were often required to perform manual labor to combat “idleness.” Berkhofer used very few, if any, Native American sources for this work, other than periodicals published in Indian languages by white missionary groups. However, he does leave the reader with the understanding that the culture of Native Americans was not respected and, in fact, was undermined by the missionaries’ schools. The work of Sophia Sawyer is, in some ways, a contradiction to Berkhofer's ideas for, even though she did not learn Cherokee, Sawyer seemed to have a genuine respect for the culture.\textsuperscript{17}

In *American Education: The Colonial Experience*, Lawrence Cremin also examined the missionary efforts of early colonists to convert Native Americans to Christianity through education. These efforts were not very successful, however, despite the labors of men like John Eliot, and gradually the British colonists had retreated from their education efforts in most areas of the colonies. Interestingly, Cremin also points to the disruption of family life among the Indians as a problem because it also disrupted the education that was conducted by the family. This occurred because Indians “withdrew from the tribal context and sought to live according to European ways.” In other words, as Native Americans adopted the culture of whites, their own culture was affected because they failed to transmit tribal values and customs to their children. Many of the students in Sawyer's classrooms were of mixed blood. They had already adapted to


\textsuperscript{17} Robert Berkhofer, Jr., *Salvation and the Savage: An Analysis of Protestant Missions and American Indian Response, 1787-1862* (University of Kentucky Press, 1965), 16-43.
the dominant culture in terms of dress and language. Their parents recognized, as did parents of many full blood students, that education was a means to success in the white man's world.\footnote{Lawrence Cremin, \textit{American Education: The Colonial Experience, 1607-1783} (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1970), 158-162, 194-195, 348-356, 136.}

In 1984, Francis Prucha published \textit{The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians}, a work that covers the period from the Revolution until 1980. Prucha states in his introduction that his work resulted from the opinion that there has long been a "need for a comprehensive history of the relations between the United States government and the Indians." These relations were based on the idea of "paternalism, a determination to do what was best for the Indians according to white norms." This broad survey of events is helpful in this study of Sophia Sawyer as a resource about the events that surrounded the removal of the Cherokee tribe. In addition, Prucha has one chapter devoted to the issue of "Civilization and Education," which describes the goals and establishment of mission schools among Native Americans, including the Cherokees.\footnote{Francis Prucha, \textit{The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians} (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), ix and x.}

Until recently, book-length studies of Native American education were rare, as it was often a subtopic of a larger study of some aspect of Native American history. However, since 1988 several books have been issued solely on the topic of education of Native Americans. In 1988, Margaret Szasz published \textit{Indian Education in the American Colonies, 1607-1783}, another work on the early colonists’ efforts to educate Native Americans. Szasz proposes that, while the different colonies varied in their efforts at education in general, as well as Indian education, there were some commonalities among the plans for Indian education. She states that all the plans were based on “the need to Christianize and civilize the natives,” were stimulated by “one or more Euroamericans, either missionary or pious layman,” and included “the involvement of at least one Indian.” Szasz also writes, “views on Indian schooling in colonial America have changed in the last few decades. Until recently, those addressing the subject have gauged their evaluation through an ethnocentric framework thus limiting their criteria for assessment to mainstream concepts of success and failure.”\footnote{In Szasz’s assessment, if examined through traditional indices such as “endurance of schools, quantity of Indian students, and the degree of assimilation in these students,” then Indian education has failed. She feels, however, that this determination overlooks the smaller
scale achievements such as Indian students who became proficient enough at English through education at a day school to become translators that were able to assist their people. Szasz concludes that these individuals “attained the unique position of cultural broker…. Their noteworthy achievements provide a touchstone for assessing the merits of the many ventures in Indian schooling in colonial America.” Although Szasz's work is based on a period before missionaries arrived in the Cherokee Nation, her conclusions can be verified by the examination of leadership of the Cherokee tribe, which included wealthy mixed bloods who had been educated in white schools. These were the people who came to respect the work and commitment of Sophia Sawyer.  

*Cultivating the Rosebuds*, published in 1993 by Devon Mihesuah, examines the history of the Cherokee Female Seminary, an institution that is unique from those previously studied because the Cherokee Nation operated it. The school began its existence after the tribe was removed from the southeast and operated from 1851 until 1909. Mihesuah explains that, after Cherokee relocation west of the Mississippi, “the Cherokees’ consciousness about race, class, and culture became more pronounced, causing cultural changes to accelerate and intratribal political and social rifts to reemerge.” The Cherokee Female Seminary, which included young women of various levels of affluence and various degrees of Cherokee blood, became a microcosm of these tribal issues. One of the main goals of Cherokee leaders was to create an educational institution that would provide suitable wives for the prominent Cherokee young men. However, Mihesuah explains it may not have been possible for Cherokee women to ever attain the ideal of the “true woman,” which was the ideal of white women in America, because of their Native American heritage.  

Using interviews and oral histories with former students and their descendants, Mihesuah was able to gain an understanding of the operation of the school as well as its level of prestige among Cherokee Indians. She also determined that attendance at the school was a great source of pride for attendees and their descendants, regardless of how long they were at the school or if they graduated. *Cultivating the Rosebuds* presents an image of Native American education that is somewhat positive. The techniques used at the school were similar to boarding schools for

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20 Szasz, 5, 258.  
21 Szasz, 258, 262-62.  
white females, but most of the students were left with fond memories of their days at the Cherokee Female Seminary. On the other hand, however, some members of the tribe criticized the seminary because it “did nothing to preserve or reinforce Cherokee customs among its students.” In fact, “evidence suggests that the social atmosphere at the school contributed to a rift between Cherokee girls from progressive, mixed-blood families and those from more traditional, uneducated backgrounds.” 23

The Cherokee Female Seminary opened after the Fayetteville Female Seminary had been open for more than a decade. There had been talk of establishing schools for both boys and girls shortly after the removal of the Cherokees from their eastern lands. In fact, Sawyer wrote about being approached to come across the border to the Cherokee territory to teach in such a school. She strongly considered doing so but was concerned about the tribal infighting that continued even after Ridge's assassination. On October 16, 1839, she wrote "They are calling me to the nation, but so much disunion I fear almost to go should Mrs. Ridge decide to leave. I have consented to go to Flint however, if they build a school house & support a female school - this they propose to do." 24

In *Listening to Our Grandmother's Stories: The Bloomfield Academy for Chickasaw Females, 1852-1949* (2000), Amanda Cobb describes another seminary for female Indians. Like the Cherokee Female Seminary, Bloomfield (1852) was established and maintained by a particular tribe. The students also viewed attendance at Bloomfield as a positive experience and a source of pride. Bloomfield's curriculum, like that of the Cherokee Female Seminary, was similar to that of eastern schools for white girls, with no mention of their heritage or history. However, Cobb maintains that the school contributed to a continuation of Chickasaw culture because the girls who attended were all of Chickasaw descent. Their families attended their examination and graduation ceremonies, which became almost a replacement for earlier tribal gatherings. According to Cobb, "for many Chickasaws, education had become a tradition, and celebrating it may have enabled them, significantly, to continue the traditional rituals of coming together as a community, sharing stories, and feasting." Cobb's work will provide insight and comparison as to the importance Native Americans of different tribes placed on education. 25

23 Mihesuah, 2.
Another work on a particular institution is Donal Lindsey’s *Indians at Hampton Institute*, published in 1995. Hampton Institute was actually a school for African Americans, but Native American students also attended. While this study illuminates some of the negative aspects of the boarding school experience, Hampton Institute is unique in that Indian students were recruited to attend the school voluntarily. Lindsey feels that although a relatively small number of Indians were educated at Hampton Institute, the school had a wider scope of influence because it “recruited its students from 65 tribes, and left records that move beyond local issues to illuminate the still shadowy history of relations between the United States and the American Indian tribes surviving both disease and conquest.” In addition, the attendance of both black and Indian students at the same school “offers a unique opportunity to examine, within a single institutional setting over an extended period of time, the attitudes of prominent white reformers toward the two racial minorities whose experiences most defined the shape of American history.” Although the scope of Lindsay’s work is somewhat later than this study, *Indians at Hampton Institute* provides a comparison with another multi-cultural institution, and it also shows the changing attitudes about the use of education to wipe out Indian culture.26

Another 1995 publication about a similar time period is *Education for Extinction* by David Adams. However, this book is more of a comprehensive look at the “boarding school experience” of Native Americans, as the subtitle indicates. What makes this work different from other studies about Indian boarding schools is that Adams attempts to present both sides of the issue. He has “attempted to lay bare the social and ideological outlook of those whites responsible for the creation of the boarding school system,” but he also tries to “describe in as realistic fashion as possible the nature and meaning of the boarding school experience from the Indian students’ perspective.” In other words, he gives “voice to Indians” despite the fact that “the documentary record is both sparse and unreliable.” It is particularly difficult to portray “the experience of a subgroup of this population, Indian children.” Despite the difficulties, Adams feels that the story of Indian boarding schools from the point of view of the students is important because for many of them “attending boarding school had been one of the defining experiences of their lives.” Boarding schools were “established for the sole purpose of severing the child’s cultural and psychological connection to his native heritage, [and] this unique institution figured

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prominently in the federal government’s desire to find a solution to the ‘Indian problem,’ a method of saving Indians by destroying them.” Although Fayetteville Female Seminary was a boarding school, students attended by choice (not government requirement), and these were students who had, for the most part, adopted white culture. However, this work is useful as a comparison to the missionary schools that were created to Christianize and civilize. Eventually, the goal of mission schools became the elimination of Native American culture.27

In addition to these works on Native American education, there are several broader works about the Cherokee Nation relevant to this study, such as William McCloughlin’s *Champions of the Cherokees: Evan and John B. Jones* (1989), *Cherokee Renascence in the New Republic* (1986), and *Cherokees and Christianity* (1994). These provide important context concerning the political and social environment in which Sawyer worked. Other resources are *Torchlights to the Cherokees*, by Robert Sparks Walker (1931); *Trail of Tears*, by John Ehle (1988); and *Cherokee Editor: The Writings of Elias Boudinot*, edited by Theda Perdue (1983). Jacqueline Jones’s *Soldiers of Light and Love: Northern Teachers and Georgia Blacks, 1865-1873* provides a comparison with the later experiences of missionary women in the south to educate African Americans.

While there are no books published about Sophia Sawyer, in particular, there are at least four dissertations that are relevant to this study. The Ph.D. dissertation of Lydia Hoyle, "Missionary Women Among the American Indians, 1815-1865," is a useful means of comparing Sophia Sawyer with other missionary women. In fact, Sawyer is one of the women Hoyle uses as an example in her study. In the collective portrait, Hoyle suggests that while these women embraced the ideal of “true womanhood,” they worked within their chosen sphere to enlarge the picture of what this ideal represented. In some ways, they were able to experience empowerment within the restrictions they were required to adopt as part of their culture.28

Hoyle estimates that about five hundred women chose to become missionaries to Native Americans in the United States. Their average age was twenty-six and most stayed in missionary service for less than five years. Like Sawyer, many were single women with training and experience as teachers. However, there were also married women who arrived with their

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husbands, as well as other single women with little education. One thing that this diverse group did seem to share was a sense of calling and a desire to serve God, a feeling that is often expressed in Sawyer's letters. There were those among them who, like Sawyer, were willing to step outside of society's boundaries and challenge their male superiors. As Hoyle writes, "The missionaries...pushed the boundaries outward as they held high the banner of faith. The mission of God could not be thwarted by the work of shortsighted men. In the name of the Gospel, inferior mission leaders had to be confronted or removed." It is significant to learn that Sawyer was not alone in her dissatisfaction with her supervisors.29

Another pertinent dissertation is Kim Macenczak's study of the New Echota mission station, "Educators to the Cherokees at New Echota, Georgia: A Study in Assimilation." Macenczak examines education at New Echota "to determine what impact those responsible for education at New Echota had in relation to assimilation of the Cherokee people." Macenczak used as her model the ideas Bernard Bailyn presented in Education in the Forming of American Society (1960). Bailyn identified three "occupational groups" as educators: ministers, printers, and teachers. In her study, Macenczak uses Samuel Worcester, the minister at New Echota, Elias Boudinot, the printer, and Sophia Sawyer, the teacher. She concludes that their actions were not entirely assimilationist because they never supported the "physical assimilation of the Cherokee Nation," believing instead that the nation should "remain a separate entity." Also, Worcester, Boudinot, and Sawyer went west with the tribe and continued their work with them. This dissertation is useful to the study of Sophia Sawyer because it uses Sawyer as a specific example and describes her life and teaching while she was at New Echota. It also describes the events surrounding the removal of the Cherokees. However, the study only looks at a small portion of the time Sawyer was a missionary or teacher to the tribe. There are also some incorrect facts that can be corrected by a more in depth study of Sawyer's letters.30

There are two dissertations pertinent to this study about Sophia Sawyer as a missionary for the ABCFM. "Protestant America and the Pagan World," by Clifton Phillips, was completed in 1954 and was eventually selected for publication by the East Asian Research Center at Harvard University in 1968. Although selected for this honor because of its usefulness in the

29 Hoyle, 152, 161-163.
study of missionary efforts in East Asia, Phillips also details the founding of the ABCFM and
discusses the organization’s efforts among the Native Americans. As Phillips describes these
men, they are dedicated to saving the “heathen” around the world and preparing them for the
new millennium. 31

A second dissertation, "The 'Reflex Influence' of Missions: The Domestic Operations of
the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, 1810-1850," by Charles Maxfield
is pertinent to this study for two reasons. First, Maxfield describes how the ABCFM used the
"reflex influence" to promote the missionary cause and gain support in the form of increased
numbers of missionaries and funds donated to supporters. Second, he traces the rise of the
ABCFM and discusses the involvement of missionaries in the Cherokee removal crisis.32

There are two articles published about Sophia Sawyer. “Miss Sophia Sawyer and Her
School” (1955) by Caroline Foreman describes details about Sawyer’s time in Fayetteville,
Arkansas but is not adequately documented and does not provide an analytical framework. A
more recent article, "Sophia Sawyer, Native American Advocate: A Case Study in Nineteenth
Century Education," (1991) by Kimberly Macenczak, focuses on Sophia Sawyer's time at New
Echota, where her school was the only mission school available. Macenczak uses Sawyer's
letters to describe her classroom, curriculum, and attendance of students. Macenczak points out
that Sawyer's move to Cherokee territory after removal was actually a unique incident. In fact,
"It was practically unheard of for a single female to carry out work among the Indians without
some type of support other than that provided by the Indians." This article is useful for its focus
on New Echota, but it can be expanded to cover Sawyer's teaching at other mission schools.33

Aside from the letters and records of the ABCFM itself, there are several important
published sources about the missionary association. The Origins and History of Missions was
published in 1837 as "A Record of the Voyages, Travels, Labors, and Successes of the Various
Missionaries, who have been sent Forth by Protestant Societies and Churches to Evangelize the
Heathen," according to its lengthy subtitle. While a portion of this work is devoted to English

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30 Kimberly Portwood Macenczak, "Educators to the Cherokees at New Echota, Georgia: A Study in
31 Clifton J. Phillips, Protestant America and the Pagan World: The First Half Century of the American
32 Charles Maxfield, "The 'Reflex Influence' of Missions: The Domestic Operations of the American Board
and Scottish missionary groups, it also provides details of the history of the American missionary efforts, especially those among the Southeastern Indian tribes. This work is useful because it is a contemporary account of missionary efforts. In fact, it may have been used to recruit more missionaries. The title page includes the following quote: "To imbue men thoroughly with the Missionary Spirit, we must acquaint them intimately with the Missionary Enterprise." The founders of the ABCFM, a group of young Williams College students, were said to have decided "The object of this society shall be to effect, in the persons of its members, a mission or missions to the heathen." This resource also includes a detailed account of the residents and activities at each mission station, including those established when the first group of Cherokees relocated to Cherokee territory in Arkansas in 1820.34

In 1910 William Strong published a later account of the ABCFM: *The Story of the American Board* (reprinted in 1969). As Strong states, "This book does not pretend to be a history of the American Board… The aim has been to portray the Board as an organism living and growing in the world; to mark the stages of that growth, to reflect the temper and movement of that life, and to describe briefly and yet vividly some characteristic scenes enacted on the many fields of the Board's enterprise." One of these "fields" was among the Cherokee Indians of the southeast. This work is useful for its description of the founding of the ABCFM. However, a large portion is focused on the Board's mission overseas.35

A more modern version of events is provided by William McLoughlin in *Cherokees and Missionaries* (1984), which provides an overview of all the missionaries that came into contact with the Cherokees. McLoughlin's account is more scholarly than earlier works which seem more like promotional literature. He also provides a useful analysis of the effects the missionaries had on the Native Americans. McLoughlin explains that “this story of the failure of the first Indian policy of the United States between 1789 and 1839 is not told through the eyes of white and Cherokee political leaders but through the eyes of the missionaries and those Cherokees who were in closest contact with them.” Because of this perspective, the economic

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and political events of the period surrounding the removal of the Cherokee move to the background and the story of “the missionaries’ efforts to alter the behavior and world view of the Cherokee people” moves to the forefront of McLoughlin’s work. The author also describes how the missionaries are forced to evaluate their own ideas and the policies of their government with regard to the Cherokee and many of these missionaries come to sympathize with the very people they had originally intended to assimilate into American culture.\textsuperscript{36}

A rich set of unmined primary sources is available to document the life and work of Sophia Sawyer. Formerly undocumented birth dates for Sophia, her sisters, and parents, as well as the marriage date of her parents exist, recorded in the \textit{Fitchburg, Worcester County, Birth and Christening Records}. Abner Sawyer appears in the 1800 Census in Cheshire County, New Hampshire, and Sophia Sawyer has been located in the 1850 Census in Washington County, Arkansas. The richest primary source, however, is the documents of the ABCFM, which are housed at Houghton Library at Harvard. These include biographical information on Sawyer and other missionaries, letters of reference written on her behalf, and hundreds of letters written by, to, and about Sophia Sawyer between 1821 and 1852. Most of these letters are available on microfilm from Houghton Library. However, there are some additional records that were in the archives, such as letters pertaining to Sawyer’s application, which were not microfilmed and, these were transcribed for the author. There are five letters from Sophia Sawyer to her friend Linda Raymond in the Diedrich Collection of the William L. Clements Library at the University of Michigan which were available as photocopies. Sawyer wrote at least one letter to Zilpah Grant which in preserved in the Zilpah Grant Banister papers in the Mount Holyoke College Archives and Special Collections. The only known catalog of the Byfield Female Seminary, which lists Sawyer in 1820 and 1821, is also in the Mount Holyoke College Archives and Special Collections.

Many of the letters written by Sawyer after 1823, when she began teaching the Cherokees in Tennessee, are very revealing. Not only do they describe the life and thoughts of this extraordinary educator, but they also open a window into the lives of the Native Americans among whom she lived and worked. In addition, Sawyer records her impressions of her students and techniques she used in the classroom. Among the school records are full class rosters that list

the students not only by their English names, which were usually recently adopted, but also by their Cherokee names. There are also descriptions of the background, literacy level, blood purity, Indian heritage, and family structure. In sum, these letters and records provide a description of a relatively unexplored area in Native American educational history.

The methodology for the dissertation is descriptive and will capture the experiences of a missionary teacher among the Cherokee Indians. The study relies upon written documents of the ABCFM. A majority of these documents are letters written back and forth between the missionaries and their superiors in Massachusetts. One of the positive aspects of this collection is that the letters provide access to two points of view. However, it is also an important task of the historian to round out the picture presented by these letters by examining other available historical evidence, such as census records and newspapers.

One particularly interesting example of potential bias exists among the ABCFM letters regarding Sophia Sawyer. At least two of the male missionaries who supervised Sawyer wrote to complain about her temperament. Elizur Butler, a doctor in charge at Haweis, wrote “With her present instability, I cannot think her a suitable person to have the care of heathen children.” Samuel Worcester, in charge of the New Echota mission, wrote “I fear the peculiar construction of her nervous system, and the lamentable defects of her mother’s discipline will never allow any place on earth to be a resting place for her.”37 It is possible that these men were correct in their assessment of Sawyer, but it is also possible that they were uncomfortable with a woman who was willing to assert herself. Sawyer wrote of herself that she “differ[ed] from most people respecting the capacity of the children,” and that she had more confidence in her “own [judgement], in everything, relating to mental improvement.” To add to this multifaceted view, there were leaders of the Cherokees who specifically requested that Sawyer be allowed to relocate in the west with them because of their high regard for her. It is the challenge of the historian to present these various opinions without appearing biased himself/herself.

Organization of Chapters

The story of Sophia Sawyer will be organized into five chapters. Chapter 1, "Sophia Sawyer's Early Life and Education," will introduce background on Sophia Sawyer’s early life

and education. She grew up in a period of increasing educational opportunities for women, especially in the northeastern United States. One of the main reasons is that women were needed to fill spots as teachers to keep up with the growing demand for education in the early Republic. Sawyer took advantage of this new opportunity to find a means to support herself after the death of her parents. This was also a period of increasing demand for missionaries to work with Native Americans, as well as travel overseas. Many young women chose to become missionary teachers, as did Sophia Sawyer, due to a religious conviction to assist in the conversion of heathens.

"Missionaries and Native American Educational Opportunities," the second chapter, will describe the various opportunities available to Native Americans in terms of education in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. For example, many Native American children were separated from family to be educated by well-meaning Anglo-Americans in boarding schools. Even when allowed to remain with family, many missionary teachers reflected the goal of the missionary groups, which was to civilize Native Americans and teach them to be more like whites. This was one of the goals of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. It was believed that by converting and civilizing the children the missionaries would be able to effect a change among adult members of the tribes.

Chapter 3, "Sophia Sawyer's Life as a Missionary," will focus on Sophia Sawyer’s career as a missionary teacher among the Cherokees in Tennessee and Georgia, beginning with her first position at the Brainerd Mission. This will include what Sawyer was like as a teacher and techniques and curriculum that she used in the classroom. There will also be a description of her religious feelings about her life and work and her frustration with the Board that not enough was being done to help the Cherokees. This frustration led to conflicts with her male superiors at the various missions where she worked. The conflicts may also have been caused by her independent nature, which perhaps made her supervisors uncomfortable. Another topic will be the feelings of the Cherokees themselves about Sawyer, which often contrast with the missionary leaders’ feelings.

The fourth chapter, "Background on the Cherokee Nation and Removal," will provide background information about the Cherokee Nation and its development in the southeastern United States. As the white population in Georgia grew, there began to be conflicts among white settlers and the Cherokees. ABCFM missionaries played a role in negotiations between the two
sides and with the federal government. They also were involved in protests on behalf of the Cherokees. This chapter will also discuss the eventual treaty and removal of the Cherokee to the newly created Indian Territory in Oklahoma. This treaty led to conflict within the Nation and the murder of some of the signers of the treaty. Sawyer was present for much of this conflict.

The final period of Sawyer’s life and her creation of the Fayetteville Female Seminary in Fayetteville, Arkansas will be described in Chapter 5, "Fayetteville Female Seminary." This will include a description of teachers, curriculum, and buildings, as well as students and their impressions of the school and Sophia Sawyer. Sawyer’s standing in the community and her possible influence on education in the state of Arkansas will be described.

Chapter 6 of this study will provide conclusions on the significance of Sophia Sawyer and the importance of a study of her life and work. What relevance does one teacher, out of the hundreds that were assigned by the ABCFM, have in expanding our understanding about the role these teachers played? How did missionaries reconcile their patriotism and loyalty to the United States with their compassion for the Native Americans who were being targeted for removal by the United States government? These and other questions will be addressed.

Sawyer’s role as a missionary and teacher to the Cherokees opens a window into several under-researched areas. From her many existing letters, she was obviously a very religious and pious person. This played a large role in her decision to teach the Cherokees, and she devoted her life to them. It seems clear that she felt a calling to Christianize and educate, but she also displayed considerable respect for their culture, something that is often overlooked in histories of white/Native American encounters. Also, Sawyer was a woman of limited means. While we know about the education and careers of more illustrious women like Mary Lyon and Emma Willard, Sophia Sawyer’s experiences will add to our understanding of the lives of more ordinary women.

Sawyer was a woman whose strong personality created dilemmas for her superiors at the ABCFM. However, they were also aware of her popularity among the wealthier members of the Cherokee tribe. When the ABCFM was attempting to determine which of the missionaries would be sent west with the Cherokees, Samuel Worcester wrote to the Board that “She has become exceedingly popular with some of the influential Cherokees, and has done more…towards inclining such persons to the missionary cause than any other missionary.”

ABC, 18.3.1, Vol. 8. Sophia Sawyer to David Greene, 17 July 1834.
There is more evidence as to the opinion that Cherokees such as Ridge held of Sophia Sawyer. When Sawyer arrived in the Cherokee Nation, Ridge built a two-story school building that contained a schoolroom and living quarters. The Ridges were willing to make this contribution because of their belief in the importance of education. However, there must have also been some feelings on their part for the spinster teacher from New England. Sawyer wrote “Such presents as Mr. & Mrs. Ridge make in clothing I receive & continue my labours in their family & among their people in the character of benevolence sustained by the patronage of the Board. In this way they wish me to live & labor, believing it to contribute to my happiness & usefulness.” For them to choose Sawyer for such “benevolence” also shows the high regard the Ridges must have had for her ability to educate their children.39

It is possible that the Cherokees held Sawyer in such high esteem because of her ability to look beyond the stereotypes held by many other missionaries about Indians. She writes in her letters that she actually prefers Cherokee children to the children she taught in New England, and she believed that they were capable of learning difficult subjects.40 One area of consternation for Sawyer was that other missionaries did not share her high opinion of the abilities of the Cherokee students. At one point, Sawyer attempted to learn Cherokee in an attempt to show her students that she sympathized with their difficulties in learning English.

Sawyer held strong opinions about the standing of female children in the Cherokee culture. In one letter, she describes “the children [as] capable of high improvement. The females capable of refinement & delicacy of feeling seldom found in New England …. All they need is proper instruction & the advantage of society to make the most accomplished young ladies.” Later, writing to a superior, Sawyer wrote: “I feel for the education of my own sex. The Cherokees think much more of their sons than their daughters. I wish to raise the female character in the Nation.” Undoubtedly, it was this commitment that led her to create the Fayetteville Female Seminary.41

This dissertation will investigate the life of a woman who was educated and went on to educate Native Americans and other women in a time when it was not fully acceptable to do so. As our nation continues to struggle with issues of multiculturalism and diversity, Sawyer’s life

40 Sophia Sawyer to Zilpah Grant, 3 August 1824, Zilpah P. Grant Banister Papers. Series A. Correspondence. Sophia Sawyer to Linda Raymond Ward Kingsbury, 24 May 1824.
41 Sophia Sawyer to Linda Raymond Ward Kingsbury, 24 May 1824.
work illuminates our historical encounters. In several ways, Sophia Sawyer was on the cutting edge of educational movements in the United States in the early 1800s.
CHAPTER 1

SOPHIA SAWYER’S EARLY LIFE AND EDUCATION

"My studies are very pleasant. Sometimes I think the pleasures I receive in study would be boundless [sic] -- I could continue here as longe [sic] as I could wish."

Sophia Sawyer began her life as the daughter of a New England farmer. She was educated, as many children of the period were, through a combination of schooling at home and periodic schooling in a neighborhood common school. Sophia Sawyer's family background and experience resembled that of many young women who became career teachers in the antebellum period. Although born into a family that was probably of middling means, Sawyer was forced to find a means of supporting herself after the death of her parents. An engaged and interested student herself, Sawyer combined work as a school teacher with periods of academy study. Having thereby achieved a level of education, experience and maturity that distinguished her from the average common school teacher, Sawyer made the equivalent of a career move in the context of her time. She transferred to an academy known for its cultivation of female educators, Byfield Female Seminary. Eventually, she sought a position as a missionary teacher to the Cherokee with the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM).

At the time of Sophia Sawyer's birth, the United States was a fairly young nation that had just recently completed the transformation of the government with the ratification of the Constitution. Even before this occurred, various leaders expressed concern about the state of education in the fledgling nation. Historian Carl Kaestle has written of this period "To foster the intelligence required of republican citizens, some of America's most eloquent political leaders looked to education - not just through the informal colonial modes of instruction but through

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42 Sophia Sawyer to Linda Raymond Ward Kingsbury, 7 October 1817, letters dated July 1814 through 12 February 1825, Diedrich Collection, William Clements Library, University of Michigan.
schools organized and financed by the states.\textsuperscript{43} In 1789, Massachusetts, where Sophia Sawyer was born, passed a law that required a public elementary school in towns where there were more than fifty families. However, the law did not stipulate how the schools would be financed so it is unclear how effective it was in the actual establishment of schools. Most New England communities took it upon themselves to provide a school for their children.\textsuperscript{44}

At the time of the first census in 1790, ninety-five percent of Americans lived in communities with a population of fewer than twenty five hundred people.\textsuperscript{45} In 1800, four out of five Americans still were involved in farming as an occupation. Sophia Sawyer was born on May 4, 1792 on a farm in Fitchburg, Massachusetts that had belonged to her grandfather and then her father. She was the youngest of Abner and Betsey Sawyer's son and five daughters. The rural setting of Sawyer's childhood contributed to her later independent nature. On New England farms, both men and women, boys and girls, contributed to the never ending cycle of work to be done to feed and support the family.\textsuperscript{46}

In 1797, Abner Sawyer sold his farm in Fitchburg due to "embarrassed circumstances" and purchased another in Rindge, just across the border in New Hampshire. According to Sawyer, it was her mother's wish that they move to Rindge, which Sawyer identified as her hometown in later letters. There is no record of what caused Abner Sawyer's dilemma, but perhaps it was because he did not have the labor assistance from family members. His only son died before the family moved to Rindge so he had to rely on hired assistance if the work was too difficult for him to do on his own.

Abner Sawyer passed away when Sophia was eighteen, and her mother appears to have followed soon after. By the time Sawyer was twenty-three, all but one of her sisters had died. This left Sophia with very little incentive to remain in the area and with very little family support to sustain her financially or emotionally. However, there were people in the community who were ready to step in and help her. Sophia lived for a time with the families of her minister Seth Payson, Joel Raymond, and a cousin, Asa Burnham, who was also a minister in Rindge. Mr.

\textsuperscript{44} Kaestle, 10.
\textsuperscript{45} Kaestle, 13.
Payson and Mr. Raymond sponsored some of her education, and Mr. Burnham later assisted her in acquiring a position as a missionary.\textsuperscript{47}

In \textit{Women's Work}, Joel Perlmann and Robert Margo describe the development of New England’s education system where Sawyer grew up. As early as the late seventeenth century, women were teaching small children rudimentary reading and writing skills. This expanded to include two tiers: men teaching boys more advanced subjects in winter sessions and women teaching girls in summer sessions. The salary for the summer session teachers was much lower than for the winter. Gradually, women began to teach girls in the winter sessions. In the mid-1800s communities began to recognize the cost savings of women teachers and the growth of academies increased the number of women qualified to teach advanced subjects. Women gradually began to take over teaching at both tiers. One reason for this evolution was that teaching came to be seen as an extension of women's domestic sphere as the family caregiver. Another factor that contributed to this change was that young women were being freed from household labor by the increased availability of manufactured products. Also, men were attracted away from teaching by more lucrative careers. A quote from the \textit{American Journal of Education} in 1826 illustrates this point: "So many opportunities are open for industrious enterprise, that it has always been difficult to induce men to become permanent teachers."\textsuperscript{48}

Sophia Sawyer describes her own education in an early letter to the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM): "My literary advantages until I was seventeen years old were limited to five weeks in the summer, & five in the winter, & so much of that time, I now see, was not spent under the best instruction." At the age of seventeen, Sawyer apprenticed as a tailoress and "was hurried from place to place without opportunity scarcely to look in a book except at unreasonable hours, and even this opportunity I abused by reading novels." She explains that the "inconveniences incident to her employment" were injurious to

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her health and writes "I then took what I had acquired by my needle, recovered my health, went to school, & turned my attention to the instruction of youth & children." Sawyer then supported herself by being "alternately employed in sewing, instructing, and studying."  

If Perlmann's assessment of education in New England is correct, then Sophia Sawyer's education is an example of how she was on the forefront of educational movements. She describes attendance at both summer and winter schools, possibly as early as 1797 when her family moved to Rindge. This is about the time when Perlmann feels girls were just beginning to attend upper tier schools. In addition, when Sawyer began attending New Ipswich Academy in 1817, she was again on the forefront of a trend, for academy attendance by women did not become common until about 1830.

As the economy of the country began to change in the late 1700s, "family-centered production gave ground to market-oriented production and individual wage earning." More and more young women turned to teaching school as a means of earning a wage, rather than as a form of community service. In New England, they began by teaching in summer schools. However, as the number of academies available to women grew, they turned to academy teaching, and "attending an academy was generally the appropriate preparation for teaching in one." It has been estimated that twenty-five percent "of all native-born New England women were schoolteachers for some years of their lives."

Forced to find a means of supporting herself by the death of her parents, Sawyer followed a practice common to many young men and women at the time. She combined periods of academy attendance with periods of teaching in local common schools. Beginning in 1817 at age twenty-five, she attended the New Ipswich Academy near Rindge. Established in 1787, New Ipswich enrolled a class of thirty females as early as 1809. By 1817, a new building was completed and there was “a large class in the summer of 1818” taught by Miss Susan Eaton, presumably for young women. During the next three years or so, Sawyer attended the academy and taught school in Rindge.

49 ABCFM Candidate Department, 6 Vol. 4, 189.
50 Perlmann, 27.
In acquiring her education, Sophia Sawyer enjoyed the good fortune of belonging to a community where established individuals seemed to want to help educate those less fortunate. Seth Payson was one of the early contributors to the fund to finance the New Ipswich Academy, which was not far from Sawyer’s hometown of Rindge. Payson donated money specifically for the “education of needy scholars, reserving to himself the right to nominate the persons to receive it.” Perhaps Sophia Sawyer was one of the needy scholars he identified. Later, Linda Raymond’s father sent Sophia money while she attended another academy, and may also have done more to help her financially. In 1812, Sawyer wrote to Linda: “I am ashamed to thank your Pa for the care, which he takes of me & my property, it seems to be such a poor return. I hope he will see to it that he does not lose by me, as he has by other poor people.”

As a student at New Ipswich, Sawyer expressed a sense of intellectual engagement and excitement. In October 1817 she wrote a brief description of her academy experience to her friend Linda Raymond. “I am much pleased with it although it is not elegant. There is a beautiful grove or rather wood at a little distance…My studies are very pleasant sometimes I think the pleasure I receive in study would be boundles [sic].” Sawyer also wrote: “the days devoted to study are fast closing. I wish every moment spun out to an hour, so much do I see to learn in so short a time. Sometimes I regret my contracted fortune whose scantiness forbids me to pursue my favorite studies…”

With some academy education and a few years teaching experience, Sawyer already exceeded the qualifications of many common school teachers at the time, who were often little more than common school graduates themselves. To sustain a life as a teacher over the long-term, however, required more than a common school teaching job. Building on the qualifications she had already acquired, Sawyer went on to pursue further education at the highly regarded academy established by Joseph Emerson in Byfield, Massachusetts.

Joseph Emerson was trained as a minister at Harvard University between 1794 and 1801. He was influenced by writings of the time in support of female education, especially those of Hannah More. In 1816, Emerson followed his inclination to create a seminary for women when he opened the Byfield Seminary in Byfield, Massachusetts with fifty students enrolled.

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54 Sophia Sawyer to Linda Raymond Ward Kingsbury, 7 October 1817.
55 Kaestle, 20.
immediately. The seminary eventually moved twice, to Saugus and Wethersfield, Connecticut, as Emerson received posts as a minister. The curriculum of the school included subjects considered too advanced for women. Aside from the seminary, Emerson published various works about and for women. The *Prospectus of the Female Seminary at Wethersfield, Ct. Comprising a General Prospectus, Course of Instruction, Maxims of Education and Regulations of the Seminary*, published in 1826, was intended as a manual for female education. He also produced texts to be used by women, including a revision of Isaac Watts' *The Improvement of the Mind* and works on history, literature, and theology.57

Beginning in 1820 and continuing for the next two years, Sawyer attended Byfield Female Seminary and worked periodically for the Emersons to help finance her schooling. Two of her fellow students at Byfield in these years were Mary Lyon and Zilpah Grant, each of whom went on to become leading female educators in their own right. Like many women of the mid-nineteenth century who pursued an academy education, Sawyer was older than her male counterpart in a college or university. She was twenty-eight when she entered Byfield, Lyon was twenty-four, and Grant was twenty-five. This trend continued as young women who were of "middling means" sought a way of financing their education. Their academy enrollment was frequently interrupted or postponed as they taught school or sought other jobs to make the necessary money for tuition costs. Some academy leaders were cognizant of this difficulty and provided ways for their students to work at the academy itself to defray the costs of education. Joseph Emerson followed this practice, and Mary Lyon did as well when she later opened her own academy. At Troy Female Seminary, Emma Willard used a different approach by providing "'instruction on credit' for any woman who would agree to become a teacher, the debt to be repaid from her later earnings."58

At Byfield, Sawyer received the highest quality education available to women during that era. She would also have imbibed there something of the sense of mission regarding the importance of female education for which Joseph Emerson came to be known. In an address

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published near the end of Sawyer's experience as his student, Emerson declared that the time "was not remote," when female institutions "greatly superior to the present" would be "as important as are now colleges for the education of our sons."\(^\text{59}\) Emerson himself undertook to cultivate leadership skills in a number of the female educators who would found and head those institutions. One thing he apparently conveyed to them was a command of the language and arguments necessary to win support for their work from patrons, parents and surrounding communities. This ability to articulate to potential supporters a compelling sense of the purpose and importance of female education came to characterize not only the work of Mary Lyon and Zilpah Grant, but also that of Sophia Sawyer.

Historian Barbara Solomon has noted "for both Grant and Lyon, studying with Joseph Emerson became the turning point in their intellectual and social development." They, like Sophia Sawyer, had both attended other schools of various levels, though Grant was largely self-taught, and had engaged in teaching school sporadically to finance their education. They made the decision to invest time, money, and intellectual effort in Emerson's academy. Perhaps it was because Emerson addressed his female students "as the equals of men in intellectual capacity." The subjects taught at Byfield included philosophy and other college-level material. Perhaps it was because Emerson had become widely known for his willingness to help young women of limited means achieve a higher level of education.\(^\text{60}\)

It is likely that Joseph Emerson had an impact on Sawyer's life in other ways. Emerson was a proponent of a religious tradition known as New Divinity, also known as Hopkinsianism, which was created by Samuel Hopkins, a follower of Jonathan Edwards. According to historian William Breitenbach, "the Hopkinsian ministers preached energetically on the need for sacrificing self-interest to the greater general good. By defining sin as selfishness and holiness as universal disinterested benevolence, the New Divinity preachers denied that there could be

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\(^{59}\) Joseph Emerson, *Female Education: A Discourse Delivered at the Dedication of the Seminary Hall in Saugus, January 15, 1822* quoted in Barbara Miller Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women: A History of Women and Higher Education in America* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985), 20. Emerson's success in establishing himself as a leading educator of future female educators is indicated by the advice Lyman Beecher gave his daughter Catharine when she adopted the plan of founding a female academy in Hartford in 1823. According to Kathryn Kish Sklar, Lyman instructed Catharine to "go immediately to Mr. Emerson at Saugus and get from him all the information concerning his system of instruction" that she could, "staying long enough and going into his school and perhaps taking notes as an assistant till you are well possessed of his plan.” Sklar, *Catharine Beecher: A Study in Domesticity* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1976), 53.

\(^{60}\) Solomon, 19.
any acceptable self-love short of universal love...[and] they rebuked all individualistic behavior as sinful. The demand that converts willingly submit to damnation for the glory of God is pointed to as the ultimate expression of the Hopkinsians’ commitment to selflessness." True acts of holiness were acts of "disinterested benevolence." Ministers of the New Divinity movement "demanded that benevolence be impartial and disinterested, not uninterested," and taught that "a person had an obligation to exercise his benevolence where it would do the most good." It was a movement that emphasized the importance of missionary work "to bring the rest of the world to a new level of faith, knowledge, and morality." 61

Emerson’s influence over his students was such that there were likely others that followed his example. The influence of the New Divinity ideas can be seen in the writings of Sawyer herself. Perhaps this idea of disinterested benevolence and the "commitment to missionary work" led her to make the decision to become a missionary. Emerson told his students that each should "feel her individual responsibility to serve her generation according to the will of God," and they should "'Never spend six months of [their lives] in any way, without first considering whether [they] can benefit the world as much by the plan proposed, as by any other.'" 62

Aside from his religious teachings, Emerson was seen as a father figure by many of his students, especially since several of them were fatherless themselves, including Sawyer, Lyon and Grant. After Emerson died, Mary Lyon wrote to Zilpah Grant: "From the difference in our characters and the dissimilarity in our aims and motives, little union of feeling might have been anticipated; but on one subject, we all agreed. This was, respectful affection for our teacher...The epithet of father, which was often applied to him by the pupils, in familiar intercourse with each other, well expressed our sentiments toward him. In consequence of our regard to him, our love for our companions increased. Viewing him as a common parent, we learned to consider each other as sisters." Lyon further stated that she regarded her "residence in S.(augus) as forming an important era in (her) intellectual existence" because she "acquired new ideas of what constituted excellence of character." As the father-figure for these young women of little means, Emerson took it upon himself to raise funds on their behalf. One advertisement for an astronomy lecture stated that the main purpose was to raise funds "to be appropriated to

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the charitable purpose of aiding pious and indigent young ladies in obtaining an education with a view to qualify themselves for the important business of teaching."\textsuperscript{63}

Emerson imbued in his students the belief that "knowledge was desirable principally as a means of usefulness to others, and that literary selfishness was as sinful as any other selfishness." According to his brother, "his object was not merely to have a good seminary of his own, but also to benefit other teachers, and to raise up a multitude more, of the right stamp, and ultimately fill the land with such seminaries and schools." This was another of his teachings that his students took to heart, and it is further evidenced in the life and goals of Sophia Sawyer. Ultimately, Sawyer followed the example of Mary Lyon and Zilpah Grant and opened her own school to continue the tradition begun by Joseph Emerson. A contemporary of Emerson's wrote after his death, "his may properly be called a parent institution. For several of his pupils and many others followed his example in establishing schools of high order for young ladies. His usefulness in this respect, has surpassed that of any other teacher within the last half century."\textsuperscript{64}

As a woman of straightened family circumstances, Sawyer had much in common with Lyon and Grant, as with other women who became career teachers at this time. Like Sawyer, Lyon and Grant put themselves through school by a combination of charity, common school teaching and other labors. Like Sawyer, they attended Byfield as experienced teachers in their mid-twenties. Lyon and Grant may also have benefited as Sawyer did from Emerson's practice of employing needy but experienced students as assistants while they attended the school. By this means students not only afforded their educations but effectively acquired an apprenticeship in operating academies of their own. Both Lyon and Grant eventually adopted similar systems for needy students at their own institutions.\textsuperscript{65}

Unlike Lyon and Grant, however, Sawyer did not pursue her career as a teacher in New England. As early as 1821 Sophia Sawyer wrote of trying to find more permanent teaching position than those she had previously held and was considering a move to Morgan County, Georgia, to accept a position that paid two hundred dollars a year as well as board. She also considered it a good risk because there was "sewing in great demand in that place," which meant there would be other opportunities for employment if the school did not work out, and "the

\textsuperscript{62} Rev. Ralph Emerson, \textit{Life of Rev. Joseph Emerson: Pastor of the Third Congregational Church in Beverly, MS and Subsequent Principal of a Female Seminary} (Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1834), 430.
\textsuperscript{63} Emerson, 425, 250.
\textsuperscript{64} Emerson, 425, 248, 435.
country is favorable to health.” In this letter to her benefactor, Joel Raymond, Sawyer frequently mentioned her lack of money. In fact, she was unable to pay the postage to mail the letter. However, she also wrote, "I hope my trials have done me good. I find it is a poor way to sit and cry and think myself forsaken. I resolve to do the best my circumstances allow, and trust the Lord who has indeed been a father to me.”

Sophia Sawyer's willingness to travel to Georgia to accept a teaching position is further evidence of her independent nature. This arrangement never came to fruition, but, in an equally bold step, Sawyer made the decision to become a missionary teacher. Perhaps she made this move in part because she failed to find a satisfactory position in New England. She wrote of an effort to try to find a position as a teacher that either was not successful or proved of short duration. A lack of family ties may also have been a factor in Sawyer's decision. Grant supported a widowed mother, and Lyon kept house for a brother for some time, while Sawyer seems to have had no such ties of family obligation. Beyond these circumstances, Sawyer may also have been animated by ambition or by the influence of her mentor. She may have been influenced by the frequent appeals for missionaries that were read from the church pulpits and printed in journals and missionary biographies during these years. Whatever the combination of reasons, Sawyer had decided by 1821 to apply to the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions (ABCFM) to serve as a teacher.

The early communications between Sawyer and her advocates and the Board show her assertiveness and impatience with delay. It seems that she volunteered for service in the Sandwich Islands sometime in 1821, but had not had a response from the Board by the next year. Her cousin and mentor, Asa Burnham, wrote that she was "now heartily desirous of going to the assistance of any mission among the Aborigines." The Board responded on January 10, 1823 with a request for testimonials and gave Sawyer hope that she would be accepted by them. In February 1823, Burnham again wrote to the Board on behalf of Sawyer and stated that "her reputation in this vicinity as a teacher of youth is evidence that she has an aptitude for that

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65 Solomon, 24.
66 Sophia Sawyer to Captain Joel Raymond, 5 May 1821, letters dated 5 May 1821 through 25 December 1830, Gertrude Foster Brown Collection, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University.
business.” Attached to this letter was the requested testimonial, signed by members of the community, which attested to the fact that Sawyer was "considered as one apt to teach," "a good tailorress," and "a useful member in the mission family." When she had not heard from the Board by March, Sawyer wrote herself to see if they had received the testimonial. The Board did not respond until May 8, so perhaps her impatience was not unfounded. Finally, they told her that they were willing to appoint her as an assistant missionary. She accepted the position and wrote "I have particularly & renewedly examined myself on those points to which your clerk so kindly directed my attention; & feel that in Christ's strength, I can cheerfully bear the trials of a missionary life, spend & be spent for the good of those souls, whom Jesus died to redeem." Here is the expression of disinterested benevolence that was stressed by Joseph Emerson.68

In becoming a missionary teacher, Sawyer resembled many female teachers of a somewhat later period, such as those studied by historian Polly Kaufman, who joined the Board of National Popular Education and went west to teach on the frontier in the late 1840s and early 1850s. She is also typical of teachers, studied by historian Jacqueline Jones, who went south from New England in the late 1860s after the Civil War to teach the newly freed slaves. In both these later situations, the women tended to be above the age of twenty-five, were experienced teachers, and were forced to seek self-support through the death of one or both of their parents. As Sally Schwager points out in her essay “Educating Women in America,” “dislocations resulting from the early death of parents or a spouse, sudden financial reversals, or other unexpected changes in family status had a different impact on nineteenth-century women than they did on men to whom a variety of options for self-support were available. For women, teaching offered an alternative to the traditional solution of living as a dependent in the homes of willing relatives.”69

Other social factors also shaped the educational decisions and teaching careers of women in this era. Schwager points out that “demographic changes had begun to alter parental expectation and the traditional female life cycle of some women in the hill towns of rural New England and New York even as early as 1800.” This was mainly due to the emigration of many young men to western areas of the expanding country or to growing cities for non-agricultural work. The young women left behind had a more difficult time finding husbands and “parents of

68 ABCFM Candidate Department, 6 Vol. 4, 185-192.
modest means needed to plan for the support of their daughters during this interval and, perhaps, for their entire adult lives.” Women, such as Sophia Sawyer, who were older, may have found the “option of financial support through marriage…less available (or less attractive)…than younger and less experienced women.”

In addition to responding to the limitations of her family circumstances and possibly also of marriage opportunities, however, Sophia Sawyer seems to have genuinely enjoyed intellectual activity. Historian Schwager concludes that “unlike most nineteenth-century women, whose social status was in large part a function of their father’s or husband’s status, women teachers occupied a position in their communities that was, to some degree at least, a function of their own occupational goal.” In addition, historian Geraldine Clifford claims that “a teaching career – however brief, and despite the low pay and emotional and physical costs – provided women with a ‘psychic reward unique to their gender.’…Clifford describes the ‘growing self-respect, autonomy, and assertiveness’ she discovered in the papers of young country girls whose teaching often took them to schools far from their homes.” Sophia Sawyer proved to be a person of strong character. Despite the support she received from various sources, Sophia Sawyer was an independent woman. Three of her sisters and her brother died fairly young. In 1833, Sawyer mentioned having only one relative, a sister, living, but she never wrote of receiving any support from her. Forced to find some means of supporting herself due to the death of her parents and lack of other family ties, Sawyer turned to one of the few respectable occupations open to women: teaching.

Sophia Sawyer chose to teach in schools very far from home. Her first assignment was to the Brainerd Mission in southeast Tennessee where she began teaching in the school for Cherokee children. Sawyer was now thirty-one years old and she had never been more than seventy miles from her home. What gave Sophia Sawyer the courage to “[embark] among strangers twelve hundred miles by land”? One possible answer to this question can be found in a letter to Linda Raymond. Sawyer vaguely referred to an incident in which “[her] character was spoiled the last season [she] instructed the dear youth & children in [the] district.” She also mentioned that “to be dependant (sic.) is to be persecuted.” She gave no other details, but this

event clearly affected her and may have led to her decision to leave New England. Sawyer wrote longingly of missing her friends, the landscape, and the climate of her former home, but she never expressed a desire to return. In fact, in 1828 she wrote: “I dare not return to N.E. where so much uncertainty would attend my usefulness.”

Sophia Sawyer’s decision to become a missionary was also related to her religious beliefs. With no family ties to keep her in New England, she was free to go where she thought she might be most useful to the cause of saving souls. In a letter to her friend Linda, Sawyer described the appearance of her students and how fond she had grown of them. She wrote, “every feature seems to say ‘teach me to read – lead me to God – I am the workmanship of his almighty hand – Jesus has died for me & sent you here to teach me – I shall go to heaven or hell – much depends on your instruction.’” In the same letter, Sawyer expressed her belief that the Cherokees were “the real descendants of Abraham” and “will ere long be seen and gathered as the ancient covenant people. O may the time soon come when they & the fullness of the gentile nations shall be brought in to the fold of Christ.” This attitude typifies the New Divinityites idea that Christians were “ambassadors to Christ, responsible for helping to bring the rest of the world to a new level of faith, knowledge, and morality.” Sophia Sawyer was ready to go forth as an ambassador for Christ.

Several factors converged in the life of an ordinary young woman brought up in the rural landscape of New England that ultimately made her life rather exceptional. Sophia Sawyer, the youngest daughter of a farmer who died leaving her with no means of support, began to do what others in her position did. She turned to friends, neighbors, and relatives for what support they could give. She used her limited education to begin to gain some economic means by teaching school, but she was not satisfied. The psychic rewards identified by Clifford were starting to stimulate her to achieve more. She pushed herself to attend, first New Ipswich Academy, and later, Byfield Seminary, despite a self-admitted lack of previous intellectual ability. Sawyer was already a religious person when she encountered the Rev. Joseph Emerson, but his influence made her much more so. There are changes in her writing from this period that reveal a deeper

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72 Sophia Sawyer to Zilpah Grant, letter dated 3 August 1824, Zilpah P. Grant Banister Papers, Series A, Correspondence, Mount Holyoke College Archives and Special Collections. Sophia Sawyer to Linda Raymond Ward Kingsbury, 12 February 1825. ABCFM, 18.3.1, Vol. 5, Ppart 2, Sophia Sawyer to Jeremiah Evarts, 27 September 1828.

faith and commitment to the idea of self-sacrifice, as well as a person who is gaining more
knowledge. Like other men and women motivated to become missionaries, Sophia Sawyer took
a giant step outside of the norm for her rural community and decided to sacrifice herself for the
good of a group of people who needed to be saved.
CHAPTER 2

MISSIONARIES AND NATIVE AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

"You have appeared in our full council. We have listened to what you have said, and understand it. We are glad to see you. We wish to have the schools established, and hope they will be of great advantage to the nation."74

When Sophia Sawyer applied to be a missionary for the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) in 1821, the organization had been in existence for eleven years. This mission station in Brainerd, Tennessee had been established in 1816. The ABCFM was not the only organization to send missionaries to live and work among the Indians of the Southeast. They were also not the originators of the idea to use education as a means of civilizing the Indians.

From the time that European colonists set foot in North America, one of their main goals in dealing with the Native Americans was to save them from their savage, heathen ways and convert them into civilized Christians. However, early efforts during the Colonial era were sporadic and met with little success. As early as 1743, a new method was proposed. Rev. John Sergeant proposed the establishment of a manual labor boarding school in Stockbridge, Massachusetts. The school would include a farm where the students would receive hands-on training, and it was modeled after the Irish charity school system. The plan was never realized due to the death of Sergeant, but in 1763 Eleazar Wheelock, founder of Dartmouth College, opened Moor's Charity School in Connecticut. The plan at Moor's was to take in Indian boys and girls, teach them the work associated with their gender roles, and send them back to their tribes as missionaries. The program was based on a model community idea, which had its roots

74 This quote was from the Principal Chief of the Cherokee to Rev. Cyrus Kingsbury in October 1816 after Kingsbury laid out his plans for a mission station among the tribe. Quoted in Rev. John O. Choules and Rev. Thomas Smith, The Origins and History of Missions: A Record of the Voyages, Travels, Labors, and Successes of the Various Missionaries, who have been sent Forth by Protestant Societies and Churches to Evangelize the Heathen (Boston: Gould, Kendall, and Lincoln, 1837), 345.
in the Colonial missionary efforts, and consisted of a husband and wife who would teach the children both in and out of school.\textsuperscript{75}

Even before the Revolutionary War had ended, George Washington was concerned about relations between Anglo-Americans and Indians in North America. He proposed a boundary to separate the two groups and perhaps avoid warfare. After the Revolution ended, various treaties were passed between the tribes and the new government, but the treaties were not enforced. After Washington became president in 1789, he "proposed the establishment of official U.S. government trading houses on tribal lands as a means of 'render[ing] tranquility with the savages permanent by creating ties of interest.'" When the legislation went into effect, it provided for an Indian agent to be assigned to each trading house. In 1796, Benjamin Hawkins was assigned by Washington to be "'Principal Temporary Agent for Indian Affairs South of the Ohio.'" Hawkins' appointment was far from temporary for he continued in this role for twenty years. He went to live among the Creeks and appointed an assistant who went to live among the Cherokees. After two men served for short periods, Hawkins appointed Return Meigs in 1801, and he served in this capacity until he died in 1823. Hugh Montgomery succeeded Meigs and was the Cherokee agent until the removal of the Cherokees occurred in 1838.\textsuperscript{76}

Washington's Secretary of War, Henry Knox, was concerned about treaty violations on the part of white settlers and the United States government. A new treaty, the Treaty of Holston, was negotiated and signed with the Cherokees on July 2, 1791. This treaty forced the Cherokees to cede land in eastern Tennessee to the United States to prevent friction between the Cherokees and white settlers. There was one other important component of this treaty which stated "'The Cherokee Nation may be led to a greater degree of civilization, and to become herdsmen and cultivators, instead of remaining in a state of hunters, the United States will from time to time furnish gratuitously the said nation with useful implements of husbandry.'"\textsuperscript{77}

When Thomas Jefferson became president in 1801, he utilized both the legislation providing for Indian agents and the Treaty of Holston to provide financial assistance for those attempting to establish schools among the Cherokee. Benjamin Hawkins used these funds to set


up schools to teach Cherokee women domestic skills like spinning and sewing. Men were taught farming and husbandry methods. Agents also promoted the use of manufactured goods to the Indians. Hawkins was especially instrumental in teaching the Cherokees how to raise cotton and produce cloth.78

According to Joel Spring, this introduction of cotton culture by Hawkins created social classes among the Cherokees. The best example of this can be seen in the story of the Ridge family. In autumn 1796, Sehoya Ridge was one of a group of women taught to spin and weave by Hawkins. When the Cherokee men returned from hunting, Sehoya's husband, known as "The Ridge," found that she was able to make more money in the production of cotton cloth than he was in hunting. With Hawkins' encouragement and promise to provide them with spinning wheels and looms, The Ridge decided to become a cotton farmer and give up hunting. By the 1820s, The Ridge was wealthy enough to build a large, American-style, two-story house that was described by government official Thomas McKenney: "'it resembled in no respect the wigwam of an Indian, it was the home of the patriarch, the scene of plenty and hospitality.'"79

The first suggestion for a model school located among an Indian tribe came in 1799. The Chickasaws requested such an institution from the New York Missionary Society "to teach the tribe agriculture and trades." Although lack of funds prohibited the creation of the model school for the Chickasaws, Gideon Blackburn, a Presbyterian minister in Tennessee, was successful in developing the first boarding school that was actually within the bounds of the Cherokee tribe. He began trying to amass the financial backing necessary in 1799 but did not receive support until 1803 when the Committee on Missions for the Presbyterian General Assembly approved funding for the school "as an introduction to the notice of the Indians, to conciliate their friendship, & to prepare the way for extensive usefulness among them at a future day." Blackburn also appealed personally to President Thomas Jefferson for funding. Jefferson responded by appropriating three hundred dollars from the money allocated to the Cherokee agency. Blackburn also raised funds by appealing to churches and their congregations for contributions to his project of salvation and civilization.80

77 Spring, 50. McLoughlin, Cherokee Renascence, 23.
78 Spring 25.
79 Spring, 25, 48.
Next, Blackburn had to secure the approval of the Cherokee chiefs, which was granted in October 1803, probably because Blackburn did not mention religious conversion or manual labor on a mission farm. A site was chosen in the least civilized part of the tribe along the Hiwassee River in southeast Tennessee. The school opened its doors the following spring and soon enrolled twenty-one students. The school day was packed with instruction, prayer, meals, and some play, but the school did not include a farm so there was no manual labor training. The children were given American clothes, food, and names. By 1806, Blackburn's school was successful enough that he was able to open a day school.

At the same time Blackburn was working to garner support for his efforts, the Moravians sent missionaries to live among the Cherokees in northwest Georgia. The Moravians wanted to establish a compound for Christian converts to live in and, as support grew, then a school would be built. However, the Cherokees wanted a school first. Many of them had come to see the economic advantages of familiarity with the customs and language of whites and wanted to allow their children to become educated in a school structured like a white school. In 1800, the Moravians opened a station on land donated by James Vann, a wealthy mixed-blood Cherokee leader, in northwest Georgia. By 1803, the Cherokee leaders were becoming impatient because the missionaries had not started a school, and the missionaries were becoming impatient because they had not converted many Cherokees. At this point in their mutual frustration, Gideon Blackburn arrived and proposed opening a school of his own so Cherokee attention shifted to his school. The Moravians did finally open a school in 1804, but there were only eight students. The efforts of the Moravians and Blackburn were small-time in comparison with the large-scale operations of missionary groups that began to form in the 1810s.

One such group was the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), which was created in 1810 with the goal of "establish[ing] schools in the different parts of the tribe under the missionary direction and superintendence, for the instruction of the rising generation in common school learning, in the useful arts of life, and in Christianity.”

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82 McLoughlin, Cherokees and Missionaries, 1789-1839 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 13, 26, 43-45, 47, 102-104. Spring 65, 69. Both McLoughlin and Spring relate a story surrounding the choice for the location of the Moravian station. Both James Vann and John McDonald, a white trader married to a mixed-blood woman, wanted to donate land for the station. McDonald's land was in Southeast Tennessee, while Vann's was in Northwest Georgia. The Moravians reportedly wrote the two names on slips of paper and put them in a hat. One of them drew out a slip, and it said Vann so that is where they decided to locate the station. It was not unusual for the Moravians to use such a lottery to make decisions. They reasoned that it was God's way of giving them a sign.
ABCFM has its roots in the gatherings of a group of young Williams College students who began meeting beside a haystack in 1807. These less than auspicious beginnings led to the formation of the Brethren. Among the early members were Samuel Mill, Gordon Hall, and James Richards who all shared the goal of spreading Christianity. In 1808 a few others joined the group and they recorded their main goal: "The object of this society shall be to effect, in the persons of its members, a mission, or missions to the Heathens."

The organization spread to Andover Seminary when several members started there upon graduation from Williams. Finally, in 1810, the young men could no longer be patient and decided to petition the General Association, a meeting of Congregational ministers in Bradford, Massachusetts on June 27. Four members of the Brethren presented a document that included their reasons for wanting to become missionaries. It also included the following questions: "Whether…they ought to renounce the object of missions as visionary or impracticable; if not, whether they out to direct their attention to the eastern or western world: Whether they may expect patronage and support from a missionary society in this country, or must commit themselves to the direction of a European society; and what preparatory measures they ought to take, previous to actual engagement." As a result of their petition, the General Association decided to create the Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions with nine members. The Board officially met for the first time on September 5, 1810 in Farmington, Connecticut and included the Governor of Connecticut, John Treadwell. Dr. Samuel Worcester, an early leader of the ABCFM, who was instrumental in its success, was also present.

Although these young men were certainly not the first of their time to have an interest in becoming missionaries to the heathen, their action "provided the immediate stimulus for the inauguration of American missions abroad." The first ABCFM missionaries departed for Calcutta in February 1812. The group consisted of two single men and three couples, and they did not arrive until the summer of 1812. There had been some concern about being able to fund the missionary effort, but the Board managed to raise six thousand dollars in three weeks,

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presumably through very persistent fund raising efforts. Between 1815 and 1819, the ABCFM sent missionaries to Sri Lanka, Hawaii, and Palestine.\textsuperscript{85}

Historian Charles Maxfield has argued that the Board was created because these men saw "the missionary movement as a sign of, and a necessary preliminary to, a this-worldly millennium, which would come, 'not by miracles, but by means.'" In other words, they saw it as a sign of the second coming. "Christian union, world peace, the world-wide spread of the Gospel, and an increase in human happiness, were all signs of the coming kingdom." According to Maxfield, "the Board also advanced the idea, 'in every human being you see a brother or a sister.' The missionary movement was opposed to racism." They were concerned for their fellow human beings who were suffering in ignorance and "for the eternal fate of other human beings."\textsuperscript{86}

Dr. Samuel Worcester was the pastor of the Tabernacle Church in Salem, Massachusetts when the ABCFM was founded. He was one of the individuals consulted by the Brethren before their appeal to the General Association. Worcester was elected as the corresponding secretary at the first meeting of the Board in 1810 and was a member of the Prudential Committee, which was the governing body of the Board. Worcester was important in garnering support, both emotional and financial, for their early missionary efforts. In the Board's "Address of 1810," Worcester reminded observers "The Redeemer of men...gave it in special charge to his disciples to 'go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.'" In January 1821, Worcester decided to visit the missionary stations in the Southeast in an attempt to improve his health. However, his health continued to fade, and he died at Brainerd on June 7, 1821. This was the same year that Sophia Sawyer first applied as a missionary, and by 1821 the ABCFM had seven missions with nineteen stations. There were twenty-three ordained ministers out of a total number of eighty-three missionaries. The Board spent about fifty thousand dollars to establish and support their missionaries and had over thirty thousand dollars on reserve. Contributions and the number of volunteer missionaries continued to grow.\textsuperscript{87}

\textsuperscript{86} Maxfield, 78-79.
Another figure important to the growth and success of the ABCFM was Jeremiah Evarts. Evarts is recognized as a founder of the Board because the Brethren also consulted him before they went before the General Association. Evarts began his career as a lawyer in Connecticut in 1806, but in 1810 he became the editor of the *Panoplist*, which was a religious magazine of the Congregationalists. He was chosen as treasurer of the Board in 1811 and as a member of the Prudential Committee in 1812. Evarts was only thirty-one at the time and has been described by Maxfield as a "transitional figure between the older generation of American Board founders and the younger generation of first missionaries." Evarts became the corresponding secretary upon Worcester's death in 1821. In the same year, the *Panoplist* was reorganized as the *Missionary Herald*, which was dedicated to missionary news, but Evarts continued to serve as editor.  

Under Evarts' leadership, the first single women were sent out as assistant missionaries for the ABCFM. He was also very involved in defending the Cherokees against removal and in that capacity made several trips to Washington to lobby the government in their behalf. Evarts also wrote a series of letters against the treatment of the Cherokee that were published under the pseudonym of William Penn. His efforts took a toll on his health, and in February 1831 he went on a trip to Cuba to attempt to regain his strength. However, he died on March 10, 1831 in South Carolina while returning home. Before Evarts died, the ABCFM had undergone a great expansion. In 1830 the expenditure by the Board to support their missionaries was over one hundred thousand dollars. There were two hundred and twenty five missionaries, six hundred native teachers, and fifty thousand students in mission schools.

The ABCFM began as a Congregational organization that was directed by the General Associations of both Massachusetts and Connecticut, which determined membership on the Board. However, in 1812 the Board was transformed into an independent agency incorporated by the legislature of Massachusetts. At this time, the Board joined with the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church and expanded its membership from nine to twenty-four, among which were to be included eight Presbyterian representatives from the middle states. Maxfield states that "As the first 'national' benevolent society, the ABCFM supported the development of cooperative national benevolent societies." Not only was the Board involved in sponsorship of

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mission stations, but they also created the American Bible Society, to help in the distribution of Bibles, and the American Education Society, which gave financial assistance to young men who were studying to be ministers and, perhaps, missionaries. According to Maxfield, these efforts "brought together Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Reformed, and others in varying combinations to promote the advancement of the kingdom of God in the United States and around the world. Not only did they labor for the kingdom, but their Christian unity was interpreted as a sign of the coming millennial kingdom." This is also evidenced in the joint efforts of Board and Presbyterian missionaries in the Southeast.  

The first ABCFM missionary sent to the Southeast was Cyrus Kingsbury, who graduated first from Brown and then Andover. Kingsbury was classmates at Andover with Adoniram Judson, one of the first missionaries sent to India by the ABCFM. After his graduation from Andover in 1815, Kingsbury was ordained as a missionary and was soon on his way to the Southeast to scout a suitable site for a mission to the Indians there. On his trip south, he stopped in Washington and met with President James Madison and appealed to him for assistance in this venture. William McLoughlin explains that Kingsbury agreed that "The Board would supply and supervise the volunteer workforce of this benevolent bureaucracy if the government would provide the funds for 'the erection of suitable buildings and for providing those implements of husbandry and the mechanic arts' which are essential for a 'respectful and useful' vocational education. It was a project vital to 'national interest and national happiness,' and 'probably no other means could be so successfully employed to prevent the recurrence of expensive and bloody Indian wars.'" Kingsbury got his support, and Secretary of War, William H. Crawford, instructed the Indian agent "'to erect a comfortable school-house, and another for the teacher and such as may board with him, in such part of the nation as will be selected for the purpose.'"  

Kingsbury chose a site for the station on land donated by John McDonald, a white trader who had tried earlier to donate his land to the Moravians. Within a year of being established, the station consisted of "four small log buildings" with plans for additional buildings. There were twenty-six Cherokee students attending school. By the spring of 1818, when Jeremiah Evarts visited the station, there were forty-seven Cherokee children attending school, including fourteen

90 Maxfield, 80-82.
full-blooded Cherokees. This is how Jeremiah Evarts described the scene at Brainerd when he arrived:

It was on a Friday evening, the 8th instant just after sunset, that I alighted at the mission-house. The path which leads to it from the main road passes through an open wood, which is extremely beautiful at this season of the year. The mild radiance of the setting sun, the unbroken solitude of the wilderness the pleasantness of the forest, with all its springing and blossoming vegetation, the object of my journey, and the nature and design of the institution which I was about to visit, conspired to render the scene solemn and interesting, and to fill the mind with tender emotions.  

During his visit, Evarts observed the students and wrote, "At evening prayers, I was forcibly struck with the stillness, order, and decorum of the children." Evarts also wrote "If all the members of the board could hear the prayers which are daily offered in their behalf at this station; and if all patrons and contributors could hear the thanks which are returned to God for their liberality…if all these things could be seen, one may safely predict, that the exertions and sacrifices of the friends of missions would be increased fourfold." By the end of school in 1819, there were fifty male and thirty-three female students. 

By 1817, there were three religious denominations operating mission stations among the Southeast Indians: the Moravians, the Presbyterians - represented by Gideon Blackburn, and the Congregationalists - represented by the ABCFM missionaries. In 1801 the Congregationalists and the Presbyterians had agreed to unite in their missionary efforts on the frontier because there was no Congregational association located in the Southeast while there was a Union Presbytery of East Tennessee. The Presbytery in Tennessee was visited by the ABCFM missionaries and provided more local support for the station. In 1819, the Baptists established a permanent mission station in Southeast Tennessee on the Hiwasee River, but in 1827 Evan Jones, a Baptist minister, began an itinerant preaching circuit where he made stops at important towns and held four day camp meetings. The Baptists were not as successful as the ABCFM in terms of educating students; they only opened three schools. However, they were more successful in

92 Choules and Smith, 345-346.
20 Choules and Smith, 345-346.
terms of the number of converts. Another religious group that was even more successful in converting Cherokees to Christianity were the Methodists. They did not officially assign a missionary teacher to work among the Cherokees until 1822, and it was another year before the first circuit-riding minister was sent.94

Thomas McKenney had been appointed first as the superintendent of Indian trade in 1809 and then served as the head of the Office of Indian Affairs from 1824 to 1830. McKenney is important to this discussion of Indian education because he believed education was the key to civilizing the Indians. He viewed them as children who should be protected from the corruption of vices introduced by white settlers. McKenney was one of the first to propose that southeastern tribes could only be protected by moving them west of the Mississippi. As early as 1816, McKenney became interested in education as a means of cultural transformation as opposed to trade. He was also involved in convincing Congress to pass the Civilization Fund Act, also known as the Education Act, in 1819.95

The Civilization Fund Act of 1819 allocated ten thousand dollars a year "for the purpose of providing against further decline and final extinction of the Indian tribes adjoining the frontier settlements of the United States, and for introducing among them the habits and arts of civilization." The legislation "authorized the president to 'employ capable persons of good moral character, to instruct them [Indians] in the mode of agriculture suited to their situation; and for teaching their children in reading, writing, and arithmetic.'" Thomas McKenney approved the use of these funds for the subsidizing of missionary groups in the creation of schools and the means of instructing Indians in agriculture and other domestic tasks. Subsequently, new treaties were negotiated with tribes, and they included the appropriation of money to missionary societies for these purposes.96

The educational strategy of the ABCFM went along with the government’s desire to civilize the Cherokee Indians. Using money allocated from the Education Act and funds they raised themselves, the American Board established eleven mission stations in northern Georgia and Alabama and southern Tennessee. A majority of the money from the Education Act went to

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95 Spring, 26-27. Prucha 141, 148-152.
the ABCFM. In 1819, Dr. Samuel Worcester, one of the members of the Board, wrote to McKenney "We should find no difficulty in applying immediately and with good effect, the whole $10,000 appropriated by Congress." The ABCFM did not receive all of the funds, but their operation was large enough that they could have spent all of the money in their missions of the Southeast.  

Historian Robert Berkhofer has noted that the bond between the church and state in the civilization process "was mutually advantageous to both parties: the missionary societies received some money to support the secular side of their stations and the federal government obtained civilization agents at low cost…Such an arrangement saved the government money, moreover, through sharing costs. In this deal…the missionaries received some federal money and moral support, the Indians supposedly obtained 'civilization,' and the government leaders salved the American conscience while they hoped soon to acquire native lands no longer needed by their transformed inhabitants." This arrangement blurred the lines between church and state as policy makers shared with missionaries the idea that civilizing the Indians included Christianizing them.  

The missionary societies and the government policy makers each had their own agenda in this attempt to civilize Native Americans. Berkhofer has suggested that for the government "Expansion could be achieved with honor if the United States offered American civilization in return for native lands." Missionary groups assumed that Indians would see the inherent superiority of "the American Way of Life" and "would see it in their self-interest to adopt the habits and beliefs of the (good) White American after a brief demonstration." Both sides were willing to allocate increasing amounts of money and numbers of staff to achieve their ends but with results that were not much more successful than earlier efforts.  

One important development with regards to education of the Cherokees was the development of a Cherokee alphabet by George Guess, otherwise known as Sequoyah, in 1821. He could not read or speak English, but "upon learning the idea of an alphabet, he actually devised on of eighty-six characters, with a symbol for every syllable of the Cherokee tongue."  

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The principles of the alphabet could be learned in as little as three days and quickly spread throughout the tribe so that within three years half the tribe could read their own language. While there is no evidence that the missionaries used this alphabet in their schools, it did become a useful means of reaching a larger number of people, especially after Samuel Worcester and Elias Boudinot became involved in creating a printing press.¹⁰⁰

Rev. Samuel Worcester was a nephew of the Board's first corresponding secretary of the same name. He had graduated from the University of Vermont in 1819, after learning how to set type from his father. Worcester then attended Andover and graduated in 1823. Two years later he was ordained as a minister and married Ann Orr, a classmate of Sophia Sawyer's at Byfield Seminary. The newlyweds departed for Brainerd where Worcester served as supervising missionary for two years. Worcester's interest in linguistics and experience with printing sparked his interest in moving to the new capital of the Cherokee Nation, New Echota, in 1827. Elias Boudinot, an influential mixed-blood Cherokee, was interested in establishing the national press for the Cherokees in that town. Worcester actually petitioned the ABCFM for permission to make the move and establish a new mission station there. He was also able to gain their support in building a new house valued at over thirteen hundred dollars, which served as the Worcester home, the mission station, and the post office. Despite the fact that Worcester established a mission station in New Echota, his primary efforts were concentrated on the translation and of religious works into Cherokee. Historian Kim Macenczak has estimated that 14,650 copies of eight publications were printed, "in addition to the regular printings of the Cherokee Phoenix," which was the nation's newspaper.¹⁰¹

Historian William McLoughlin has a different opinion of how the creation of an alphabet affected the Cherokees. Despite the involvement of Samuel Worcester in translating and printing documents in Cherokee, McLoughlin feels that the missionaries were not necessarily pleased that a written language was created. They probably would have preferred that the Cherokee language were to die out. As it was, the Cherokee government had adopted English as its official language.

because many of the leaders were mixed-bloods who spoke English better than Cherokee. Another problem, from the missionary point of view, was that the new language actually decreased dependence on the missionaries themselves. Cherokees of any age or educational level could easily learn to write in their own language, which they began to do fervently. The Cherokees saw the alphabet as a means of liberation. The Sequoyan alphabet, according to McLoughlin, "became virtually a code to sustain the traditionalist community beyond the perception of the authorities, red or white." One of the ABCFM missionaries, Reverend Isaac Proctor, wrote in 1825 that "letters in Cherokee are passing in all directions' and nothing is in 'so great demand as pens, ink, and paper," a development that Proctor saw as working "against English schools."102

The issue of the alphabet also highlights the issue of language in terms of the mission schools. After Jeremiah Evarts visited Brainerd in 1824, the Board determined that students in both Cherokee and Choctaw mission schools would be taught in their native language initially, "that they might become more quickly civilized." There is no evidence that this actually happened. In fact, many missionaries complained of the difficulty in attempting to learn Cherokee. Sophia Sawyer, herself, indicated that it was a problem. The earlier Moravian missionaries also had difficulties with the language barrier. They came to believe that teaching the children English would help lead to the spread of religion, and "the Cherokees who refused to learn English were in all senses irredeemable and doomed."103

One missionary that did learn the Cherokee language was Rev. Daniel S. Butrick, who arrived at Brainerd in 1818. According to McLoughlin, "He left the comfortable life at Brainerd mission soon after his arrival and went to live in a smoky cabin with a full blood family in order to learn Cherokee" because "he firmly believed that only by learning the Cherokee language could the missionaries truly perform their task." Other missionaries complained of the lack of words in the language, but Butrick wrote "this language exceeds all my former expectations in richness and beauty." He later succeeded in translating the New Testament into Cherokee.104

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104 McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Missionaries*, 136-137.
Despite the interest of two missionaries in the Cherokee language, the initial plan created by the ABCFM was to draw Cherokee children away from their native culture and teach them in a boarding school. They would be educated in English; boys would also be taught farming skills; girls would learn housekeeping skills. It was hoped that the influence of educating the children would eventually spread throughout the tribe. In 1816 Cyrus Kingsbury, one of the first representatives of the ABCFM in the Cherokee Nation wrote, “Those who will be first educated will be the children of the half-breeds and the leading men of the nation…. [O]n their education and influence the character of the nation will very much depend.” Historian William McLoughlin has pointed out that the missionaries of the ABCFM “seemed unaware of the damaging ethnocentrism embodied in their determination to teach only in English. Their missionaries made little effort to learn Cherokee. It quickly became apparent that children of mixed-blood parents who spoke English in their homes were able to learn much faster than those from Cherokee-speaking homes. Soon the ratio of mixed-bloods to full-bloods in American Board schools was three to one, the exact opposite of their proportion among the Cherokees.”

All of the missionary groups who had stations among the Indians had to address the issue of language in their schools. The Moravians used English in their schools and were not interested in learning Cherokee. In fact, they "insisted that virtually no adult white had ever been able to learn the language so as to speak it fluently…[and] they were appalled to find that the Cherokees had no words that could represent the concepts of sin, repentance, forgiveness, grace, redemption, perdition, damnation." Presbyterian missionary Gideon Blackburn also relied on English in his schools where he used bilingual students as translators and hoped they "would spread the message to their people." Evan Jones, the Baptist missionary, was interested in learning Cherokee. He knew English, Welsh, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, "but he found Cherokee very difficult to master." When he heard that Butrick was trying to learn the language, Jones wrote to him, as well as Samuel Worcester, about learning it himself; but "it took Jones almost a decade to learn the language well enough to preach in Cherokee.”

One way that missionary teachers overcame the language problem was by using bilingual students to translate for them. The Presbyterian, Baptist, and ABCFM missionary schools all

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relied on the Lancasterian system. According to historian Ronald Rayman, "The fundamental premise of Lancaster's system revolved around mass public education utilizing older or more advanced students, or 'monitors,' as instructors." Not only was this efficient and inexpensive because large numbers of students could be taught by one teacher, it was also extremely effective in inculcating civilization and culture among the Cherokee students. Some people referred to it as a factory system of learning. Joseph Lancaster created the method for English charity schools, but he himself favored its use in Indian schools. In fact, Lancaster considered writing a version of his textbook for these schools. According to Rayman, Cyrus Kingsbury was successful in soliciting support for the first ABCFM mission because he argued "persuasively that the popular Lancasterian plan offered prospects for signal successes in educating American Indians."

Rayman described the organization of the school in this way: "Kingsbury reported the formation of groups of students -"companies"- under the supervision of monitor "captains," an indication of the school's discipline patterned after a military model. Under the tutelage of the monitors, who had received preliminary instruction from the white missionaries, students first learned the alphabet, and printed letters in sand with sticks to save on the use of expensive paper. From those rudimentary beginnings, students advanced to writing on slates, and finally reading."107

In some respects, the Cherokees were actually the better linguists because many of them were able to master English. Spring notes that the wealthier members of the tribe saw that "bilingualism was important in commercial transactions and in dealing with the U.S. government…In addition, bilingualism contributed to the social class differences within the tribes…[and] literacy in English appeared to enhance the power of mixed-bloods over full-bloods who spoke no English." As evidence of this, in 1817 the Cherokee National Council passed a law, written in English, creating a National Committee, which would keep its records in English.108

The subject of language acquisition in the Cherokee tribe is closely tied to whether one was full blood or mixed-blood. Those Indians who were genetically one hundred percent of Cherokee descent would be known as full bloods, while mixed-bloods had some degree of Euro-
American heritage. Mixed-blood children often resulted from the marriage of a white trader who married a Cherokee woman, but very seldom from a white woman marrying a Cherokee man.

While in other cultures the full-blood individuals might be considered more genetically pure and more powerful, among the Cherokees and other tribes in the United States it was the mixed-blood individuals who garnered more power. Historian Devon Mihesuah describes this development: "Progressive Cherokees gained access to high positions in the tribal government and controlled the annuity payments from the federal government for past land concessions. They purchased black slaves, developed the best farms, and amassed personal wealth. They were economically successful because they were acquisitive, educated in the ways of white society, and aware of the importance of long-term planning. Furthermore, because of their appearance and ability to speak English, the mixed-bloods could better communicate with whites." For example, in 1809 a mixed-blood Cherokee, Joseph Vann, "owned 115 slaves, 1,000 head of cattle, and 250 horses."109

The lives of John Ridge and Elias Boudinot, two sons of mixed-blood families, can be examined as examples of how their heritage affected them. As described earlier, John Ridge's parents, The Ridge and Sehoya, were the first Cherokees to adopt cotton farming. Their four children were all born in their large Euro-American style home, including John in 1803. John's father recognized the importance of his children receiving education in English, and in 1810 John went to the Moravian school at Spring Place. He left this school four years later, but began attending the Brainerd school with his sister Nancy in 1817. In that same year the ABCFM established the Foreign Mission School in Cornwall, Connecticut for the purpose of educating foreigners, meaning non-westerners. The Ridge decided to send John to Cornwall so he could be educated in more advanced subjects. The Ridge told Mr. Hoyt, an ABCFM missionary at the Creek Path station, "he can never be thankful enough to the missionaries for providing a way for his son to receive an education. He says, he wishes him to stay at Cornwall until he gets a great education; and he hopes the Lord will give him a good heart, so that when he comes home, he may be very useful to his nation."110

John's cousin, Buck Watie, arrived in Cornwall before him in January 1818. Buck, the son of The Ridge's brother, Oo-watie, and a Cherokee mother, was born in 1803 in Georgia. He

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110 Sping, 48-49. Maxfield, 82. Choules and Smith, 350.

The similarities in the lives of Ridge and Boudinot do not end there. Both men were destined to fall in love with and marry white women whose fathers were associated with the Foreign Mission School. John met Sarah Northrup, the daughter of the school's steward, when she was helping her mother nurse him back to health in 1821. When The Ridge arrived in Cornwall to check on John's health and take him home, John refused to leave. When Sarah's parents found out about the romance, they sent her away from Cornwall, but Sarah's persistence persuaded them to accept the betrothal. John and Sarah were married on January 27, 1824 in her parents' home by a Congregational minister and immediately left for the Cherokee nation. Despite the descriptions of John as a well-educated and civilized young man, Cornwall society was not open to the idea of this mixed-race marriage.\footnote{Spring, 48, 52-53. Thurman Wilkins, \textit{Cherokee Tragedy: The Ridge Family and the Decimation of a People} 2nd ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), 146.}

Elias Boudinot had left Cornwall in 1822, hoping to attend Andover to become a minister but poor health prevented this and he returned to his home. However, he had begun a relationship with Harriet Gold, the daughter of one of the founders of the Foreign Mission School, and they began a correspondence that continued for almost two years. In 1824, after the uproar about the marriage of John Ridge to Sarah Northrup had barely subsided, Harriet confessed to her parents that she loved Elias and the two wished to marry. Harriet's parents were shocked and tried to change her mind, but she responded that "she was determined to become a missionary to the Cherokees and knew no better way than as the wife of a leading man of the nation." The Gold's refused at first, but Harriet's health began to deteriorate to the point that it was obvious that she no longer had the will to live. Finally, they consented to the marriage, but the plans had to be made in secrecy. When it was discovered that Harriet and Elias were to be married, Cornwall was again thrown into upheaval. She was burned in effigy and forced to go in
Elias Boudinot and Harriet Gold were married on March 28, 1826, and, like his cousin before him, they departed immediately for his home in the south.\textsuperscript{113}

John Ridge and Elias Boudinot were not prepared for the reaction of the white citizens of Cornwall. The two were the epitome of success in terms of the missionary goals for Cherokee students. They were refined, well-educated young men who had adopted the ways of white society. According to Spring, John Ridge "realized that neither education nor civilization would ever, in the eyes of whites, make them equal. 'If an Indian is educated in the sciences, has a good knowledge of the classics, astronomy, mathematics, moral and natural philosophy, and his conduct equally modest and polite, yet he is an Indian, and the most stupid and illiterate white man will disdain and triumph over this worthy individual.'" School leaders warned that Boudinot's marriage to Harriet would close the doors of the Foreign Mission School, and that is what happened in the fall of 1826. The experience of Ridge and Boudinot ultimately led them to the understanding that "no matter how much Native Americans adopted the ways of European civilization, there would still be no peace between the groups." These two young men eventually became involved in the removal of their people to new lands west of the Mississippi because of pressure from white Americans in the Southeast.\textsuperscript{114}

Shortly after being established beginning in 1816, the mission stations in the Southeast became very important to the ABCFM for one major reason. They were the only stations easily accessible due to their location within the United States and near available travel routes. Not only were members of the Board itself able to make visits of inspection, but also the general public, who may be more willing to donate funds, and representatives of the United States Government, who were also important in funding considerations. Government grants of between two and three hundred dollars were made each quarter to the Cherokee and Choctaw, presumably on the basis of satisfactory reports from these government visits. As a result of Board visits to the Southeast, in the year 1820 alone half of the money spent and half of the missionaries sent were for the Indians in the United States.\textsuperscript{115}

Another result of visits from the Board members was change in structure and procedure at the mission stations. In 1824 when Jeremiah Evarts visited, he was pleased with the progress of the students and the efforts of the missionaries at Brainerd. However, he also decided to make

\textsuperscript{113} Spring 52. Wilkins, 150-153.
\textsuperscript{114} Spring, 54-55.
\textsuperscript{115} Strong, 40-41.
some changes. Historian William Strong has written that the Board "felt that too much stress had been put upon merely industrial training. Instead of maintaining a large number of farmers and mechanics…it was determined to leave the Indians to make their own engagements of teachers in the arts and to set the missionaries free from these distractions." Also, it was decided that, instead of building large missionary stations, several small stations would be created "to spread out the missionary force as widely as possible."\textsuperscript{116}

After Brainerd, smaller missionary stations were set up throughout the Cherokee Nation. By 1827 the Board had a total of seven stations with thirty-one people working in various capacities such as missionaries, teachers, and farmers. The characteristics of these stations are evidence of the new focus of the Board in this region. The new stations tended to be smaller than Brainerd, and most only had a day school. They did have farms attached, but there was less emphasis on teaching husbandry and farming methods to the students because most of their parents were already practicing these techniques. McLoughlin has estimated that between 1817 and 1833, three hundred and fifty-five students were taught at Brainerd, with a total of eight hundred and eighty-two in all of the ABCFM Cherokee schools. The emphasis was now on educating students so that they would spread Christianity and civilization throughout the tribe. The next chapter will examine how Sophia Sawyer was involved in the education of the children in the Cherokee tribe.\textsuperscript{117}

\textsuperscript{117} Choules and Smith, 361. McLoughlin, \textit{Cherokees and Missionaries}, 129
CHAPTER 3

SOPHIA SAWYER’S LIFE AS A MISSIONARY

"Their skin soft & smooth long eyelashes their hair and
eyes glisten& every feature seems to say ‘teach me to read -
lead me to God -I am the workmanship of his almighty hand -
Jesus has died for me & sent you here to teach me -
I shall go to heaven or hell - much depends on your instruction.” 118

Sophia Sawyer served as a missionary teacher with the ABCFM for a total of fifteen
years, from 1823 to 1836 and from 1837 to 1839. Throughout this period she worked with the
Cherokee, first in Tennessee, then in Georgia, and finally in Indian Territory (Oklahoma).
Sawyer's experiences as a missionary teacher were shaped by larger conflicts between the
Cherokees and the governments of Georgia and the United States, as well as by disagreements
within the tribe itself. Ultimately, these conflicts led to the relocation of the Cherokees, and
many other Native Americans, to an area in what is now Oklahoma. Sophia Sawyer made this
transition as well. One of the few Anglo-American missionary teachers specifically identified as
desirable as teachers by Cherokees themselves, Sawyer joined the tribe in the newly established
Indian Territory 1837, where she stayed for two years.119

On November 21, 1823 Sophia Sawyer arrived in Brainerd, Tennessee to begin her career
as a teacher to Cherokee children in an ABCFM mission school. The mission at Brainerd,
located near what is now Chattanooga, Tennessee, was established by the ABCFM in 1817. By
the end of its first year of existence, the buildings included "the school, dining room, teachers'
quarters, kitchen, lumber house, meat house, dormitories, barn, stable, gristmill, and carpenter's

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118 Sophia Sawyer to Linda Raymond Ward Kingsbury, 24 May 1824, Diedrich Collection, William
Clements Library, University of Michigan.
119 ABC, 18.3.1, Vol. 8, Sophia Sawyer to David Greene, 17 July 1834. ABC, 18.3.1, Vol. 2, David
Greene to John Ridge, 12 August 1834.
shop." There were twenty-two missionaries and assistants, along with their families at the station, and there were about fifty Cherokee children who regularly attended school.¹²⁰

When Sophia Sawyer arrived, Reverend Ard Hoyt was the superintendent of the mission. For the Hoyt family, Brainerd was a family enterprise. Ard Hoyt had arrived at Brainerd in 1818 and became superintendent a year later when Cyrus Kingsbury moved on to start a mission among the Choctaw. When Hoyt came to the station, he brought his wife and six of their seven children. All but the youngest of the Hoyt children served the mission in one capacity or another, along with Mrs. Hoyt. The Hoyt's oldest daughter, Flora, married William Chamberlin, a former student of her father's, on March 22, 1818, soon after his arrival at the mission. Sarah Hoyt, the Reverend's daughter was listed as a teacher for the girls at the mission in 1819. His oldest sons, Milo and Darius, were sent to a nearby settlement on the Chatooga Creek in 1820 to start a school there, but it only lasted a few months. A month before he left for Chatooga, Milo Hoyt married a Cherokee woman named Lydia Lowry. In 1823, Sarah Hoyt married Sylvester Ellis, one of the other missionaries at Brainerd. Darius Hoyt served as a substitute teacher in the boys' school at Brainerd and was later chosen as the teacher for the school at a new mission called Willstown. His sister Anna was an assistant at Willstown as well. Cornelius, the youngest of the Hoyt children, assisted in various ways at the mission. Darius went on to college at Marysville in Tennessee, while Cornelius was educated at Yale.¹²¹

Reverend John Elsworth was in charge of the education branch of the Brainerd mission. David Gage had charge of the boys' school and his wife Betsey the girls' school. The Gages moved on to another mission in 1824 so John Elsworth assumed responsibility for the boys, while Sophia Sawyer taught the girls. There were also several other men and women at the mission who were involved in the domestic operation of the farm and in the care and education of the Cherokee students.¹²²

Sophia Sawyer was not alone in her desire to sacrifice herself as a missionary to Native Americans. Historian Lydia Hoyle has estimated that "between 1815 and 1865, Protestant mission boards [including the ABCFM] appointed over five hundred women to labor in the South and West among the Native Americans." While little is known about the background of these women, there are some commonalities evident in the letters that they wrote when applying to the ABCFM. Many mentioned a desire to "be useful" and a sense of calling to become missionaries to "heathens." In their applications to the ABCFM, "One in every seven women ... mentioned the death of a family member as one of the 'Providential' occurrences leading to their application." They were motivated to apply by the various verbal and print appeals for missionaries that were prevalent. Sophia Sawyer was probably influenced by these appeals as well as by the persuasion of her mentor Joseph Emerson while she was a student at his school.

The requirements for missionary women varied depending on the work for which they were needed. The qualifications for domestic workers were few, but teachers needed academic training and teaching experience. Female missionary teachers taught both boys and girls because male teachers were difficult to find." Even the women teachers were responsible for helping with the domestic chores of the mission, including the making of clothing and helping to care for the children. Sophia Sawyer once "stitched a gash caused by a kick from a mule and dispensed calomel to a little girl thought to have a liver disorder. Hoyle found that women frequently described their exhaustion as a result of the unremitting workload they were forced to maintain. Sawyer herself wrote in October 1824: "My situation is trying. Sister Elsworth is feeble. Sister Blunt & her husband supply the kitchen. I have the care of the girls out of school & in. My help is needed here & there, & everywhere in the family. So much work is crowding & the girls I will not neglect...so I over do & bring the fever." Most pre-Civil War missionaries received no salary "only sufficient funds to take care of their basic needs" and the cost of "traveling expenses, to and from the mission." It is probable that salary was a consideration in the hiring of women to serve as missionary teachers.

After he arrived in 1822. John's brother, Frederick, was also a missionary who arrived in 1824 and was assigned to the mission at Haweis.


The difficulties of the missionary teachers included language barriers, discipline problems, and the wide range of ages and abilities of the students. Although most were not racist, they did believe that Euro-American culture was superior. In their letters to their superiors, "It is interesting to note that in those negative attributional statements, the strong language is often not a direct attack on the Indian people themselves. Rather, the invective was implicitly directed at the American government that had victimized the people or at the environment that had left the people walking in spiritual 'darkness.'" Sawyer described the physical appearance of her students in a very complimentary way: "They are very fond of the color of their skin - indeed I grow fond of it too. They are really beautiful - most of them have a bloom on their cheek & then so much feeling that it gives life to every feature." However, she later wrote about the condition of the Cherokee "O when will the gospel teach this degraded people to forsake the hunter's life & cultivate their lands…The land is fertile in most parts of the Nation, & promises a rich reward to the cultivator." 125

Sawyer's letters as a missionary teacher reveal that she took her work with the Cherokee seriously and derived much satisfaction from it. They also reveal that she was a woman of strong character and independent judgment. Although she no doubt shared many of the prejudices and culturally imperialist attitudes of other white missionaries, she challenged the low expectations of her Cherokee students expressed by other whites. Within a year after starting her work with the Cherokee she began articulating a vision of higher schooling for Cherokee women. These attitudes and ambitions often brought her into conflict with her superiors, but also earned her the respect of at least some Cherokee leaders.

The ABCFM sent many teachers to teach the Cherokees in mission schools. However, few of them wrote as extensively as Sophia Sawyer about their experiences and opinions. Sawyer's letters to her supervisors at ABCFM headquarters in Boston provide us with valuable insight into the classroom of a missionary teacher trying to communicate with and educate the children of the Cherokee Nation. Sawyer was also exceptional in that she did not hesitate to voice her opinions to her supervisors, Jeremiah Evarts and David Greene. Evarts served as

corresponding secretary for the ABCFM from 1821 until his death in 1831. He was succeeded by David Greene, who served as the corresponding secretary for American Indian missions.\footnote{Maxfield, 85, 101.}

In the first available letter from Sophia Sawyer after her arrival at Brainerd, written on May 24, 1824, she describes the amount of work that she has to do at the station: "I so much fear unfitting myself for the station in which I am placed, that I am rigid respecting all my rules of conduct. I rise as soon as I can see; to be ready for prayers, when the bell tolls at sunrise - I must see that all my scholars are dressed properly, and seated in the dining-room at sunrise. We have supper after sunset, & then attend prayers. After this, I have all the little ones to see washed & in bed before I can retire." She was nervous about displeasing her supervisors so she worked hard to make sure that she was fulfilling her duties. In the same letter, she gives more specific information about her responsibilities: "I have nineteen girls in school seventeen of which board with me, and are principally under my care. I have charge of their washing, ironing, mending, and making their clothes. Their work-room, school-room, beds and sleeping chamber to take care and keep clean. Their chamber is large sufficient to hold ten beds, I have a little chamber at the end of it and one to take care of for female company - our chambers are over the school and work-room, all without paint and must be kept clean. Ten girls, under ten years are with me all the time to learn to sew, and the nameless things that are connected with the education of children." Later that year she wrote, "I found my situation extremely trying when I first entered the school, my help was so much needed about the house, and the family in such a habit of calling on me. The children's habits of irregularity in every thing, especially respecting obeying the bell. I felt feeble…still I was able, after two days respite, to be in my business sixteen hours out of twenty-four."\footnote{Sophia Sawyer to Linda Raymond Ward Kingsbury, 24 May 1824, Diedrich Collection, William Clements Library, University of Michigan. ABCFM, 18.3.1, Vol. 3, Sophia Sawyer to Jeremiah Evarts, 25 June 1824.}

Despite her hard work and long hours, Sawyer was happy. She wrote in August 1824 "I am the only unmarried female belonging to the mission in this nation - I feel like an only daughter belonging to affectionate parents. I experience all that tenderness & delicacy of treatment from the brothers at Brainerd for which my situation calls." This must have been a pleasant feeling for Sawyer after being so long without family around her. It also must have
been comforting to know that she was welcome after she had risked so much and traveled so far away from her home in New England.\textsuperscript{128}

Sawyer quickly learned that Cherokee children were capable of learning difficult subjects and even found them preferable to the children she taught in New England. She wrote "I find the children much more interesting than I anticipated - their capacity for improvement beyond my expectation - less difficulty in making them understand - much less in governing them." Sawyer went on to say “The task of instruction was never so pleasant as in this school, not withstanding the difficulty of their understanding English.” In comparison with Northern children, she stated, “Their ignorance of our language is not so appalling to the feelings of the Teacher as that contempt of government, & want of a teachable temper that is so often found in schools in N.E. (New England).” Others who observed the students did not hide their surprise at the behavior of the Cherokee children. In a letter to Jeremiah Evarts, Betsey Taylor, one of the students, wrote: “Mrs. Hoyt came in and saw all the little girls she said she expected to see the Cherokees more wild than they appeared to be.” This was typical of the expectations many white observers had of Native Americans.\textsuperscript{129}

As time went on, Sawyer found herself growing more attached to her students and wrote "The more I know of the Cherokees the more I love them.” She, who had no children of her own and would never marry, began to see them as her children, a feeling that stayed with her throughout the rest of her career. She wrote in May 1824, "To feel that these children are almost wholly committed to my care has awakened a tenderness of feeling to which I have hitherto been a stranger. Then, they are so affectionate I must have a cold heart indeed not to love them…I have a sweet little Sarah whom I thought could not speak a work of our language. I passed her bed...[and she] called Miss Sawyer I want a kiss. Never was a sound sweeter to a mother's ear than this to mine."\textsuperscript{130}

While she never wrote of attempting to learn Cherokee to communicate better with her students, Sawyer did mention her use of students who could speak both languages as translators both in and out of the classroom. There is also an incident that demonstrates her sympathy for the children attempting to learn a new language. Sawyer wrote: “I have one...who suffers so

\textsuperscript{128} ABCFM, 18.3.1, Vol. 3, Sophia Sawyer to Jeremiah Evarts, 3 August 1824.
\textsuperscript{129} ABCFM, 18.3.1, Vol. 3, Sophia Sawyer to Jeremiah Evarts, 25 June 1824. Sawyer to Kingsbury, 24 May 1824. ABCFM, 18.3.1, Vol. 5, Part 2, Sophia Sawyer and students to Jeremiah Evarts, 2 May 1827.
much because she cannot speak English. I attempt to speak Cherokee that she may see my deficiency, and take courage.” In June 1824, she wrote “Give me the Cherokees as soon as they can walk & speak their own lang. if I am to educate them well.” Sawyer recognized that older children had a more difficult time learning the new language and also expressed a preference for beginning to teach Cherokee children when they were young.131

The ABCFM's mission schools were organized under the Lancasterian system where more advanced students became tutors for the less advanced. There were also several levels of students being taught at the same time. At various times during her career, Sawyer had her students write letters to the ABCFM, and one such letter contained a description of the school. "After breakfast we go to our work again till the bell rings for school. Then we get ready for school. When Miss Sawyer gets in we read a chapter in the bible Miss Sawyer makes the prayer after which the first class read. Then three of us get geography lessons; but Sally writes till we go out to play. When we come in the first class spell and the next, and the next, and so on." Sawyer herself wrote, "We shall soon have Cherokee girls able to assist in teaching."132

Another component of the Lancasterian system was the use of public examinations to demonstrate what students had learned over the course of the school term. Sawyer used this technique as well. In August 1824, she wrote to describe her first public examination: "God was with me at examination, & raised me in some degree above mortals...I shrunk from the idea of standing before so many people, & going through the order of the school. When the children began to recite I lost the presence of others in the delight I felt in their performance...They answered readily to more than an hundred questions addressed to their understanding found in the scripture history...All their answers were given promptly & correctly, & so loud as to be heard by all present."133

One of the major goals of the missionary schools was to teach the Cherokees to read English, especially so they could read the Bible. Several times in her letters Sawyer related her

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130 Sophia Sawyer to Linda Raymond Ward Kingsbury, 24 May 1824, Diedrich Collection, William Clements Library, University of Michigan.
132 McLoughlin, Cherokees and Missionaries, 132. ABCFM 18.3.1 Vol. 5, Part 2, Sophia Sawyer to Jeremiah Evarts, 25 July 1825. Historian Ronald Rayman has claimed that the mission at Brainerd abandoned its focus on the Lancaster system in favor of "manual labor training and physical work." (Rayman, 399) However, there is considerable evidence in Sawyer's letters that she was using the Lancaster system in her school. Perhaps, the boys were trained differently.
133 ABCFM 18.3.1 Vol. 5, Part 2, Sophia Sawyer to Jeremiah Evarts, 21 August 1824.
difficulties in teaching her students how to read. One early letter stated "I am learning the first class to give me some account of what they read...They cannot relate much of a story from what they read until I have brought it to their understanding by clothing it in language they can understand. This is a delightful part of my duty they show so much interest when they can get ideas." Later she wrote, "They do love to read, so far as they understand. We must proceed slowly in this as their knowledge of English is so limited. It is tiresome every few lines to stop & tell them the meaning of words. They will now often inquire what book I shall read on Saturday & not unfrequently bring some book to read, & listen with pleasure asking questions as we proceed." It is obvious that this was a tedious task for Sawyer, but one that gave her great satisfaction.  

Sawyer's letters often included requests for books: "I wish for such books for the first class as will give them a knowledge of History while they are acquiring a knowledge of reading. They have hitherto been confined to miscellaneous reading except the Bible...." She seemed to be frustrated about the scarcity of resources available to teach her students effectively. In 1833 she wrote, "In order to teach Geo. understandingly we need a globe. If a teacher anywhere should be able to demonstrate her instructions it is here...Do send me all the aid I can have from books & school apparatus...Dear Sir I know the books I mention will be expensive & I remember also that supplies are called for from all quarters of the globe. But have we not had sufficient experience of the effect of teaching the Cherokees superficially? Reading & Geography when well understood bring the Cherokee into a new world of enjoyment enlarge the soul, refine the feelings...." Sawyer felt she could be a better teacher if she only had more adequate materials.  

Sophia Sawyer also recognized that she could be a better teacher if she were better trained herself. In 1834 she asked to be allowed to attend a "high school taught in Huntsville [Alabama] by the former pupils of Miss Beecher." She wrote "I feel the need very much of understanding Geography in its connection with Astronomy - Arithmetic too. I must know more of that & be able to give demonstrations...I feel in order to teach I must be able to give the pupil to see why such & such steps bring the answer." Sawyer also wanted to "become acquainted with their method of teaching." She was willing to ask for support from the people of Huntsville.

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to meet her goal and wrote "I am willing to be a beggar if I can be better qualified to teach." Sawyer never did attend this school in Huntsville, and it was a continual concern for her that she was not adequately prepared to teach subjects of higher levels. In her study of missionary women who worked throughout the country, Lydia Hoyle has found that "Upon appointment or after several years of mission experience, a few women showed interest in furthering their education, especially in the 'masculine' disciplines of math and science. The mission boards, however, showed little interest in 'continuing education' and offered no financial support to make this possible."  

Like other nineteenth-century teachers, Sawyer was not only responsible for the academic improvement of her students; she was also responsible for their moral improvement. There were times that she expelled a student and only accepted him or her back if the parents agreed to allow her to take control of the student's moral behavior. Early in her tenure at Brainerd she explained, "I have had to punish several times to break bad habits respecting the cleanliness of their clothes, books and persons." However, she also wrote "I have never lost anything tho' all I have is open & within their reach. This locking up things I think has a bad effect on the morals of the children. I gratify their curiosity in letting them see my clothes, desk, trunk, or anything that is new to them. Sawyer also voiced concern about boarding schools: "In neighborhood schools, where the families have or can be persuaded to have, order & perseverance to keep their children in school, & aid in their home education, the child is trained from day to day to meet & labor in such circumstances as will be likely to surround her in future life...Besides her father's house is her scene of action, if she improves they have the satisfaction of seeing her daily improvement, & of aiding, at least in the expense of educating their own offspring. But there are thousands who cannot receive a English education from neighborhood schools, hence the necessity, for the present, of boarding schools." Sophia Sawyer’s statements are unique and contrary to the position of the government and most missionary boards which saw boarding schools as an important means of achieving the civilization of the Indians.  

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135 ABCFM 18.3.1, Vol. 5, Part 2, Sophia Sawyer to Jeremiah Evarts, 28 July 1827. ABCFM 18.3.1 Vol. 8, Sophia Sawyer to David Greene, 3 July 1833.  
136 ABCFM 18.3.1, Vol. 8, Sophia Sawyer to David Greene, 15 March 1834.  
137 Hoyle, 52.  
138 ABCFM 18.3.1, Vol. 3, Sophia Sawyer to Jeremiah Evarts, 25 June 1824. ABCFM, 18.3.1, Vol. 5, Part 2, Sophia Sawyer to Jeremiah Evarts, 19 October 1824. ABCFM 18.3.1 Vol. 8, Sophia Sawyer to David Greene, 6 July 1833.
It was an area of consternation for Sawyer that the other missionaries underestimated the abilities of the Cherokee students. While still at Brainerd, she differed with Rev. John C. Elsworth, who was in charge of the mission’s schools, “respecting their ability to understand.” Sawyer showed the frustration she had been feeling with regards to this difference of opinion: “I am tired of hearing the word cannot when it relates to doing for the improvement of the scholars.” She knew that her students were capable of doing more than the other missionaries expected.\(^\text{139}\)

Sophia Sawyer expressed especially strong opinions about the capacities of female children. From very early in her missionary experience, Sawyer harbored an ambition to educate some Cherokee students, girls in particular, in higher-level subjects. Evidently, however, this ambition met with resistance from the Board, as beyond the capacities and preparation of Cherokee students. In several of her letters, Sawyer wrote to her superiors to refute this position and give evidence to the contrary. In 1824 she wrote, "Should the Committee keep me instructing, I hope to bring some of the girls forward to the highest branches. I was told they could not understand the sounds of the letters. This I have found by experience they can do. I had a class at examination prepared to study geography...." She also described how two girls studied scripture questions and memorized the answers to over twenty-three hundred questions. According to Sawyer, the students themselves were eager to carry their studies to higher levels than expected. "The young ladies, that you saw when here, wish to continue in school till they are acquainted with all the branches usually taught in english schools. Their example inspires others with the same desires. Most of them now understand sufficient to find a pleasure in study."\(^\text{140}\)

From these and other passages it is clear that as early as 1824 Sawyer imagined establishing a school for female education modeled on what she had learned from her own experience at Byfield Female Seminary. In pursuit of that vision she developed and tried out her arguments for such a plan with both peers and superiors. In a letter to female educator and former fellow Byfield student, Zilpah Grant, Sawyer described “the children [as] capable of high improvement. The females capable of refinement & delicacy of feeling seldom found in New

\(^{139}\) ABCFM, 18.3.1, Vol. 3, Sophia Sawyer to Jeremiah Evarts, 25 June 1824. ABCFM, 18.3.1, Vol. 5, Part 2, Sophia Sawyer to Jeremiah Evarts, 19 October 1824.

\(^{140}\) ABCFM, 18.3.1, Vol. 5, Part 2, Sophia Sawyer to Jeremiah Evarts, 19 October 1824. ABCFM, 18.3.1, Vol. 5, Part 2, Sophia Sawyer to Jeremiah Evarts, 29 July 1826.
England … All they need is proper instruction & the advantage of society to make the most accomplished young ladies.” Later, writing to an ABCFM director, Jeremiah Evarts, Sawyer wrote: “I feel for the education of my own sex. The Cherokees think much more of their sons than their daughters. I wish to raise the female character in the Nation. It is said by the Cherokee gentlemen that there are no young ladies of their own country sufficiently educated for companions. I expect this is too true. Now all the females need is a proper education to be qualified to fill any of the relations or stations in domestic life.” In another apparent disagreement with Mr. Elsworth, Sawyer once more appealed to Mr. Evarts. “Mr. Elsworth does not think best for any but little ones to be admitted. But must the Cherokee females sink down to the grave without being able to read the Bible? Must they become wives and mothers without learning their relative duties from this volume?” Later, she wrote to Mr. Evarts again, asking him, “Cannot more be done for the Cherokee females.”

There is some hint of Sawyer’s independent nature in these letters. Writing again to Evarts in 1826 after he did not make an expected stop at the mission on his return to Boston, Sawyer wrote “I wished to consult you respecting the studies of the girls – Mr. E[lsworth] and I do not think alike respecting their ability to understand; and as you have given him the direction of their studies I feel it my duty to act on his judgement, still I have more confidence in my own, in everything, relating to mental improvement. I rest confidently in Mr. Elsworth’s judgment in most of the affairs of the mission but I differ from most people respecting the capacity of the children.” Elsworth in turn wrote of Sawyer that he was concerned "that the Girls School is losing rather than gaining ground. It does not appear to be so much for want of exertion in teaching them as in government & example. Miss Sawyer & myself differ a little in regard to the management & studies of the Girls School.”

Sawyer’s independence and determination regarding her teaching and her ideas about female education eventually got her into trouble. Conflicts with Elsworth continued until she left Brainerd and moved to the mission at Haweis, Georgia in 1828, apparently having been transferred. At first, Sawyer seemed happy at Haweis, but before six months had passed, there

were again signs of conflict. Elizur Butler, a doctor in charge of Haweis, wrote to Evarts about Sawyer: “With her present instability, I cannot think her a suitable person to have the care of heathen children. Her pupils will be naturally led into her peculiarities. I feel it absolutely necessary that she should be placed in some different situation.” In a letter dated September 27, 1828, Sawyer wrote to Evarts: “I have conversed with [Dr. Butler] freely respecting my duty & feelings, & offered to leave, if he chose that I should. I heard all he had to say with patience & fortitude. If I do leave the mission I am determined it shall not be my fault. I will submit to anything, if I may do good to the Cherokees. In my own view I am qualified to instruct & form the characters & morals of the girls.” Evidently, Sophia was very disappointed about her transfer from Brainerd and wanted to return there.  

Sawyer also communicated with Samuel Worcester, missionary in charge of the New Echota mission, which was also in Georgia, about her unhappiness. He advised her in October 1828 to remain at Haweis, but told her that she was welcome to vacation at New Echota with his wife and himself. Worcester's letter gives the reader great insight into the story behind why Sawyer was so unhappy and having trouble getting along with the other missionaries. He wrote to Sawyer: "As for my desire that you should remain at Haweis, it was based on the supposition that nothing was wanting in order to your usefulness, but self-government and contentment; and on the principal that self-government and contentment are personal duties…if you are so much the involuntary slave of your passions or 'feelings' that you cease to be in that respect a moral agent, - or if, for whatever reason, those feelings are not to be under your control, I must say, that I do not think you are to be useful there.” These are stinging words, but he also stated in the same letter that he wanted to "give [her] prudent as well as brotherly counsel in all things." Worcester was trying to let Sawyer know that if the situation continued as it was, then she risked losing her position as a missionary. Sawyer did stay for a few more months at Haweis. She wrote in January 1829 and described her students to Evarts: "The present number is sixteen. This has been my usual school from day to day for several months past." She also wrote "We have some of the most promising scholars, that I ever taught anywhere." Sawyer does not say how many girls there are out of the

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144 ABCFM, 18.3.1, Vol. 5, Part 2, Samuel Worcester to Jeremiah Evarts, 18 October 1828.
sixteen, but she did write about them "The girls here are brought more closely into the family than at B[ra]inerd] learn English faster & become more domesticated. Mrs. Butler, in my view manages girls well, brings them forward in domestic economy, learns them to cook, & thus far fits them for usefulness." Evidently, Sawyer's problems at Haweis were not with Mrs. Butler but with her husband.\(^{145}\)

The situation at Haweis must have deteriorated and on February 11, 1829, Sophia wrote to Evarts that she had moved to New Echota. She also wrote about herself: "Two things are certain respecting my labouring under superintendance. The persons under whose direction I am called to act must possess such qualities as to engage my affection & confidence, or I must be allowed to use my own judgement, & act on my own principles."\(^{146}\) Worcester wrote to Evarts that there was plenty to keep her busy, and she was welcome to stay with them for the time being. Sawyer wrote in May 1829 to tell Evarts how happy she was at New Echota: "I am happy here, so far as sympathy & kindness can make me so. The idea that I am in the possession of home, & domestic happiness soothes & comforts me constantly sleeping & waking. I feel at rest too in these enjoyments because I know I am associated with persons of tried integrity & judgement." She had decided "to come to Mr. Worcester & do just what he said."\(^{147}\)

This determination to follow Worcester's advice may not have lasted very long. Worcester was uncertain whether Sawyer would be able to open a school in New Echota: "In regard to the expediency of her opening a school here, other than a Sabbath school, which she has already, I have much doubt. The situation and character of the population around us is such, that the attempt would be attended with difficulties, with which I fear she is not qualified to cope, though she would herself be glad to make the experiment." However, in April 1830, Worcester wrote to Evarts that Sawyer had started a school in New Echota that began with "eighteen Cherokees, three blacks, and two whites," including his own daughter Ann Eliza. The record is silent, but one can wonder how long Sophia Sawyer badgered Worcester before he finally agreed to let her open a day school. Historian Kim Macenczak has suggested that they


\(^{146}\) ABCFM, 18.3.1, Vol. 5, Part 2, Sophia Sawyer to Jeremiah Evarts, 31 January 1829.

\(^{147}\) ABCFM, 18.3.1, Vol. 5, Part 2, S.A. Worcester to Jeremiah Evarts 9 March 1829.
did not open a boarding school in New Echota because there were sufficient roads in the area to make traveling to the school an easy matter for the students.\textsuperscript{148}

In January 1832, Sophia wrote to David Greene, Evarts successor, to relate to him how her school was progressing. She had 27 students, including 2 black boys. Some of the students had little educational background, but Sawyer wrote "Most of the scholars can read understandingly in books suited to their age & capacities." In August, she reported 32 students and wrote "The children & parents have manifested an increasing interest in the school. At the close it was visited by the parents & some of the principal men in the nation. Their addresses to the children & the kindness & respect shown to me was very gratifying, & I hope I shall try more than ever to prove that their confidence in me as a teacher has not been misplaced." Later, Sawyer wrote of her frustrations with dealing with so many different levels of students: "To teach all these branches skillfully and meet the interruptions of a school like this composed of such a variety of age, capacity, disposition, & character, & to give to each daily that instruction on various subjects, which their circumstances demanded, has required more ability than I have possessed. I have often been discouraged with myself & the children, but have always felt it was better than no instruction, & better than most of the children receive in this country."\textsuperscript{149}

For lack of a better location, Sawyer had to teach her school in the Council House which she described: "[It] is cold & dark - the chimney is failing the roof leaks badly - not suitable places for books, & the sized makes it very hard speaking for the teacher." In a letter to her friend Mary, she wrote, "As it respects outward circumstances, so far as suitable books, house of instruction & c., are concerned, I am highly favored as a teacher…I have no labor or responsibility resting on me except giving instruction. The scholars are boarded & clothed at their parents expense…Our average number has been twenty-five …The circumstances of most of the pupils are such as to require persevering effort on the part of the teacher to secure such interest as will bring prompt & constant attendance."\textsuperscript{150}


\textsuperscript{149} ABCFM, 18.3.1, Vol. 8, Sophia Sawyer to David Greene, 20 January 1832. ABCFM, 18.3.1, Vol. 8, Sophia Sawyer to David Greene, 28 April 1830. ABCFM, 18.3.1, Vol. 8, Sophia Sawyer to David Greene, 9 August 1832. ABCFM, 18.3.1, Vol. 8, Sophia Sawyer to David Greene, 3 July 1833.

\textsuperscript{150} ABCFM, 18.3.1, Vol. 8, Sophia Sawyer to David Greene, 6 July 1833. Sophia Sawyer to Linda Raymond Ward Kingsbury, 31 August 1833, Diedrich Collection, William Clements Library, University of Michigan.
Despite allowing Sawyer to open a school in New Echota, Worcester began to express further concerns about her: “I fear the peculiar construction of her nervous system, and the lamentable defects of her mother’s discipline will never allow any place on earth to be a resting place for her.” Although it is possible that Sophia Sawyer had a “peculiar” nervous system, it is also possible that she asserted herself within a domain about which she felt well qualified to make decisions. Sawyer had many years of education and training behind her, and she apparently did not agree with the decisions of her male superiors as to what should be done in her classroom. She also expressed much more confidence in the abilities of her Cherokee students than did the men in charge. Sophia Sawyer exhibited some of the very characteristics described by Geraldine Clifford and Polly Kaufman in their studies of women who chose to migrate far from home to teach.¹⁵¹ She could also fit Ann Firor Scott’s description of a “New American Woman” who “demonstrated a will to direct their own lives to an extent that was unusual for the majority of women of their time.”¹⁵²

Lydia Hoyle has pointed out that women at academies were almost indoctrinated with the idea that teaching was considered one of the most honorable endeavors for women. In addition, the evangelical movement of the era preached that mission work was some of the "most important and rewarding work of God." Women missionaries "were not happy, therefore, when men stepped forward to once again remind them of their 'appropriate' sphere." Sophia Sawyer was specifically identified by Hoyle as a woman "full of energy and ideas -- a woman who would not simply fit into the system." Another ABCFM missionary, Elizabeth Hancock, disagreed with her supervisor at another mission in the 1850s and "made him feel she was usurping his power." Sawyer and Hancock "dared to believe that their own judgement and piety might exceed that of their male 'superiors.'" They were not alone. Hoyle identified at least ten other women missionaries who wrote of various conflicts with the supervisors at their missions.¹⁵³

Sophia Sawyer's personality issues, described in the nineteenth century as a “nervous disorder” may have resulted from a chemical imbalance not recognized by the physicians of the


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time. Fellow missionaries described her as being difficult to live with and exhibiting mood

swings. Samuel Worcester wrote a detailed description of what it was like to live with Sawyer

when the Board asked him for his opinion about whether she should continue to be a teacher for

the Cherokees after their removal in 1837:

"Indeed her character is a strange compound of inconsistencies, exhibiting some

traits which appear like decided evidence of Christian character, and other which,

at least if viewed by themselves, appear perfectly incompatible with the existence

of true piety. And however we may excuse these latter traits of character, they

certainly constitute an important disqualification for a member of a mission

family. For myself, I do not well know how to have it permanently so in my own

family, that the parents should often have a torment of abuse poured on them

without measure in the presence of their children, by one whom those children are

teached to look upon, not only as their teacher, but as a Christian, and a fellow

laborer with their parents in the work of the Gospel. In this, as well as in some

other respects, her example is not such as we would have before the eyes of our

children…. We would have our dwelling a dwelling of peace; and we do not

know whether peace has dwelt, we do not easily perceive how it can dwell, where

Miss Sawyer is an inmate…. If only Miss Sawyer's character as a teacher were to

be taken into the account, I should not hesitate to recommend her being sent on to

Arkansas…on the whole I believe she would be found superior to a great majority

of female teachers of common schools in New England. In point of indefatigable

effort and perseverance she can hardly be exceeded. Nor does she fail in effort

and zeal to promote their spiritual welfare. It is as a member of a mission family

that the objection lie against her."154

Sophia Sawyer's strong personality was also evident in contacts with some Cherokee

parents. After one mother kept her two boys home from the school at Haweis, Sawyer asked her

why. The mother complained that they were not fed dinner as was done at the Brainerd mission.

Sawyer tried to explain that they were not equipped to feed all the children, but the mother

153 Hoyle, 122-127
154 ABC 18.3.1, Vol. 7, Samuel Worcester to David Greene, 28 May 1834.
became angry and threatening. Sawyer responded that God would protect her from evil, including the mother’s threats, if she did what God commanded. She also “Pointed out to her the duties of a mother, & refered it all to the coming Judgement.” The mother replied, “I do not care if my children go to hell you shall not teach them.” The mother later apologized and sent her boys back to school, but Sawyer was not confident of her sincerity or the possibilities of the children.\footnote{ABCFM, 18.3.1, Vol. 5, Part 2, Sophia Sawyer to Jeremiah Evarts, 25 February 1828.}

Despite the conflict with this mother, Sawyer seems to have been well liked by the Cherokee, or at least valued for her teaching ability. In 1826 she wrote: "There have been more applications for receiving girls especially large girls this season than at any time since I have been in school. The parents have done more for them & taken more interest in their improvement. More than 50 yrd. of calico have been brought to make frocks for their daughters within a few weeks." Sawyer was especially popular with the more wealthy, mixed-blood families of Elias Boudinot and John Ridge who were both leaders in the Cherokee Nation. Perhaps they recognized Sawyer's commitment to teaching her students and the fact that she did not look down upon her Cherokee charges. Sawyer probably gained their respect when she stood up to soldiers in the Georgia Guard who came to her school to reprimand her for teaching two black boys in her school. Elias Boudinot once told Sophia Sawyer "We shall always feel indebted to you for what you have done for our children."\footnote{James W. Parins, \textit{John Rollin Ridge: His Life and Works} (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1991), 14-17, 20. ABCFM, 18.3.1, Vol. 5, Part 2, Sophia Sawyer to Jeremiah Evarts, 29 July 1826. ABC, 18.3.1, Vol. 8, Sophia Sawyer to David Greene, 14 March 1832. ABC, 18.3.1, Vol. 8, Sophia Sawyer to David Greene, 9 August 1832.}

In 1824, Sophia Sawyer wrote to Zilpah Grant, “without repeated discoveries of my own insufficiency I feel a strong propensity to look on myself & all I do & say ‘Behold me & this great Babylon I have built’” On the surface, this appears to be a statement of strength and pride. However, this is a biblical reference to the book of Daniel where God punishes king Nebuchadnezzar after he builds up the great city of Babylon but does not follow God’s wishes. Sawyer often wrote about her pride and selfishness. In the letter to Grant, she continued, “I sometimes feel that no thing less than almighty power can subdue the pride of self will of my nature.” She was a person who lacked confidence and was plagued by fear that she was not
performing adequately in the eyes of God. This is ultimately what led her to be so demanding of the other missionaries and her superiors.157

Sawyer's school at New Echota had opened in 1829, and she continued to live with the Worcester family until 1834 when the ABCFM closed the mission at New Echota. Sawyer then moved in with the Boudinot family, and she continued her school there until the end of that year when relations between Georgia and the Cherokee Nation became intolerable. The Ridges and Boudinots moved to Running Waters across the border in Tennessee and not far from the Brainerd mission, and Sawyer moved with them and continued her teaching. Cherokee parents pledged to build a school for her use in the new location, and in the meantime she used a room of the Ridge's house.158

While the Cherokee parents seemed confident in her abilities, Sawyer's fellow missionaries were not. When tribal leaders signed the Treaty of New Echota, the ABCFM had to decide which of its missionaries it would send west with the tribe. Worcester was against sending Sophia Sawyer and wrote to David Greene on May 28, 1834 to express his doubts about her going with them: "She is desirous of trying the experiment of teaching unconnected with any mission family, still in the employment of the Board, but boarding in Cherokee families. In regard to such a plan I should have hopes and fears. For a time it would succeed; but I should have much apprehension that it would not long endure, and that considerable evil might result from a rupture between her and a family where she might be boarding. I am confident no Cherokee family would bear what we have borne; but in such a family I know that she does for a season command herself, and I cannot say that it would not endure. If it did, it would be because she would find motives to operate more powerfully upon her mind to produce self government, than any she has found in mission families."159

Despite his concerns, Worcester knew Sophia Sawyer was popular with the Ridges and Boudinots and other members of the tribe. On July 17, 1834, Worcester wrote to David Greene of the ABCFM to relate a conversation with Boudinot: "It is still his (Boudinot's) impression that it would be well for the Board to allow her to try the experiment of boarding in Cherokee families, and teaching schools. She has become exceedingly popular with some of the influential

157 Sophia Sawyer to Zilpah Grant, 3 August 1824, Zilpah P. Grant Banister Papers, Series A Correspondence, Mount Holyoke College Archives.
158 Parins, 11,16-17.
159 ABC 18.3.1, Vol. 7, Samuel Worcester to David Greene, 28 May 1834.
Cherokees, and has done more, he thinks, towards inclining such persons to the missionary cause than any other missionary… Some of the Cherokees, he thinks, will continue to employ her and will take her along with them to Arkansas if she should not be sent by the Board.”  

The feeling the Cherokee leaders had for Sophia Sawyer was strong enough that John Ridge himself wrote to David Greene on July 24, 1834 to request that she be allowed to continue as a teacher among them. Ridge wrote "She will accomplish as much good for a hundred dollars in the year, as those same missionary establishments which consume thousands. Her great power lies in the affections of the Cherokee families, and the success with which her labors are attended. She is popular among us, & her corrections of the scholars are not ill received by the Parents. She is truly a mother of her pupils.” In other words, Ridge was pointing out that Sawyer was hardworking and inexpensive. On August 12, 1834, David Greene responded to Ridge's letter and agreed that the “Committee will send Miss Sawyer West if she can be happy and useful there.”

John Ridge described Sophia Sawyer in his letter to David Greene: "She is lady of fine feelings & susceptibilities of mind, and in the providence of God, unsupported and uncherished by any relations in this world…she enjoys our keenest sympathy, and ought to be supported by the approbation of the Board. If she is not, I can not answer for the pangs of heart affliction she will experience, when the ties which connect it with the Indians in her devoted labors shall be cut asunder.” Sophia Sawyer was "unsupported and uncherished by any relations in this world,” and this is the basis for both her problems and successes as a missionary for the ABCFM. Because she was on her own, she became more independent, a feeling that was fostered in the literature of the era which proclaimed women teachers and missionaries so very important. Her independent spirit and outspokenness when it came to her expression of what she believed caused tension between herself and the other missionaries, especially the men who supervised her. However, these attitudes also endeared her to the Cherokees who saw that she was willing to make sacrifices for them and their children. Perhaps she appealed to them because they saw her as

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161 ABCFM, John Ridge to David Greene, 24 July 1834.
somewhat of an outcast in the missionary world, and they themselves were outcasts in the world of the white man.  

The Cherokee leaders were also aware that their conflicts with the white man getting more difficult to bear. At the end of term examinations in 1833 Sophia Sawyer recorded “Mr. [Elijah] Hicks and Mr.[John] Ridge addressed the children - expressed their increasing satisfaction in seeing their improvement - reminded them of the numerous children, who could receive no education - told them of the value of it in future years - the necessity of persevering in their studies & of improving the knowledge they had already acquired in the pursuit of more. Expressed their gratitude for the benevolent institution - wished the nation was supplied with teachers. Mr. Ridge, alluding to the state of the nation said ‘All the comfort I have now is to see you growing up in knowledge.’” The next chapter will describe the roots of Ridge’s sadness for the situation of his people and the ultimate outcome.

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163 ABCFM, John Ridge to David Greene, 24 July 1834.
164 ABC, 18.3.1, Vol. 8, Sophia Sawyer to David Greene, 3 July 1833.
CHAPTER 4

BACKGROUND ON THE CHEROKEE NATION AND REMOVAL

“When told that their rights could not be obtained - that no alternative remained to them as a nation but death or removal - they seemed not to hesitate saying ‘It is death anyhow we may as well die here.’”

In 1828, the Cherokee Nation was the most civilized nation it had been to that point. There were prosperous land owners and well-educated businessmen who were members of the tribe. A new constitution was ratified in October, and John Ross was elected First Principal Chief. The constitution was created in an attempt to show the United States that “the Cherokees were fully as capable as those in any state in the United States to be civilized, Christian, republicans, farmers, and capitalist entrepreneurs.” However, a month after the Cherokees chose their leaders, the United States chose a new president - Andrew Jackson. This event triggered a removal crisis in the Cherokee Nation. However, the crisis that began in 1828 actually had its roots as far back as the American Revolution. Sophia Sawyer and the other missionaries were in a difficult position as white representatives of American civilization living among the Cherokees whom they had come to know and care for. It is important to understand the assault on the Cherokee tribe by the United States government because this had an enormous effect on education in the tribe. The removal crises faced by the Cherokee disrupted mission schools, but ultimately it also made many Cherokees understand that education was one way that they could compete with the white man.

Early Removal Crisis and The Effect on Tribal Organization

\[\text{ABC, 18.3.1, Vol. 8, Sophia Sawyer to David Greene, 9 August 1832. Sophia Sawyer was with a Baptist missionary named Evan Jones when he announced that the government was going to proceed with removal and there was nothing more to be done to prevent it from happening.}\]

\[\text{William McLoughlin, Cherokee and Missionaries, 1789-1839 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 221.}\]
Historian William McLoughlin has identified three removal crises among the Cherokee Indians. According to McLoughlin, the initial crisis began in 1808 with the first attempt by the government to remove members of the tribe to a location west of the Mississippi. However, even this problem can be traced back even further to 1777 when the Cherokees sided with the British in the American Revolution. They were defeated by the Americans and forced to sign a peace treaty which ceded some of their land to the Americans, “including several areas in which their oldest and most sacred towns were located.” Some of the younger chiefs of the tribe refused to accept this treaty, and, in protest, they moved with their families to an area that came to be called the Lower Town settlements. These towns were located along the Tennessee River between Muscle Shoals, in Northern Alabama, and Chattanooga, Tennessee. There was a division among the tribe until 1794 when a Lower Town chief named Little Turkey helped create a national council, which included representatives from both lower and upper towns, but each region continued to have its own regional council meetings.\footnote{McLoughlin, Cherokees and Missionaries, 31.}

This loose union existed until 1805 when the Lower Town chiefs began agreeing to treaties in which they ceded away Cherokee land. When it became known that the chiefs had been compensated for their willingness to accept these land cessions, many Cherokees were outraged. Invoking a form of clan revenge, which allowed a member of a clan to seek revenge against a clan that had wronged himself or another clan member, in 1807 a group of chiefs from the Upper Town region murdered Doublehead, the leader of the Lower Towns. Instead of discouraging future clandestine land cessions, this revenge only triggered more Lower Town chiefs to agree to give up land in the Cherokee Nation in return for land in Arkansas. Those who agreed to relocate to Arkansas were labeled traitors. However, one positive result was the decision to form a thirteen-member executive committee and reunite the tribe under the leadership of Black Fox and Path Killer. The regional councils were replaced with one “centralized national council which met annually with representatives from all of the towns.” Pathkiller served as the Principal Chief of the Cherokees until his death in 1827. Assistant Chief Charles Hicks served as an interpreter for Pathkiller, who spoke no English, and interacted more with the English-speaking tribe members. Major Ridge also played a political role in the tribe by serving as the main orator for the tribal leadership.\footnote{McLoughlin, Cherokees and Missionaries, 31-32. Joyce B. Phillips and Paul Gary Phillips, eds., \textit{The Brainerd Journal: A Mission to the Cherokees, 1817-1823} (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 470.}
Those Cherokees who did leave for Arkansas were gone but could not be forgotten. Future treaties with the United States government included considerations of those that had already moved west of the Mississippi River. From 1809 to 1822 between eleven hundred and fifteen hundred Cherokees moved to Arkansas expecting to have a tract of land provided for them by the government. However, the United States did not set aside any land for them. This situation was remedied in a future treaty. Also, later agreements included a negotiation of cash payments as compensation for land that the Cherokees had ceded to the United States. The Cherokees who left during this first removal period were also included in these payments.\textsuperscript{169}

Second Removal Crisis

According to McLoughlin, the second removal crisis began in 1817, when Andrew Jackson negotiated a treaty that “he expected would result in the removal of the whole Cherokee Nation to Arkansas.” Jackson’s history with the Cherokees began in 1813 when he led a Cherokee unit in the Creek War. After the Creeks were defeated, he rewarded the Cherokees by negotiating a treaty that included a cession of land belonging to the Cherokees. This action was overturned in March 1816 when a new treaty was made by the United States, with the support of President James Madison and Indian agent Return Meigs, that reversed the land cession, but in return the Cherokees had to give up the rest of their land in South Carolina. Jackson and his land speculating supporters “were furious, and at another treaty negotiation in September - October 1816 Jackson, by means of intimidation and bribes, forced a tiny minority of the Cherokee chiefs (most of them from the Lower Town region) to cede this 2.2 million acres back to the United States.” The following July Jackson again bullied and bribed a Cherokee delegation into signing a treaty in which they agreed to give up their land in the east for land in Arkansas. The treaty also stipulated that “those more advanced Cherokees who did not want to remove would be given their farms as fee simple ‘reserves’ and allowed to become citizens of the states in which they resided.”\textsuperscript{170}

Joyce and Paul Phillips, the editors of the Brainerd Journal, describe these reserves as “discriminatory because although the United States government had it within their power to grant the Cherokees federal citizenship, the Cherokees would be living under the jurisdiction of a state where the white people were still racially biased and were not willing to accept the

\textsuperscript{169} McLoughlin, Cherokee and Missionaries, 108, 120-121.
\textsuperscript{170} McLoughlin, Cherokee and Missionaries, 107-108.
Cherokees as equals, but only as ‘men of color’…under state laws the Indians had no rights other
than owning land and paying taxes.” They could not vote, hold office, serve in the militia, testify
against a white man, marry a white person, or send their children to public school. According to
Phillips and Phillips, “Those signing the treaty thought they were executing a compromise treaty
allowing them to remain on their ‘lands and follow the pursuits of agriculture and civilization.’
Yet, in reality, they gave up 651,00 acres of land in Georgia and Tennessee in exchange for land
in Arkansas.” The United States government began sending agents into the Cherokee Nation to
courage them to register for emigration. This caused a dilemma for individual Cherokees who
were being encouraged by the agents to enroll for removal because a new Cherokee law passed
in 1817 made it clear that anyone who did so lost any political standing in the eastern Cherokee

The missionaries for the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) had arrived just six months before Jackson’s treaty was finalized. The missionaries were in a difficult position. On the one hand, they were hesitant to speak out against the policies of the government that was partially subsidizing their efforts. On the other hand, they did not want to appear unsympathetic to the Cherokee leaders whom they were trying to convince of their sincerity and willingness to help. The group of principal chiefs against the treaty included Charles Hicks, Path Killer, Major Ridge, George Lowery, and John Ross. This was the same group who was “eager to encourage the American Board’s plan for a nationwide school system and equally eager to establish a Cherokee school fund which would give the Council some control over education in the nation.” The ABCFM was against the government’s removal policy, but it had to step lightly so as not to anger an important source of funding.\footnote{McLoughlin, \textit{Cherokees and Missionaries}, 108. McLoughlin, \textit{Cherokee Renascence}, 253.}

In 1818 the ABCFM offered to open a school in Arkansas to serve those Cherokees who
had or would emigrate. Jeremiah Evarts visited the Brainerd mission in May of 1818 as part of a
journey to improve his health but also to gather information about the state of affairs in the
missions of the southeast. While at Brainerd, Evarts was present at a Cherokee Council meeting
where there was discussion about removal concerns. He promised to the Council that the
ABCFM would establish a mission and school in their new home if they were forced to leave. While Evarts was still at the mission, the following entry was recorded in the Brainerd Journal:

“The Indians say they do not know how to understand their good Father the President. A few years ago he sent them a plough & a hoe - said it was not good for his red children to hunt, they must cultivate the earth. Now he tells them there is good hunting at the Arkansas; if they will go there he will give them rifles.”

The author of this entry put it in brackets and added this statement: “Perhaps it will be best not to publish the above which is in brackets.” It is unclear why the writer added this, although there was concern voiced by the government agents that the missionaries were criticizing the government for its pressure on the Cherokees to move west. Although the ABCFM and its missionaries were not in favor of removal, “by the end of 1818…[they] were convinced that the government would succeed in its removal effort.”

The Cherokees were in a state of uncertainty after the signing of Jackson’s treaty in 1817. The government agents enrolled Cherokees for emigration to Arkansas in return for a rifle, a blanket, and transportation provided by the government. The first group of three hundred thirty-one left in February 1818, and a second group followed soon after. However, after March of 1818 the numbers began to decline. In fact, by the end of 1818, only about two thousand Cherokees out of about thirteen thousand had actually enrolled for removal. Those who remained did not know whether to plant crops for fear they would be forced out before they could be harvested. This created a food shortage problem in the Nation in 1818. One way the Cherokees expressed their opinions about removal was through the writing of memorials. One such piece, written by Cherokee women in 1817, was recorded in the Brainerd Journal:

“Our Father the President advised us to become farmers - to manufacture our own clothes, & to have our children instructed. To this advice we have attended to every thing as far as we were able. Now the thought of being compelled to remove [to] the other side of the Mississippi is dreadful to us because it appears to us that we, by this removal, shall be brought to a savage state again; for we have,

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174 McLoughlin, Cherokees and Missionaries, 116.
by the endeavors of our Father the President, become too much enlightened to
throw aside the privileges of a civilized life.”

In January 1819, it was decided to send Cherokee representatives to meet with the United
States government in Washington to try to solve the dilemma. Ard Hoyt, the Superintendent of
Brainerd, reported to the board that the delegation was secretly given authority “to negotiate an
entire exchange of country if they think best after a conference with the President. If they do not
agree to a total exchange, a considerable part of the country must at all events be given up at the
portion of the emigrants.” Principal Chief Path Killer and John Ross were among the delegates.
Ross had told the Brainerd missionaries that he would try to protect the property of the Board,
and he asked them to request “the board’s help in obtaining some funds from the sale of a portion
of Cherokee land to be used as a school endowment in case they did not remove.” Even in the
face of this serious crisis for his people, Ross was concerned about continuing and expanding the
benefits of education for the children of the tribe.

When the Cherokee delegation arrived in Washington in January of 1819, they met with
Secretary of War John C. Calhoun. At the suggestion of Ard Hoyt, the ABCFM sent Dr. Samuel
Worcester to represent their interests, but he did not reach Washington until the negotiations
were almost concluded. Calhoun asked for land cessions in Georgia, but they would not
relinquish this land because “it was the seat of their government, Ustanali and the site of much of
their best and most highly developed land. It was also the location of the Moravian mission and
of the major full-blood towns along the Etowah River.” Despite their authority to cede all
land east of the Mississippi, the Cherokees agreed “for the sake of putting an end to the
enrollment of more emigrants, to cede a fair proportion of [their] homeland in the East in order to
provide an exchange for land in Arkansas to accommodate those Cherokees who had enrolled to
go or were already there.” They hoped for a guarantee from Calhoun that they could depend
on this treaty to protect them from having to make future cessions, but Calhoun would not
provide such a promise. He did leave them with the “impression that if the grant of land ceded in

176 McLoughlin, Cherokees and Missionaries, 117.
177 McLoughlin, Cherokee Renascence, 254, 255-256.
178 McLoughlin, Cherokee Renascence, 257.
the East were sufficiently large, the government would be reconciled to a permanent homeland in
the East for the Cherokees who wished to stay there and continue to acculturate.”

In the end, the Cherokees accepted the government’s figures of 5,291 Cherokees either
prepared to go to Arkansas or already removed. They also agreed to the government estimate of
ten thousand Cherokees to remain in the East. Both of these figures were different from the
Cherokee estimate, but no census was conducted. Their acceptance of these figures meant that
one third of their tribal annuity from the government as compensation for previously ceded land
would go to the Arkansas Cherokees. The delegation also gave up almost four million acres of
the Eastern Cherokee lands in North Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, and Tennessee. About eight
hundred seventy Cherokees would be required to leave their homes and move to what was left of
the Cherokee Nation. The treaty was signed on February 27, 1819 and ratified by the Senate two
weeks later. Despite the heavy price, the Cherokee representatives and their people again
breathed a sigh of relief and felt that once again they had ended the threat of removal from their
homeland. One other positive outcome was the agreement to create a Cherokee school fund by
selling a twelve square mile tract of land along the Tennessee River. The proceeds from this
would be “invested by the President in a trust for the education of the Cherokees.” Once again
there was a concern for education in the midst of these very serious proceedings.

In March 1819, Rev. Samuel Worcester wrote to Charles Hicks to express his
congratulations to the Cherokee people: “You feared that you would be compelled to give up
your houses, your cornfields, your rivers, plains, and mountains…The dark cloud has passed
away…A good portion of your land is secured to you; the wicked men who seek your hurt are to
be kept from troubling you.” It is obvious from this where Worcester stands, and presumably the
rest of the Board, on the topic of removal. In the same letter, he points out that the plight of the
Cherokee is beginning to gain more attention: “’Hundreds of thousands of good men and
women in all parts of this country’ were coming forward to aid them.” The Cherokees were
beginning to understand the importance of public opinion. John Ross demonstrated this when he
wrote from Washington to Ard Hoyt back in Brainerd: “I cannot express my feelings of
gratitude in behalf of the Cherokee Nation to those religious societies who has so much softened
the hearts and influenced the minds of Congress, as well as the heads of departments towards the

179 McLoughlin, Cherokees and Missionaries, 119.
interests of the poor red children of nature.” As William McLoughlin describes it: “The heroic homeland had given the philanthropic public a romantic new cause to champion.”

**Cherokee Progress**

After averting this second removal threat, the Cherokee people left in the east tried to continue on with their lives. Although there were still a large number of traditionalists who preferred the Cherokee way of life, there were also a growing number who adopted the ways of the white man. William McLoughlin describes the impact of this growing middle class, which only represented eight to ten percent of Cherokee families. According to McLoughlin, this group was well educated and determined. They “rapidly accumulated wealth, slaves, and credit and then took up the best land for their expanding farms, pastures, plantations; they seized the most lucrative opportunities for trade and manufacture, inns and ferries, mills and trading posts; they assumed a prominent place in politics and in effect made policies which suited their interests.” In other words, this minority group adopted the white man’s ideas about “individualistic competition and the accumulation of property.” They used their strength and knowledge to dominate the political affairs of the Cherokee Nation.

In 1825 the Cherokee Council conducted a census which found that the eastern population was 14,072, an increase of about twenty-five hundred people since the previous census in 1808. The number of slaves had increased from five hundred eighty-three to one thousand thirty eight, indicating their increasing dependence on cotton production. Almost every Cherokee family owned a plough and a spinning wheel, while twenty-five percent owned a loom and a wagon. There were twenty five hundred families who owned 7,628 horses and 22,405 head of cattle. In addition, the nation had thirty-one gristmills, fourteen sawmills, and nineteen schools. Also in 1825, the Cherokee Council began loaning “money from the treasury at low interest rates to Cherokee entrepreneurs who needed capital to undertake activities useful to the general welfare, such as new turnpikes, ferries, inns, saltpeter mines, trading posts….” Within two years, the Cherokee Nation was virtually self-sufficient. They were involved in their own trade of “cotton, corn, livestock, and poultry with towns and cities as distant as New Orleans, Charleston, and Augusta.”

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183 McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Missionaries*, 125.
Another important development was the creation of a Cherokee alphabet by Sequoyah, who was a mixed blood Cherokee but was raised in a full blood community. He wanted to prove that he could do anything that a white man could do and worked to create his alphabet over the course of about ten years and finally revealed it in 1821. Sequoyah was actually against the acculturation of his people into the way of the white man. He had “hoped that his discovery…would be a major force for the preservation of the Cherokee heritage, traditions, and religion.” In a way, Sequoyah was somewhat successful because missionaries reported that a large number of Cherokees had learned to read and write in their own language by around 1824. However, to Sequoyah’s disappointment, Christian missionaries also adopted the alphabet as a means of translating the Bible and other religious works. Most missionaries could not actually read or write in Cherokee, but in 1828 the ABCFM provided a Cherokee type set for a printing press in the nation.184

Between 1817 and 1827 the Cherokee Council passed over one hundred laws, another sign of the Cherokee willingness to adopt more civilized ways. However, there was concern among some of the leaders that these laws were not very well organized or enforced. Finally, in October 1826 the decision was made to call a constitutional convention in July 1827. William McLoughlin describes the structure of the Cherokee government at the time: “Since 1810 the two principal chiefs had been representatives of these two segments of Cherokee society; the Principal Chief represented the full blood majority while the bilingual Second Principal Chief attended to most of the diplomatic relationships with white officials. Similarly, the National Committee consistently contained a majority of bilingual, well-to-do mixed bloods because its principal activities concerned relationships with federal officials. The full bloods had their power in the National Council, or lower house, which dealt with local affairs.” This structure had served the Cherokees well, but now the growing power of the wealthy mixed bloods as well as the growing pressure from outside the nation caused the leaders to call for reorganization. Another cause for the decision to reorganize was the deaths of both Pathkiller and Charles Hicks, two of the Principal Chiefs, in January 1827.185

Not all of the Cherokee leaders agreed that this reorganization was necessary and there was dissension for a time within the nation. However, the election of delegates to the

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constitutional convention was finally held in May 1827, and the convention itself began on July 4, 1827. John Ross was elected to serve as the convention president and may have presented a constitution draft at that time. There were seven articles in this Cherokee constitution which laid out the specific Cherokee territory and asserted Cherokee sovereignty as an independent nation within the United States. There were to be three branches of government. The qualifications for voting and office-holding were defined. A bill of rights of the Cherokees was outlined in Article VI, and Article VII outlined the amendment process.\(^{186}\)

An election was set for August 1828 to choose the new government, which met for the first time in October and ratified the new constitution. The new leaders were as follows: John Ross - First Principal Chief, George Lowrey - Second Principal Chief, Lewis Ross - President of the National Committee, Going Snake - Speaker of the Council, and John Martin - Chief Justice. In addition, Major Ridge and William Hicks were selected to serve as advisors for the chiefs. Of these men, John and Lewis Ross, George Lowrey, Major Ridge, and William Hicks were all mixed blood, and it is possible that the others were as well. In the end, the leadership structure remained much as it had before, with mixed bloods dominating the National Committee and full bloods dominating the National Council.\(^{187}\)

One important reason that the Cherokee leadership wanted to create a new constitution was “to demonstrate to the world that politically - as a nation - the Cherokees were now fully civilized and republicanized and that they were fully capable of self-government according to the same kinds of laws and legal system that white Americans adopted in Western territory prior to statehood.” They wanted to show that they had achieved what was expected of them in an attempt to protect their territory and their people from further demands by whites. However, the new constitution actually angered the leaders of surrounding states who saw it as impossible that the Cherokee Nation could be accepted as a sovereign nation within the boundaries of the United States.\(^{188}\)

Third Removal Crisis

A month after the ratification of the Cherokee constitution, the citizens of the United States elected Andrew Jackson president. This election would change the future for the Cherokees. Jackson made no secret of how he felt about Cherokee removal, and, before the end

\(^{186}\) McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renascence*, 388, 394, 397-404.
\(^{188}\) McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renascence*, 396, 401.
of the year, the state of Georgia announced its intentions to annex Cherokee lands within the state. The land was to be surveyed, divided into 160 acre plots, and disbursed in a land lottery that would be held for Georgia’s white citizens. Effective June 1, 1830, those lands would belong to Georgia and under Georgia law. No Cherokee laws would be in effect after that date. When the Cherokees appealed to Jackson for help, his Secretary of War, John Eaton, responded in April “that he could not help them, that the sovereignty over the land in Georgia belonged to the state, and that the Indians had only a right of occupancy not sovereignty.”

Jackson did not speak directly to Congress until December 1829. However, his opinions were well known, and in February 1829 The Ridge addressed the concerns of the Cherokee Nation.

“We have noticed the ancient ground of complaint, founded on the ignorance of our ancestors and their fondness for the chase, and for the purpose of agriculture as having in possession too much land for their numbers. What is the language of objection this time? The case is reversed and we are now assaulted with menaces of expulsion, because we have unexpectedly become civilized, and because we have formed and organized a constituted government.”

In other words, the goals of civilizing and educating the Cherokees had worked, but they had worked too well in the eyes of the United States government. Now there was an educated group of Indians with the knowledge and ability to use the Constitution and laws of the United States against the federal government. The Ridge also made a very astute observation:

“If the country, to which we are directed to go is desirable and well watered, why is it so long a wilderness and a waste, and uninhabited by respected white people, whose enterprise ere this would have induced them to monopolize it from the poor and unfortunate of their fellow citizens as they have hitherto done?”

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If this land was as wonderful as the agents had been trying to convince them it was, why hadn’t whites taken it?\textsuperscript{190}

When Jackson addressed Congress in December 1829, he reaffirmed his position on the situation in Georgia. The Cherokees could not be allowed to establish a sovereign government of their own. Their only choice was either agree to follow the laws of Georgia or move to the land west of the Mississippi. He even argued that if they remained they were in danger of destruction because of contact with the white man. His solution to save the Cherokee from this destruction was to set aside land in the west, which would be guaranteed to them for as long as they lived upon it. Jackson also tried to portray himself as an ally of the Cherokees, while their real enemies were the wealthy tribal leaders, the missionaries, and the greedy settlers who wanted more land. The only way he could protect them would be to help them move west, away from the pressures of white settlers. Jackson asked Congress for funding to help remove the Cherokees. Congress passed the Removal Bill in May 1830 because Jackson had convinced enough of them that “"Humanity and national honor demand that every effort should be made to avert so great a calamity.”"\textsuperscript{191}

The Cherokees may have felt they were being abandoned, but they had a champion on their side. Historian Francis Prucha has suggested “opposition to the Removal Bill was to a remarkable extent the inspiration and work of one man - Jeremiah Evarts.” Evarts had been the Corresponding Secretary of the ABCFM since 1821. He had also served as editor of the missionary journal, \textit{Panoplist}, beginning in 1810 and continuing after it became the \textit{Missionary Herald} in 1821. In August 1829 Evarts began publishing a series of essays against Cherokee Removal in the newspaper the \textit{National Intelligencer} and continued until December when the essays were republished together in a pamphlet. Prucha states “If any man ever held an absolutely sure position, it was Jeremiah Evarts in regard to the rights of the Cherokee Indians to stay where they were in Georgia and the obligation of the federal government to protect those


rights without delay or equivocation.” He also felt that it was a sin for the government not to protect the Cherokees.\footnote{192}{Prucha, \textit{William Penn Essays}, 5-7.}

In the second essay of the series, Evarts wrote:

“The Cherokees are human beings, endowed by their creator with the same natural rights as other men. They are in peaceable possession of a territory which they have always regarded as their own. This territory was in possession of their ancestors, through an unknown series of generations, and has come down to them with a title absolutely unencumbered in every respect.”\footnote{193}{Jeremiah Evarts, \textit{Cherokee Removal: The ‘William Penn’ Essays and Other Writings}, ed. Francis Prucha (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1981), 53.}

In a later essay, he appealed to “the good people of the United States to take this trouble upon themselves, and not to think it an unreasonable task. Let every intelligent reader consider himself a juryman in this case; and let him resolve to bring in such a verdict, as he can hereafter regard with complacency.”\footnote{194}{Evarts, 121.} Evarts spent a great deal of time researching each treaty that had been made with the Cherokees. In a portion of this essay series, he outlined these treaties and concluded: “The treaties and laws assume, in the most unequivocal manner, that the Cherokees are not under the jurisdiction of Georgia, nor any other state, nor of the United States.”\footnote{195}{Evarts, 128.} Evarts wrote in another essay “It is urged, that if the Cherokees remain where they are, Georgia is deprived of a valuable portion of land within her chartered limits. But this is an abuse of language. Georgia is deprived of nothing. If the Cherokees are compelled to remove, either by physical force, or what is called moral necessity, they are deprived of their inheritance; but if they remain there is no deprivation on either side.”\footnote{196}{Evarts, 179.} Despite Evarts’ detailed arguments, his essays were not enough to sway the opinion of the government against removal.

There were two other events that occurred in 1829 which affected the Cherokee Nation. First, in October, the National Council passed a law known as the Blood Law. The law may have been proposed by The Ridge and was introduced into written record by his son John Ridge who had become the Clerk of the Council. The law stated:

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\item \footnote{192}{Prucha, \textit{William Penn Essays}, 5-7.}
\item \footnote{194}{Evarts, 121.}
\item \footnote{195}{Evarts, 128.}
\item \footnote{196}{Evarts, 179.}
\end{itemize}
“that any person or persons who shall contrary to the will and consent of the legislative council of this nation...enter into a treaty...and agree to sell or dispose of any part of the national lands...he or they so offending, upon conviction before any of the circuit judges of the Supreme Court, shall suffer death.”

The law was called the Blood Law because it was considered a form of clan revenge. The fact that The Ridge and John Ridge were involved with the passage of this law becomes significant in terms of future events.

The other important event of 1829 was the discovery of gold in Georgia during the spring of that year. Gold seekers flocked to the area around Dahlonega to search for gold. It was estimated that between fifteen hundred and two thousand dollars worth of gold was taken daily from the rightful Cherokee owners. The Georgia legislature actually passed a law that claimed the gold for the state of Georgia even though it was within the borders of the Cherokee Nation. Another law prevented Cherokees from mining their own gold. Eventually, the Governor of Georgia, George Gilmer, had the area cleared of white prospectors but only to protect the land for those who would become the owners of the land in the land lottery. The fact is that this gold discovery only strengthened Georgia’s resolve to take over the Cherokee land in the state.

In the summer of 1830, Georgia formed the Georgia Guard. This police force was essentially a private security force, but it was under the command of militia officers. The Guard was supposed to maintain order in the Cherokee Nation, which included protecting the Cherokees. According to McLoughlin, however, “the Guard rightly understood its job to be one of harassing the Cherokees and siding with white intruders in any dispute.” The missionaries of the ABCFM also became targets of the Georgia Guard in years to come.

In 1830 both the federal government and the government of Georgia continued their efforts to push the Cherokees out of their lands in Georgia. The denationalization of the tribe, which had been declared after Jackson’s election, went into effect on June 1. Jackson then declared an end to the lump sum tribal annuity on the basis that there was not a treasury in existence to accept the money. He did agree to give the annuity to each individual, but this only amounted to forty-four cents for each member of the tribe. The money was left in a bank in

197 Quoted in Wilkins, 209.
198 McLoughlin, Cherokee Renascence, 430-432.
199 McLoughlin, Cherokee Renascence, 432-433.
Nashville because the Cherokee people were too insulted to claim this money. At the same time, the Secretary of War was advised by Jackson to discontinue release of the Education Fund for eastern missionary groups on the basis that the money should not be given to those who oppose the government’s removal efforts. This action drastically reduced the funds available and led to a reduction of missionary activities. Within the next year, the ABCFM closed its mission station at Hightower and other closings came in the years that followed.  

**Worcester v. Georgia**

Dr. Samuel Worcester, the Board missionary at New Echota, called a meeting of all missionaries in the area to discuss what was happening to their Cherokee friends and what, if any, actions they were willing and able to take. This meeting was held on December 22, 1830, and thirteen missionaries, representing the four denominations, attended the meeting. Worcester had prepared a manifesto, which denied any wrong doing on the part of the missionaries and also expressed their dislike of the removal efforts of the government. Twelve of those present signed the manifesto. The only one who did not was a Methodist missionary who supported the manifesto, but had been warned by his supervisors not to meddle in politics.

On the same day that the missionaries were meeting, but unaware that they were doing so, the Georgia legislature passed the Oath Law. This legislation required “all white males ‘residing within the limits of the Cherokee nation on the first day of March next…without license or permit from his excellency the governor…and who shall not have taken the oath hereafter required; of allegiance to the state of Georgia, ‘shall be guilty of high misdemeanor and upon conviction thereof shall be punished’ by four years at hard labor in the state penitentiary.” Now the missionaries were going to have a new challenge to face. Would they swear an oath to the state so they could continue their efforts among the Cherokees? Or would they refuse on the grounds that the government of Georgia had no authority in the Cherokee Nation?

The ABCFM was notified by Worcester in January 1831 that the missionaries had “unanimously concluded that ‘taking an oath of allegiance is out of the question.’” The Board made it clear that the decision was theirs, but “it would fully support any of them who chose to” take the risk of not swearing the oath. McLoughlin describes the situation: “While awaiting their inevitable arrest, the missionaries carefully worked out their strategy for the confrontation

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with Georgia. With the support (moral and financial) of the board, they hired lawyers in
Georgia, and, when arrested, planned to carry a test case to the United States Supreme Court.”
The missionaries showed that they were willing to sacrifice on behalf of the Cherokees. They
were finally arrested on March 12, 1831, by members of the Georgia guard and were taken to jail
in Lawrenceville, Georgia. They were released not long after because the judge felt they were
agents of the government who were not required to take the oath. His reasoning was that they
were partially supported by federal money. Also, Worcester was the postmaster of New
Echota.203

Governor Gilmore was furious and wrote to the Postmaster General, who promptly fired
Worcester. The Secretary of War also reassured Gilmore that missionaries were definitely not
agents of the government. On June 1, 1831 the missionaries informed that they had ten days to
take the oath, or they must leave the state. Some of the missionaries decided to leave Georgia
rather than take the oath. Isaac Proctor, Daniel Butrick, and John Thompson were ABCFM
missionaries who went to Tennessee. They left their wives behind to take care of the schools
because women were not required to take the oath. Worcester and Dr. Elizur Butler were still
determined to fight the law. Worcester wrote to the Board that his wife was “perfectly ready to
run the risk of being forcefully removed.” Mrs. Worcester also had the assistance and support of
Sophia Sawyer who had arrived at New Echota in February 1829. Sawyer closed down her
school to help care for the Worcester family when Mrs. Worcester became sick and then
pregnant in 1830. Between nursing Mrs. Worcester and the arrest of Rev. Worcester, Sawyer
was not able to reopen her school until October 1831.204

Worcester and Butler, along with a Methodist missionary named James Trott, were
arrested on July 7, 1831. The Georgia guard treated them very harshly, forcing them to walk the
sixty miles to the prison, chaining them at night, and otherwise physically and verbally abusing
them. They posted bail and were told not to return to the state of Georgia until their trial in
September. Worcester did reenter the state for his newborn daughter’s funeral and was briefly

203 McLoughlin, Cherokees and Missionaries, 258.
204 McLoughlin, Cherokees and Missionaries, 262. Kimberly Portwood Macenczak, "Educators to the
Cherokees at New Echota, Georgia: A Study in Assimilation," (Ph.D. Dissertation, Georgia State University, 1991),
103. ABCFM, 18.3.1, Vol. 3, Sophia Sawyer to David Greene, 6 July 1833.
arrested; but the commander of the guard showed some sympathy for the situation. Worcester was allowed to return to Tennessee.  

At the trial on September 16, 1831, the jury returned a guilty verdict after only fifteen minutes of deliberation. The judge did offer them another chance to sign the oath or promise to leave Georgia, but Worcester and Butler refused. They were each sentenced to four years of hard labor in the state penitentiary at Milledgeville. Their lawyers got to work to begin the appeal process, hoping that eventually the case would be heard by the Supreme Court. Worcester and Butler settled down to life in prison and, evidently, became model prisoners. Worcester wrote a description of their circumstances:

“In regard to our situation in prison, it is perhaps sufficient to say that we get along with a good degree of comfort.

We have opportunity to make some attempts at doing good among our fellow prisoners…Dr. Butler and I have separated our lodgings at the request of some of the prisoners, for the sake of having evening worship every night in two rooms.”

Worcester and Butler spent about eight months in jail before the case Worcesters v. Georgia reached the Supreme Court. In that time, there had been a great deal of attention given to the actions of the two missionaries and how they were treated by the Georgians. Letters of support were written to them from throughout the country, as well as letters complaining about their treatment. The Cherokees also wrote to show their support. They also hoped that the actions of Worcester and Butler would gain the Cherokee Nation support in its fight against removal.

The Supreme Court finally heard the case in February 1832, and Chief Justice John Marshall released the decision a month later. According to McLoughlin, Marshall “held the treaty power supreme, declared the laws of Georgia over the Cherokee Nation null and void; and ordered the immediate release of the two missionaries.” The problem was that the Supreme Court did not have the power to enforce its decision. That was the job of the president. When

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205 McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Missionaries*, 262.
206 McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Missionaries*, 262.
207 Macenczak, 49.
Jackson was told of the court’s decision, he reportedly replied “John Marshall has made his
decision; let him enforce it now if he can.” The state of Georgia refused to release “the prisoners
on the grounds that the Supreme Court had exceeded its authority; its ruling had no standing in
the sovereign state of Georgia.” Once more Worcester and Butler, as well as the ABCFM, faced
an important decision. They still had the option of calling on the president to force Georgia to
release them. However, there was already a crisis brewing about the right of states over their
own affairs. In the end, Worcester and Butler decided to end their fight. Once they had written a
letter to the governor of Georgia asking for the “magnanimity” of the state, he agreed to their
release. However, this did not take place until January 1833, almost a year after the Supreme
Court decision.  

Beginning of the End

After this climactic event, the ABCFM began to curtail and diminish its missionary
activities in the southeast. The Board actually urged the Cherokee leaders to agree to removal,
believing now that it was inevitable. Most missionaries limited their efforts to preaching and
teaching. Worcester returned to New Echota and feverishly worked with Elias Boudinot to
continue translating and printing religious works in Cherokee. Sophia Sawyer continued
teaching in her school in New Echota.  

1832 was the beginning of the end of the southeastern branch of the Cherokee Nation. In
January the Georgia guard was sent in to begin the occupation of the Cherokee Nation. Sophia
Sawyer wrote of their arrival in New Echota:

“The guard arrived last evening. Perhaps they will take possession of the public
buildings, if so, where the school will continue we know not. A gentleman from
Georgia came in the other morning while the smallest class were reading -
expressed great surprize [sic] & pleasure when he heard them spell and answer
questions - repeat the commandments, & c. I was ready to ask will you banish
these children from home & all their privileges but I refrained thanked him for his
condescention [sic] in noticing our little school answered his inquires [sic] after
which he very politely withdrew & left me to pursue my labors quietly.”

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211 ABCFM, 18.3.1, Vol. 8, Sophia Sawyer to David Greene, 20 January 1832.
This person must have informed the Georgia guard about two of Sawyer’s students who were black. According to Georgia law, it was illegal to teach blacks to read or write. Sawyer received an anonymous letter at the end of January warning her to stop teaching them. However, she wrote back:

“The kindness with which you express your fears respecting Georgia entitles you to an answer. And as the bearer said, that he knew who was the author of the note, I give him the answer without knowing myself to whom I am indebted for the friendly advice. I cannot think, however, that my humble instructions to the little black boy will be noticed by Georgia. Besides, I am governed by the laws of the Cherokees while I remain in their territories. The object of this school is to teach Cherokee children. To them I was sent - but while the school is small, I can teach the two little slaves without retarding the progress of the other scholars…Should the colour of the skin, or the fact that these my fellow creatures are slaves, keep me from communicating knowledge to them, I should be unworthy of the confidence of those under whose direction I labour & by whose patronage I am supported.”

Sawyer continued to receive warnings “from time to time…that [she would] be arrested if [she] did not quit teaching the slaves.”

Finally, in March the Guard visited Sawyer at her school in New Echota. Her actions in this encounter reveal a great deal about her personality. The guard came first thing in the morning, and, instead of stepping outside to speak with them immediately, Sawyer asked them to come in and hear the children read. After this she said to them that it was time for the morning prayer, but, “as it is not proper for a woman to lead in the presence of men,” she asked them to step outside. The men, who were dressed in their military uniforms, agreed to withdraw. After a short time, Sawyer went outside and found them nearby.

“The officer came to the door & introduced the object of his visit in the most kind & conciliating manner - expressed a delicacy in conversing with me freely, yet intimated that his business required it…He began by assurance of protection in

212 ABCFM, 18.3.1, Vol. 8, Sophia Sawyer to David Greene, 14 March 1832.
my labors for the Cherokees & added we have heard of your doing good among
them & I have seen the small children can read & speak English,…but said I have
been informed that you are teaching slaves which is contrary to the laws of
Georgia. I made known the circumstances of the school, & said Georgia cannot
fear evil from these children,…I am not under the jurisdiction of Georgia & I
think her laws that forbid the instruction of slaves are wrong & until the Supreme
Court decides the case which is now pending I shall not yield to the laws of
Georgia.”

Sawyer goes on to state that she continued the discussion for an hour and a half. The officer
tried to warn her of “the certainty of arrest if [she] persisted…and that my attempts to resist the
laws of Georgia were fruitless - pointed [her] to Mr. W[orcester] & Dr. B[utler] as examples of
folly.” The officer finally left, but he told her that she would be reported to the commanding
general. It is amusing to imagine this Southern gentleman trying to maintain his courteous and
chivalrous manner in the face of an independent Yankee woman like Sophia Sawyer. She never
was arrested, but Sawyer was concerned about the prospect of this happening. She wrote to the
Board describing the whole event and asked their advice about how she should proceed.213

In the summer of 1832, Sawyer left New Echota for a brief vacation, and took “a trip to
the Valley Towns with Mr. Jones a Baptist missionary.” The Valley Towns was a Baptist
mission in western North Carolina. Evan Jones, a strong opponent to removal, had been in New
Echota to meet with the latest Cherokee delegation that had just returned from Washington. The
news had not been good, and Chief John Ross called for a national day of fasting and prayer.
The Council convened and debated the latest treaty that had been offered by the government.
When Jones left to return to his mission, Sawyer went with him and recorded the scene in Valley
Towns upon his arrival:

“They had been waiting with anxiety to learn from Mr. Jones what return of the
Delegation brought from Washington. When told that their rights could not be
obtained - that no alternative remained to them as a nation but death or removal -
they seemed not to hesitate saying ‘It is death anyhow we may as well die here.’
When told of the proposals of government ‘How can we trust them while they are

213 ABCFM, 18.3.1, Vol. 8, Sophia Sawyer to David Greene, 14 March 1832.
breaking the most solemn treaties? Here are our homes - our fire-sides - our cultivated fields - our gardens of fruit…If we leave this country, these hills & valleys - this Mt. air - we shall sicken & die - What can we have in exchange? Perhaps war on our arrival or if we remain a few years in peace, & cultivate the land again the white man will invade our rights. Where can we find rest or protection?"

There followed some discussion of the sins that may have caused this punishment to fall upon the Cherokees, and it was decided that slavery was the sin for which the Cherokees were most guilty.214

Although not everyone in the Cherokee Nation agreed with those in Valley Town, there were those that were beginning to feel that removal was unavoidable. The Ridge and his son John were among those who tried to present this opinion at the Council meeting on their return from Washington, but John Ross and the others against removal refused to let them be heard. There was more pressure on the tribe beginning in October 1832 when Georgia began conducting the land lottery drawings. There was also the uncertainty whether or not Worcester and Butler were going to continue their appeals in their court case. In December 1832 Sophia Sawyer noted: “You will rejoice with us that the Cherokees amidst their political struggles, & the uncertainty of everything respecting their future destination, have been disposed to improve the present opportunity afforded to their children for receiving instruction.” It seems that the Cherokees were trying to take advantage of an educational opportunity for their children while they still could. Some of the missionaries also noted an increased religiosity among the Cherokees as they began to realize their desperate status, while others appeared to abandon the white man’s religion.215

Tribal Factions

214 ABCFM, 18.3.1, Vol. 8, Sophia Sawyer to David Greene, 9 August 1832. Wilkins, 242-243.
McLoughlin, Cherokees and Missionaries, 321.
215 Wilkins, 243-244. McLoughlin, Cherokees and Missionaries, 301-302, 305. ABCFM, 18.3.1, Vol. 8, Sophia Sawyer to David Greene, 26 December 1832.
After 1832, two factions emerged in the Cherokee leadership. Major Ridge, John Ridge, Elias Boudinot, and Stand Watie led the Treaty Party. Ridge and the others “thought the Cherokees had better make a treaty with Jackson and obtain the money they could for their country before they were forced off it.” Ridge and Boudinot were in Washington with the most recent delegation and became convinced that the government was not going to abandon its attempts to remove the Cherokee to western lands. One of the government representatives felt that “Ridge left the President with the melancholy feeling that he had [heard] the truth. From that moment he was convinced that the only alternative to save his people from moral and physical death was to make the best terms they could with the government, and remove out of the limits of the States.” This was not a popular stand among the Cherokees, and, at the council meeting in July, they were drowned out Ross and his supporters who tried to imply that the Treaty party had been bribed by the government into changing their position. Later, when the lottery winners began arriving to claim their land, this idea was given credence because John Ridge, The Ridge, and Elias Boudinot were not required to vacate their property immediately. They were allowed to set their own timetable for removal because of their reversal in support for removal. John Ross led the Anti-removal Party, who wanted to stall “until 1838 when they thought that the Whig Party would win the presidency and reverse Jackson’s policy.”

The missionaries in the Cherokee Nation could not help but take sides in this division. After working so hard to fight removal, Worcester also became resigned to its inevitability. Most missionaries were believed to be aligned with the Treaty Party because, after 1832, they tried to adopt a position of neutrality. This caused the Ross Party and its supporters to doubt their sincerity. There was also frustration aimed at the missionaries. As McLoughlin describes it: “The missionaries were now hoist with their own petard; their optimistic faith in their own country’s philanthropic concern for the heathen and their faith that the Cherokees’ rapid progress in acculturation would enable them to share in - become equal participants in - the progress of God’s chosen nation had been betrayed. Somehow despite all their efforts the Cherokees had failed to overcome the whiteman’s prejudices.” The Cherokees were frustrated because they had worked hard according to the Protestant work ethic instilled in them by missionaries, but now their land was being given away in a lottery. McLoughlin writes “If the Cherokees were disillusioned with Christianity and with missionaries, the missionaries were disheartened that the

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Cherokees failed to appreciate their efforts and expected miracles.” The Cherokees were wondering if the god of the Christians only worked for whites.217

The missionaries for the ABCFM tried to continue their work as long as possible. However, Haweis closed in February 1834 and New Echota closed a month later when the new lottery owner came to claim it. Worcester went with his family to Brainerd, as did some of the other missionaries. Sophia Sawyer, however, remained in New Echota to continue her school. She boarded with the Boudinot family during this time. Worcester had considered closing the school in July of 1833, but Boudinot and Ridge, among others, donated money to help defray the cost of renting a new building. When the Worcesters left, Sawyer wrote “My separation from that family was trying, but I had no wish to go with them to Brainerd. I have much reason to bless God for the provision he has made for me in this family, & that he keeps my scholars while so many are scattered.” In another part of the letter, Sawyer stated “Several Cherokees have made proposals to me respecting school should I be compelled to leave N. Echota - How far they will sustain these proposals I have yet to learn; but I do think God will show me a path of usefulness.” At this point, Sawyer was still a teacher for the Board, but, in her typical fashion, she was able to secure her own position, perhaps without obtaining their permission first.218

This was also the beginning of Sawyer’s relationship with the Boudinots and Ridges in a situation independent of the Board. She must have been wanted by the Cherokees in the area around New Echota, because she wrote in July 1834:

“The school has been larger and more exhausting in its labors than any I ever taught before in this Nation - The parents seemed to feel that it was their last opportunity, & prest [sic] in their children until I feared I should defeat my object of doing good to any, by receiving so many. But my strength has been equal to my day - I have entered school at eight in the morning & closed at five, & sometimes at six in the evening.”

She also broached the subject of going to live with the Ridge family:

217 McLoughlin, Cherokees and Missionaries, 300-303.
218 ABC, 18.3.1, Vol. 7, Samuel Worcester to David Greene, 21 February 1834. ABC, 18.3.1, Vol. 7, Samuel Worcester to David Greene, 12 July 1833. ABC, 18.3.1, Vol. 8, Sophia Sawyer to David Greene, 3 March 1834.
“As it respects my going to Mr. Ridge’s…I wish to say that I am acquainted with the characters with whom I am to be connected as any one, who will judge in the matter - Nor have I left the trials of one situation to enter on new ones. I have been driven from mission families - And all I ask now is that I may make trial of a Cherokee family - Mr. R & all the family are desirous that I should do so…I have told Mrs. R the irritability of my nervous system, & how I might at these seasons, speak and act wrong - she says she is prepared to bear anything, & that if her husband should ever speak rashly to me it would all pass over in a few moments. I know Mr. R. is a gentleman in his manners, & has hitherto treated me with the utmost tenderness & respect, & turned his whole influence amonge [sic] his people in favor of the school…Let me try one year & then you may have more confidence.”

Harriet Boudinot and John Ridge both wrote letters to the Board requesting that she be allowed to stay with the Cherokees as a teacher, which eventually they permitted her to do. In December 1834, the Boudinots decided to leave New Echota and visit Harriet’s parents in New England before going west to the new Cherokee territory. Sophia Sawyer closed her school in New Echota and went to live with the Ridge family in Tennessee. She wrote of her arrival “We came here last Friday and found [every]thing in readiness to receive us. Mrs. Ridge [children] & servants gave us a most welcome reception. [The] poor servants seemed to rejoice in my coming [as] if they supposed I had the gift of… teaching. I hope to do something in teaching them.”

In February 1835 Worcester announced to the Board that he was leaving to go west in April of that year. The numbers of missionaries in the southeast were dwindling. Carmel Mission closed in 1835, and by 1837 the ABCFM had also closed Creek Path, Willstown, and Candy’s Creek. By this time there were only three Board missionaries left in the region. Brainerd was the only mission that remained open but would not remain so for long. This was the last station closed when removal finally began in 1838.

Treaty of New Echota

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219 ABC, 18.3.1, Vol. 8, Sophia Sawyer to David Greene, 4 July 1834.
220 ABC, 18.3.1, Vol. 8, Harriet Boudinot to David Greene, 4 July 1834. ABC, 18.3.1, Vol. 8, John Ridge to David Greene, 24 July 1834. ABC, 18.3.1, Vol. 8, Sophia Sawyer to David Greene, 17 December 1834.
221 McLoughlin, Cherokees and Missionaries, 310.
In December 1835, the Treaty Party met with representatives of Andrew Jackson in New Echota. At one point the Ridge addressed those assembled:

“We can never forget these homes, I know, but an unbending, iron necessity tells us we must leave them. I would willingly die to preserve them, but any forcible effort to keep them will cost us our lands, our live and the lives of our children. There is but one path of safety, one road to future existence as a Nation. That path is open before you. Make a treaty of cession. Give up these lands and go over beyond the great Father of Waters.”\(^{222}\)

A committee of twenty gathered to sign the treaty offered by the government. The agreement gave the Cherokees five million dollars for their land, provided payment for improvements on the land, granted them land in the northeast corner of the Indian territory in what is now Oklahoma, and provided money for transportation costs. The Ridge and Elias Boudinot were among those present at New Echota to sign the treaty. John Ridge and Stand Watie, who were part of yet another Washington delegation, signed later. The Ridge reportedly stated “I have signed my death warrant” as he made his mark on the treaty. After all, he is the one who had suggested the law that made it illegal to sell Cherokee territory without the permission of the Council. John Ross and his supporters were certain that the senate would not ratify the treaty because it was illegal, but that is exactly what happened in May 1836.\(^{223}\)

**Move to the West**

The first group departed in early 1837, but many of these were the wealthier members of the tribe who had wagons, carriages, and horses to make their journey comfortable. The Ridge planned to go with this first group but had to wait until March because of health problems. They arrived in Cherokee Territory at the end of the month and proceeded to Honey Creek, which was near the border between Arkansas and Missouri. John Ridge and Elias Boudinot departed with their families in September 1836 and arrived in November. John had resolved to stay out of Cherokee affairs and focused instead on building a home for his family, planting his farm, and starting a mercantile business with his father.\(^{224}\)

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\(^{222}\) Quoted in Wilkins, 287.


\(^{224}\) Wilkins, 300-301, 306, 308, 310-311.
Sophia Sawyer’s school in Running Waters closed down in 1836, and she arranged to take a vacation while the Cherokee families moved to their new home. She sent her school supplies with the Boudinot family and departed for the northeast. By September, Sawyer was back in her hometown of Rindge, but she later traveled to New York and Newark. John Ridge had given her money for traveling expenses to the west, and she evidently received financial assistance from others. Sawyer also taught for a time in a Presbyterian African school in New York and wrote of trying to publish an account of her life with the Cherokees. It was not until November 1837 that Sophia finally departed for the western territory that had become the new Cherokee Nation. The Ridges had settled in the northeast corner of the Cherokee territory, close to the borders of both Missouri and Arkansas, at a place called Honey Creek. After traveling to New Orleans by ship, Sawyer took a steamboat “up the Mississippi and Arkansas Rivers to New Dwight Mission, where she disembarked in December to find a party from Honey Creek waiting to escort her to the new Ridge farm.” She soon settled in and began teaching again.

Although Sawyer may have experienced pressure from friends and relatives to stay in the northeast, she once again made the decision to depart for the unknown. She did express doubts about moving west, especially after the death of Harriet Boudinot in August 1836. However, she knew she was reuniting with her Cherokee friends the Ridges. Life at Honey Creek was peaceful, and Sawyer wrote on December 27, 1838, “After having been tossed upon a sea of difficulties, I have found a haven of rest in this island of hope, the house which I now occupy.”

John Ridge built Sophia Sawyer a schoolhouse which she described: “a small house for instruction, just in the edge of a beautiful prairie; here I live altogether, except taking my meals with the family at the house, that is for me, eight minutes walk from this place.” She began teaching the Ridge children, “a few girls,” and any others in the area who desired an education. The Boudinots had settled at Park Hill, further south than Honey Creek, so their children did not attend Sawyer’s school. The school building used by Sophia Sawyer had two stories, with the first floor used for the school and the second floor used as living quarters. Sawyer reported to

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225 Parins, 22-25. ABC, 18.3.1, Vol. 8, Sophia Sawyer to David Greene, 21 September 1836.
David Greene that she had to teach each student individually because of the wide range of abilities.  

The Ridges made this contribution because of their belief in the importance of education. However, there must also have been some feelings on their part for the spinster teacher from New England. Sawyer wrote, “Such presents as Mr. & Mrs. Ridge make in clothing I receive & continue my labours in their family & among their people in the character of benevolence sustained by the patronage of the Board. In this way they wish me to live & labor, believing it to contribute to my happiness & usefulness.” For them to choose Sawyer for such “benevolence” also shows the high regard the Ridges must have had for her ability to educate their children.  

In the summer of 1839, however, the tranquility at Honey Creek was shattered. By this time the Cherokees forced to move west along the Trail of Tears had arrived in the western territory. They were angry about the treaty signed by the Ridges and Boudinot in 1835. Invoking the Blood Law, a group of Chief John Ross’ supporters met and plotted their revenge, supposedly without the Chief’s knowledge. This law, ironically, had been entered into the Cherokee law code by John Ridge himself and set a punishment of death for any member of the tribe that sold tribal land without the permission of tribal leaders.  

On Saturday, June 22, 1839, three bands of men set out to execute the punishment. In the early morning, one group entered the Ridge house and attempted to shoot John Ridge as he lay in his bed. The gun did not fire, so they dragged him outside and stabbed him repeatedly. The perpetrators reportedly each stepped on him before riding away. Sarah and their children were awakened by the commotion but could do nothing to prevent the murder. John Rollin Ridge was twelve years old and later wrote a vivid description of the events. Sophia Sawyer had eaten supper with the family earlier in the evening, but she and her students were at the schoolhouse at the time of the attack.  

Within a few days of the attack, Sophia Sawyer left for Fayetteville, Arkansas, just across the border from Honey Creek, with Sarah and the Ridge children. Surprisingly for someone who wrote so prolifically, there is no correspondence from Sawyer from the date of the murder until

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228 Pat Donat, “Miss Sophia Sawyer and Her School,” Washington County Flashback, August (1973): 5.  
229 Wilkins, 208-209, 334.  
almost four months later. In a letter to David Greene dated October 10, 1839, she wrote: “Mrs. Ridge was sustained under the overwhelming affliction, & had not an influence been exerted by interested persons to have her leave the nation, urging as reasons that herself and children were in danger, I should have succeeded in keeping the family & school together. This I did for several days after Mr. Ridge’s death, but when I saw her sinking under the weight of sorrow – fearful apprehensions, & undecided anxieties, I consented to leave for this town as the nearest place of safety & accommodation.” By the time Sophia Sawyer wrote that letter to David Greene, she had already begun to teach a school in Fayetteville, enrolling thirty-two scholars. The next chapter describes how Sawyer adapted to life in Fayetteville by creating the Fayetteville Female Seminary.²³¹

Figure 2 – 1861 Diploma from Fayetteville Female Seminary which includes pictures of the seminary itself, Sophia Sawyer, and Lucretia Foster. Used with permission from Shiloh Museum of Ozark History, Springdale, Arkansas.
CHAPTER 5

FAYETTEVILLE FEMALE SEMINARY

"I will give you a brief description of our seminary, its locality, etc. It is in the southwestern part of town, on an eminence overlooking a widely extended and fertile valley, with numerous ranges of mountains in the distance, presenting the most beautiful and picturesque landscape that can be conceived of, the building is a frame, two stories high, twenty by twenty-eight feet, with a piazza above and below stair ten feet wide running the whole length of the building, with an enclosed yard one hundred feet square." 232

In 1839 when Sophia Sawyer moved with the surviving members of the Ridge family to Fayetteville, Arkansas, it was a rugged frontier town on the edge of Indian Territory. Fayetteville was first settled in 1828 and was the capital of Washington County in the Northwest corner of Arkansas. However, it was not until 1835 that President Andrew Jackson issued the land patent for the town. Soon after their arrival, John Rollin Ridge recorded his impressions of the town: "In this town there are three groceries & the people sometimes fight with knives and pistols, & some men have been killed here, but the people do not seem to mind it much. In this town there are two saddler shops, two tailor shops - three blacksmith shops - one silversmith, one gunsmith, eight stores, & two taverns & a good many other houses. There are several carpenters & cabinet workmen (sic) in this town. There are also several lawyers & they have a good deal of business. This town is a county seat." Sawyer attached her own description to John's: "The country is in a very undesirable situation respecting its civil institutions - yesterday another man was hung her without trial except by a committee chosen on the spot."233

How did Sophia Sawyer and the Ridge family end up in Fayetteville? Sawyer wrote from Fayetteville in 1839:

“I left the nation with Mrs. Ridge, the children & a part of the servants a few days after the murder of her husband. Mrs. Ridge was sustained under the overwhelming affliction, & had not an influence been exerted by interested persons to have her leave the nation, urging as reasons that herself and children were in danger, I should have succeeded in keeping the family & school together. This I did for several days after Mr. Ridge’s death, but when I saw her sinking under the weight of sorrow - fearful apprehensions, & undecided anxieties, I consented to leave for this town as the nearest place of safety & accommodation. Here I have been doing, as it respects vigorous effort, what I could for her children & those associated with them in school.”

John Ridge had gone into business with his father and had gone back east to purchase merchandise for their store. After his death, Sarah Ridge had the merchandise brought to Fayetteville, and it was sold at auction. Sawyer and the family went to Fayetteville because it was close to Honey Creek and their remaining friends and family in the Cherokee Nation. Eventually, Mrs. Ridge decided to stay in Fayetteville and make her home there.

Arkansas was organized as a territory in 1819, and its population at the time was only fourteen thousand. Most of the original inhabitants were hunters and trappers who never settled in one place. The population did not grow very quickly. Even as late as 1840 the average population for the state was less than two people per square mile. The transient nature of this population made it difficult to create a very strong interest in education. In fact some of the first schools were created by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) to teach the Cherokee children who migrated there with their parents during the first and second removal. Cephas Washburn started one of those schools in 1822 near where the town of Russellville is today. The mission was named Dwight Mission, after Timothy Dwight who had been president of Yale, and the school building was “constructed on the Lancastrian plan and designed to accommodate 100 children. The plan requires that all the children taken into the

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school be received also into our family, that they may be constantly under our care and
direction.” The structure and format of the educational program at Dwight would have been
similar to the mission schools that Sawyer had taught in while in the southeast.\footnote{Thurman Wilkins, \textit{Cherokee Tragedy: The Ridge Family and the Decimation of a People} 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), 328, 341.}

Other schools began to open around the state, but these were private academies. Batesville Academy was the first academy granted a charter by the state legislature. This became more and more common until the legislature was granting such charters to several schools during each of its sessions. Although the charter varied, there were some similarities such as the creation of a board that was given the authority to hire or dismiss teachers and control of finances. Chicot Academy was chartered somewhat differently in 1838 in that it was given control of Arkansas’ sixteenth section lands to sell or lease for ninety-nine year, which meant that they were near to operating as a public school. It was not until after the Civil War that a public education system was created in the state, but even then the system was inadequate.\footnote{Bobby J. Steelman, “Teacher Education at the University of Arkansas, 1871-1961” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Arkansas, 1957), 7-10.}

Historian Thomas DeBlack suggests that, despite the deficiencies in the state’s education policy, “several Arkansas communities developed reputations as centers of learning. Private academies flourished in northwest Arkansas at Fayetteville and nearby Cane Hill, in central Arkansas at Little Rock, in southwest Arkansas at Springhill and Washington, and in south-central Arkansas at Tulip and Princeton.”\footnote{Thomas A. DeBlack, “‘The Rights and Rank to Which We Are Entitled’: Arkansas in the Early Statehood Period,” in \textit{Arkansas: A Narrative History}, by Jeannie Whayne, Thomas DeBlack, George Sabo III, and Morris Arnold (Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas Press, 2002), 122.} According to historian Emily Penton, “The first chartered institution in Arkansas for the instruction of women was the Fayetteville Female Academy which opened on February 2, 1836, under the direction of Mr. and Mrs. Mecklin.” This school only lasted until June 1837.\footnote{Emily Penton, “Typical Women’s Schools in Arkansas Before the War of 1861-1865,” \textit{Arkansas Historical Quarterly}, Vol. IV, no. 4 (Winter 1945): 325.}

When Sophia Sawyer went to Fayetteville, she was no longer under the support of the ABCFM, but she was also free from the constraints of working within that organization. She was finally able to recreate the academy experience she had loved so much when she was in New England. After being subordinate to the male leaders of the Board, she was able to design her
own school and make her own decisions about how it should be run. Sophia Sawyer took advantage of this freedom to create her own version of Mount Holyoke in the hills of Fayetteville. In this respect she is a prime example of what historian Anne Firor Scott has described as the "ever widening circle" of New England Academy graduates who fanned out across the country and spread New England ideals on education.\footnote{Anne Firor Scott, "The Ever Widening Circle: The Diffusion of Feminist Values from the Troy Female Seminary, 1822-1872," \textit{History of Education Quarterly} (1979): 3-25.} Just as important as the educational model Sawyer established in Fayetteville, however, was the determination and independence with which she pursued her vision. The school in Fayetteville became the Fayetteville Female Seminary, and Sawyer remained there for the rest of her life. By all accounts, the force of Sawyer's personality was an important factor in the success of her school.

The success of Sawyer’s school developed from modest beginnings. Clementine Boles, a Fayetteville resident, recorded that Sophia Sawyer’s school “began…in a small log hut in this town, and there were those of our citizens who will remember as they passed the school that it presented a marked difference from other schools over the country at that early date.” Actually, the very first sessions of the school were held on the second floor of a store, and Sawyer and her students boarded with the Stirman family. The location of the school caused her some consternation when the first floor was occupied by a “Thespian Society” because of “the scholars passing almost every hour of the day while stage players were practising.” She was later able to rent a more “convenient house.”\footnote{Carolyn Thomas Foreman, “Miss Sophia Sawyer and Her School,” \textit{Chronicles of Oklahoma}, Winter (1954-55): 399, 401. Pat Donat, “Miss Sophia Sawyer and Her School,” \textit{Washington County Flashback}, August (1973): 20, 21.}

Evidently, members of the Cherokee Nation continued to prize Sawyer’s teaching abilities. She wrote “They are calling me to the nation, but so much disunion I fear almost to go should Mrs. Ridge decide to leave. I have consented to go to Flint however, if they build a school house & support a female school – this they propose to do.” In December 1839, Sawyer wrote “My school has prospered at Fayetteville far beyond my expectations…. There was a school established there however when we came. The teacher is not pleased & I wish to be where none can injure for doing well.” It is possible that some of the students from Honey Creek came with her to Fayetteville, because she wrote of doing all that she could to help the Ridge children “& those associated with them in school.” Sawyer mentioned other chances to teach
within the Cherokee Nation in later letters, but she never took advantage of these opportunities.\textsuperscript{242}

By August 1840, Sawyer had apparently so impressed the white residents of Fayetteville that the Walkers, one of the more wealthy families, donated land for a new school building. The indenture stated that the Walkers gave her the land “in consideration of the respect they feel and the confidence they have in [her] capacity and industry in conducting her school and instructing her pupils and for the purpose of securing her services to the citizens of Fayetteville and the neighborhood around.” By enlisting the support of David and Jane Walker, Sawyer was following the example of Mary Lyon and Zilpah Grant who were adept at soliciting aid from benefactors for the endowment of their institutions. The Walkers were not the only members of the Fayetteville community who supported Sawyer and her school. J.H. Stirman and James Sutton were wealthy merchants who also assisted in the financing and building of Fayetteville Female Seminary. Sawyer, Lyon, and Grant were all students of a master at fundraising. Joseph Emerson served as a role model for how to gain support from patrons, parents, and surrounding communities.\textsuperscript{243}

Sawyer wrote to David Greene that she had also “purchased materials for building 28 by 20 two stories” and that “the house will stand elevated overlooking a beautiful valley, mountain and woodland seen in the distance. The area is sufficiently large for flowers, shrubbery and fruit trees.” Over the course of the next several years, Sawyer was able to make improvements and additions to this building. In August 1847 she wrote to a prospective teacher, “Mr. Walker, our benefactor, has placed a large and commodious house on the lot adjoining ours.” She described the two buildings as being connected by a smaller building with “sliding doors, that can convert the house into one room when necessary.”\textsuperscript{244}

In December 1839, John Rollin Ridge, the thirteen-year old son of John Ridge, wrote that most of the students were boys, but that his sister Susan attended the school. It is difficult to determine from existing records how many of Sawyer’s students were Cherokee and how many were not. However, she indicated in January 1840 “Pupils from every direction are coming


under my influence now...[and] friends from both parties bring their children to me here.” In February of that year, she wrote that they were expecting “twelve pupils from the Nation.” Historian Carolyn Foreman provides a description of their arrival:

“The first students in Miss Sawyer’s school were fourteen Cherokee girls, daughters of the Drews, Ridges, Rosses, Adairs and Starrs. The following description of the party that passed through Fayetteville...The passage of the Cherokees through the principal streets of the village [Fayetteville at that time had only a population of about 400] was picturesque in the extreme. Then followed the families of wealth - the Cherokee aristocracy - in their splendid carriages, many of which were equal to the most brilliant that rattle along Broadway. In 1840 there were fifty-one pupils in the school.”

Ann James, a teacher at the seminary who left to start her own school nearby, later wrote in her autobiography that the presence of Cherokee students at the Fayetteville Female Seminary was a problem for some of the parents in the area. She wrote that these “parents were not able to send [their daughters] to boarding school. They could have ridden to Fayetteville, but the Indian element of Miss S’s school was an insurmountable objection with many of them.” Existing records seem to indicate that this became less of a problem as the influence of Sawyer, as well as the positive reputation of the seminary, expanded in the area.

Sawyer wanted to provide an institution “that parents and guardians may look to...as places where their daughters and wards may receive a thorough and finished education.” This meant an institution of higher schooling, where women could study both the higher academic subjects and the ornamental studies often regarded by parents and their daughters as necessary for a well-educated woman. Evidence suggests that Sawyer succeeded in achieving this vision. At various times, students wrote of studying geography, ancient history, arithmetic, grammar, “definitions of words,” reading, writing, “polite learning,” American history, natural history, rhetoric, philosophy, and algebra, in addition to art and music. An examination observer in 1850

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reported classes in “Algebra, Geometry, Physiology, Latin, &c.” An 1845 newspaper advertisement by Sawyer announced to “her Cherokee patrons and the pupils generally” that the cost for the coming term would be “$1.50 per month in advance, or $1.75 when payment is deferred.” The ad goes on to state:

“Those who enter at the opening of the session and remain during the term will enjoy special advantages, while those who promiscuously enter and leave will pay according to the discretion of the teacher…Board can be obtained in good families for $1.50 per week. It is desirable that young ladies come prepared with necessary clothing, that their minds be not drawn from intellectual pursuits by needless attention to their wardrobes; they will also bear in mind that their intercourse in society will be controlled by the discretion of the teacher, who will always gratify her pupils when she can do so in accordance with their highest interest.”

Sawyer was very concerned with protecting the reputations of her students and regulating their contact with the residents of Fayetteville. Narcissa Chisholm recorded in her memoirs an event about 1850:

Mr. Watson, a town merchant and a lover of music and Colonel Pulliam decided to serenade the pupils of the school and they got together a company of musicians and ‘paired to the school. They were in the porch tuning their violins and speaking in low tones when Miss Sawyer went out on the upper porch and ordered them to depart in no uncertain terms. The next day she concluded that she had been a bit hasty and she wrote to Mr. Watson saying that last night they had awakened her from a horrible dream and that she had thought they were burglars. She invited them to return and give the young ladies a serenade but requested that they be awakened by the soft strains of music and not by their ‘boisterous conversation’. Mr. Watson knew the old lady’s peculiarities and he accepted her strange apology and returned a few evenings later with his friends and gave the girls a charming serenade.”

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247 Foreman, 403.
Students at Fayetteville Female Seminary followed a strict regimen, which is demonstrated in this description:

“She held every girl to strict account. One Sunday mornings the girls walked in dignified lines, two and two, to church, with Miss Sawyer at the head and her assistant, Miss Foster, at the rear. At six each morning, Miss Sawyer opened the stair door and called, ‘Spring, young ladies!’ They were required to walk a mile before breakfast in order to make their cheeks rosy and to give them an appetite for the morning meal, which consisted of hot cakes, butter, weak syrup, and weaker tea. Young ladies were expected to be dainty in their eating. At night, after study hour, the tinkle of a little silver bell called the girls to the study hall for prayer. After vespers, the girls went to their respective rooms and to bed.”

This depiction of life at Fayetteville Female Seminary is very similar to accounts of life at Mount Holyoke and is further evidence that Sawyer was trying to model her school after that of Mary Lyon.

Descriptions of the school’s physical assets provide indications of the content of the curriculum, including history, geography and the sciences. When Martha Trimble was a student in 1842, she listed some of the school’s “seventeen pictures…and seven maps.” These included “the Death of Napoleon, Pocahantas saving the life of Captain John Smith, and Bonaparte encamped,…George Washington…Lafayette standing at Washington’s grave;…the Solar Sistem…[and] the Prodigal son in misery.” Also present were maps of the United States, the World, and the Indian Territory. Providing evidence of the study of natural philosophy, Martha Trimble explained that “thunder is not heard for some time after the lightning is seen…[because] the sound is much longer at arriving at our ears, than light is at our eyes for light moves almost instantaneously; but sound moves at the rate of 1,142 feet a second.” An 1849 advertisement for the Seminary made further reference to this area of study, stating, “the addition of a very good and well furnished Air Pump has been made to the Philosophical Apparatus, making, in all, a

248 Mrs. Anthony George Little, “Noted Daughters of Arkansas” (paper read at meeting of Charlevoix Chapter, D.A.R., Blytheville, Arkansas, March 1947).
very respectable collection. This will afford greater facility and clearness, than heretofore, in
giving instruction and illustrations in that science.”

There are several indications that Sawyer was attempting to pattern her institution after
that of her schoolmate Mary Lyon. Like Lyon, she emphasized not only academic but also
religious instruction for her students. Sawyer also required the young ladies at her school to take
part in daily physical activity by requiring a one mile walk before breakfast "in order to make
their cheeks rosy, and to give them an appetite for the morning meal.” Lyon tried to select
students of a certain caliber for her school, and Sawyer did the same by requiring applicants to
"bring testimonials of good moral character." There were some differences between the two
institutions. Sawyer did not conduct religious revivals at Fayetteville Female Seminary, nor did
she seem to advocate for missionary work as a goal for her students to aspire to. Both of these
were an integral part of the Mount Holyoke routine. Also, because Sawyer was attempting to
recruit students from a community with a lower population than that of Mount Holyoke, it was
necessary for her to take in a broader age group of students, while Lyon was able to focus on
young women.

During the first eight years of the Fayetteville Female Seminary, Sophia Sawyer taught
the academic subjects herself. She did mention an assistant from time to time, such as Martha
Trimble, who may have been part Cherokee. Also, Sawyer hired other men and women to teach
the art, music, and religion courses at the seminary. In 1839, the first year of the seminary’s
existence, a Mr. Reddick taught John Rollin Ridge and the other students music, while his wife
taught drawing, and painting. In 1841, Reverend Scull opened a separate “Male Academy” and
also gave “lectures upon the Bible on Sunday evenings, to the young ladies.”

As the institution became more established, however, and as Sawyer advanced further in
her ambition of developing an institution of higher learning, she sought to hire other teachers to
provide academic instruction, especially in the higher branches. In June 1846, Sawyer wrote to
David Greene asking him to help her obtain a qualified assistant to teach the higher branches of
the seminary, while she herself taught the primary branches. Two years later, after her first such

251 Foreman, 401, 403. Pat Donat, “Miss Sophia Sawyer and Her School,” Washington County Flashback, August
assistant had come and left, Sawyer again wrote to Greene regarding her plans for staffing instruction in the higher subjects. “Mr. Washburn may be depended upon to engage in the Fem. Sem. as soon as his present management expires, …He will instruct in the higher branches of English as philosophy, rhetoric, logic, astronomy, English grammar, arithmetic and mathematics generally, and in the Biblical and general religious instructions of the school.”

Recruiting and retaining instructors became one of the ongoing challenges of operating Fayetteville Seminary. In 1846, a young woman named Ann James had interviewed with the Woman’s Missionary Society in Boston to become a missionary teacher to the west. She was accepted and agreed to go to Fayetteville after Miss Sawyer’s request reached the society. After a long journey, James finally reached Fayetteville in February 1847 and began teaching soon after. James was at the seminary for about a year, and she soon had difficulty dealing with Sawyer’s demanding personality. Sawyer, on the other hand, felt that James was not as capable as she had been led to believe. There was also a period when James was sick and unable to teach. Sawyer turned to Harmau and Harmania Freyschlag, a brother and sister living in Fayetteville who had been educated in Germany. Harmau taught drawing, painting, and, dancing, while Harmania taught music. Sawyer was so pleased with their work that she was not willing to dismiss them when James was ready to return to work. This caused a disagreement between James and Sawyer with the result that James left to start her own school at Mount Comfort, about three miles from Fayetteville.

The departure of Miss James left Sawyer without a teacher for the upper division of the seminary. It was at this point that she contacted a former missionary, Reverend Cephas Washburn, to see if he was interested in the position. Washburn had been one of the first missionaries to move west with Cherokee settlers. He had moved to the Fayetteville area in 1835 and ran a school for boys at Mount Comfort until 1845. That year he had planned to open the Far West Seminary, the first collegiate level institution in the area, but a fire destroyed the building before it opened. When Sawyer wrote to him in the spring of 1848, Washburn was

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“engaged at Beattie’s Prairie till the last of Oct.” He agreed to come to Fayetteville when his term expired but stipulated, “I could not, however, consent to be in any way engaged in strife. I was never combatant and in my old age and infirmity I flee from all strife.” In February 1849, an advertisement for the seminary listed Washburn as the “Teacher of higher branches and in religion,” but it is not clear from existing records how long he taught at the school.\textsuperscript{254}

Evidently, Sawyer soon found herself in the position of again seeking to hire an instructor. This time Sawyer turned to Mt. Holyoke as a source of teachers, and thus to fellow female educators trained in a similar vision of female education. On October 31, 1849 Sawyer announced in the \textit{Fort Smith Herald} that a new teacher named Lucretia Foster had just graduated from Mount Holyoke and was now coming to the Fayetteville Female Seminary. Although there is no record of communication between Sophia Sawyer and Mary Lyon, the founder of Mount Holyoke, they had attended the Byfield Female Seminary together in the 1820s and Sawyer was no doubt acquainted with Lyon's work. Foster later married a Fayetteville resident and remained in Arkansas, an eventuality common in the experiences of other teachers who went west from New England according to Polly Kaufman’s research. Another Mount Holyoke graduate, Mary True Daniels, arrived in Fayetteville in 1853 and also made it her permanent home. Interestingly, Daniels married Presley R. Smith, the father of Foster’s husband, Jack Smith.

Another teacher hired during this time was Narcissa Chisholm, who was part Cherokee. Chisholm graduated from the Fayetteville Female Seminary in 1850, and Sophia Sawyer hired her to teach music when Harmaun and Harmania Freyschlag decide to go to California during the gold rush.\textsuperscript{255}

Ann James and Narcissa Chisholm both recorded in their memoirs some of the problems they encountered with Sophia Sawyer’s personality. James had been warned before leaving New England that Sawyer had a “spasmodic temperament.” A member of the ABCFM, possibly David Greene, shared with her how he had moved Sawyer “from one Mission station to another to avoid accepting the resignation of older and well-tried Missionaries, for wherever she was she was expected to be the controlling spirit.” James reported that Sawyer was “exactly as I had been informed – one day full of hope and perfectly delighted with the signs of progress of the

pupils, and perhaps the very next day perfectly disconsolate about the school, thinking nobody was doing their duty.”

Narcissa Chisholm, on the other hand, had not been warned what to expect from Miss Sawyer. When she first arrived at the seminary, Chisholm “observed that whenever Miss Sawyer made her appearance every girl present began to dodge out of her sight, and find a place of retreat. One of the seniors…remained with me. As soon as Miss Sawyer disappeared I said, ‘Annie, what does this mean, the girls disappearing in this way?’ She laughed and gave me a knowing wink, saying, ‘Just wait; you’ll know soon enough.’” Chisholm went on to write: “Miss Sawyer was a first-class regulator, and my position with the old lady was either up in the zenith or down in the depths. As a rule I could please her, but occasionally, like all the others, I woefully missed it, and in a short time I learned to take my part in getting out of sight when the commanding officer hove in view.” In the Noted Daughters of Arkansas, Sawyer was described as “somewhat unusual in appearance. Her dress was of Puritanical severity; her hair was combed smoothly over her ears as was then the custom. Her lace caps were dainty, yet dignified and reserved. No one ever thought of approaching her with the slightest familiarity, so great was her reserve.”

Some of the students at the Fayetteville Female Seminary boarded with families hand-picked by Sawyer. This was usually not a problem for the family itself unless one of her students became sick. This event is described in a modern newspaper account of Sawyer and her school:

“When one of her pupils became ill, whether they boarded at the school or in a private home, Miss Sawyer stayed with them until they were well. Her teaching duties were taken over by the other instructors in the school. People who boarded her girls dreaded her arrival under these circumstances as she subordinated the entire household to the care of her patient. First the room was thoroughly cleaned, then clean bed clothes and sleeping garments. Miss Sawyer personally

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256 Marshall, 40-41.
257 Owen, 57. Foreman, 402.
supervised the preparation of good nourishing food and throughout the illness
ruled the house with an iron had that was not always kept in a velvet glove.”

Accounts such as these suggest that Sawyer’s own strong personality and independence
contributed substantially to the difficulties she experienced in recruiting and retaining instructors.
Paradoxically, however, this same strength of character also seems to have been critical to
Sawyer’s success in establishing and maintaining a successful school. Even Ann James, who had
been the target of Sophia Sawyer’s “spasmodic temperament,” complimented Sawyer’s abilities
as an educator and administrator. In her autobiography, James wrote of Sawyer: “She was
exceedingly visionary, and had gotten the merchants to bring on books – in mathematics for
instance – fit for advanced college students. She thought she had laid such a good foundation
that it would be easy to build a brilliant structure on it in a short time. She had never gone
beyond the primary studies herself, and was a very incompetent judge of the progress the girls
could reasonably be expected to make.” However, James also wrote: “Miss Sawyer taught a
primary school for years and taught thoroughly, for she was not woman to leave any work she
undertook half done…She was a woman of indomitable energy and perseverance. She could do
the work of three.”

There were others in Northwest Arkansas who seem to have agreed with Ann James’
assessment of Sophia Sawyer’s abilities. Like the principals of other seminaries of the time,
Sawyer conducted public examinations at the end of each term to evaluate, as well as display, the
academic skills of her scholars. One such examination in July of 1845 was reported in the
Arkansas Intelligencer. The reporter told of the “great advancement of the scholars and the high
capacity of the teachers.” He went on to write: “We are well acquainted with Miss Sawyer and
know that her system of teaching is better adapted to perfect the education of youth than any
other in this State and her school is as good as that of any other. If a few more such teachers
were sustained in Arkansas, we should see her occupying a high stand among her sisters.” An
examination observer gave a very favorable report in the Fort Smith Herald in August 1850: “[I]
was very much pleased to see the good order, and surprised to find the proficiency made by the

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259 Marshall, 20, 40.
students in the different departments of Education. We had no idea that we had an institution, in our state, that possessed such advantages.”

Although Sophia Sawyer did not marry and raise a family in Fayetteville, as did many of these teachers, she does fit Polly Kaufman’s description of a community builder. Kaufman noted that many women teachers became “community builders in the larger sense: in addition to starting or continuing as teachers in district or subscription schools, many founded or taught in seminaries where they trained the next generation of teachers.” These women often “achieved positions of considerable influence.” As the examination observer in 1850 wrote: “‘Solitary and alone,’ without relations or friends, far from her native state, without a fortune, but with limited means, has she, by a woman’s energy, built up an institution, that has done much for female education in Arkansas, and which is destined in a few years, to rank high, as an institution of learning for the young ladies of this state.”

In her autobiography written in 1897, Ann James went so far as to say that Sawyer “created an educational interest, to which the locating of the Industrial University there is largely indebted…I have been surprised to find that the students who attend the Fayetteville University [later the University of Arkansas] do not hear her name mentioned.” Another contemporary, Cephas Washburn, replied to Sawyer’s concerns that Ann James’ school would harm the Fayetteville Female Seminary: “I think you have no grounds to apprehend that any schemes formed by any persons to supplant the Female Seminary at Fayetteville will succeed. There must be, and there will be, a good permanent female seminary at Fayetteville and no one can be sustained in the near vicinity as a rival.”

These observations from contemporaries indicate that the Fayetteville Female Seminary and its founder Sophia Sawyer were both well respected in the community and, perhaps, the state. They also suggest that this respect derived in part from Sawyers determined ability to articulate a compelling vision of education and thereby ”create an educational interest.” Surviving descriptions of her as a person are either very positive or very negative, but even her detractors respected her commitment to education. This commitment may have led, if Ann

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261 Schwager, 354-355.
James is to be believed, to the selection of a small town in the northwest corner of Arkansas for the location of the state's first public university.

The first college in Arkansas was the Cane Hill College, located in the town of that name, to train ministers. One of the early instructors was Cephas Washburn, founder of the mission school at Dwight and later a teacher at Sawyer’s school. Another early college was St. John’s College, which opened in Little Rock in 1859. However, it was not until after the Civil War that the state’s first public college was opened. In 1868, the newly elected governor, Powell Clayton, signed “An Act Establishing an Industrial University.” The process for the selection of the location of the new university began with interested counties, towns, or cities bidding to see which would agree to provide the most assistance in the creation of the institution. A board of trustees was created, but selection of the site was delayed because of concerns that the bill was too vague. The process began again in March 1871 with the passage of “An Act for the location, organization, and maintenance of the Arkansas Industrial University with a Normal School Therein.” Once more the bidding process began. Four locations offered proposals for the location of the school in their area: Batesville, Prairie Grove, Pulaski, and Washington.263

Finally, Washington County was selected, with Fayetteville to be the location for the new university. Considering that the county is in the northwest corner of the state of Arkansas, which seems a remote location for the state’s first public university, it is interesting that this area would be selected. Washington County won the bidding process because they voted for a bond issue that would provide one hundred thousand dollars, and there were three parcels of land offered by county landowners for the site of the institution. Washington County was also “found to be ‘out of debt, unsurpassed for healthfulness, free from malaria, and having an abundance of good building material.’” In the 1830s, a flood of settlers had moved into Washington County because of “ideal agricultural conditions…putting nearly one tenth of the state’s population within the orbit of Fayetteville’s wholesale and retail merchants.” The region was especially beneficial for apple growing.264

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The area around Fayetteville was already known as a center for education in the state. Fayetteville Female Academy and Fayetteville Female Seminary, as well as other private institutions, had been located there. In addition, Robert Graham, a Methodist, had opened Arkansas College, identified by historian Charles Bolton as “the first institution of higher learning in the state,” there in 1852. The college was disrupted by the Civil War so it was no longer in existence when the bidding for the university site began. In 1882, James VanHoose, remembering back to his arrival in Fayetteville in 1852, wrote about Sawyer’s influence on the city:

“There was also a first class Female Seminary here then, founded by Miss Sawyer, who with her assistants…added much to make Fayetteville famous for its educational facilities. Many beautiful young ladies from Missouri, the Indian country and south Arkansas attended this school. These school girls and the young men of Arkansas College, together with the young men of the town and our own beautiful girls made Fayetteville society second to none in the state: in fact from 1851 to 1861 there were very few towns in the South or West the size of ours where there could be found more prosperous business men, more gallant beaux, more charming and beautiful young ladies, better schools or a more intelligent, industrious, happy and contented people than our own loved Fayetteville could produce.”

So, a remote town became the site of the state’s first public university because it had a strong economic base, as well as a population that was willing to support the effort with both funds and land. Another consideration, however, was the educational atmosphere of the area, an atmosphere that may well have been nurtured through the efforts of Sophia Sawyer in creating and maintaining the Fayetteville Female Seminary.

Many local histories and newspaper accounts of the Fayetteville Female Seminary point out that the school was established two years after Mount Holyoke Seminary opened in Massachusetts. From this fact it is sometimes assumed that Sawyer copied the model of Mt.

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265 Penton, 325. Bolton, 114. Fletcher, 133.
Holyoke, but it seems more accurate to suggest that the visions of Sawyer and Lyon had common roots. As previously noted, Mary Lyon and Sophia Sawyer attended the Byfield Female Academy together. Historian Barbara Solomon has noted that attending this institution was a turning point for Lyon, as it seems to have been for Sawyer, who went to Byfield at least a year before Lyon arrived. Emerson “addressed women as the equals of men in intellectual capacity, and …he lectured on the philosophy of Jonathan Edwards and included other collegiate subjects.” More importantly, perhaps, Emerson articulated a vision of the value and importance of female education that his students adopted as their own and later used to win support for their own institutions from patrons, parents and local communities. As we have seen, Sophia Sawyer articulated her own version of that vision as early as 1824, a full decade before Lyon began soliciting support for Mt. Holyoke. Although it took another fifteen years for Sawyer to achieve her goal, the Fayetteville Female Seminary of the 1840s exhibits a considerable degree of continuity with that original ambition.

Despite this continuity with Sawyer's early experience and ambition, however, Fayetteville Female Seminary differed significantly from a New England academy in at least one important respect. It enrolled both white and Native American children. In creating the Fayetteville Female Seminary, Sophia Sawyer had to overcome prejudice against the non-white students at the school. Her success in doing this is perhaps due in part to the fact that the Cherokee students came from wealthy, mixed-blood families. They had fully adopted white culture and blended with the white students. The newspaper account describing their arrival spoke of “the Cherokee aristocracy -- in their splendid carriages, many of which were equal to the most brilliant that rattle along Broadway.” While this may be an exaggeration, it is probable that these Cherokees were fairly wealthy or they would not have had the money to send their daughters to the school at all. Perhaps economics played a role as well in that these students and their families put money into the economy of the small frontier town.267

Several other factors also contributed to the success of the Fayetteville Female Seminary. First, the school itself filled a void in the education available in the area. Although Sawyer mentioned other schools, it seems as though she was still able to attract enough students. Among the Cherokee, her reputation was such that they tried several times to persuade her to come into

267 Foreman, 401.
the territory to start a school. Among whites, the seminary seems to have helped confer a sense of legitimacy on the frontier town. As described in a newspaper article, "The first families in the town who had come from Kentucky, Tennessee, and Virginia were only too glad to find a woman as capable as miss Sawyer to whom they could send their little daughters, as well as the older ones." Another account states "The Fayetteville Female Seminary not only gave impetus to further educational activities in the state and helped to determine the location of ....the University of Arkansas but was one of the most influential pioneer schools west of the Mississippi." What Sawyer started only gained momentum as other schools were started in the area both during and after her presence there. 

Second, the type of school Sawyer created also led to its success. Sawyer had been trained in seminaries and academies in New England. She knew Mary Lyon and Zilpah Grant. There were teachers at the Fayetteville Female Seminary from Mount Holyoke. Sawyer structured her school like the New England institutions. These factors made parents feel as though they were sending their daughters to a seminary that was almost as good as one in the northeast.

Third, Sawyer's training and experience in schools gave her a significant knowledge base about what was needed to run a successful school. While she was working in the mission schools, she was given some leeway, but there were also many things that she knew could be done better. She was given the chance to prove it and put all of her knowledge to work when she created the Fayetteville Female Seminary.

Finally, Sawyer's personality also played a large role in the success of her school. She had become an independent woman who knew how she wanted things done. She had been under the control of the ABCFM for long enough, and now she wanted things done her way. The fact that influential members of the community were willing to provide a stranger and an outsider with land and funding to build the Fayetteville Female Seminary is a strong testament to the respect she was able to garner relatively quickly.

Sophia Sawyer had battled tuberculosis throughout her life, and she finally died in 1854. Susan Ridge, who had been a friend and benefactor for many years, wrote wrote in a letter to a relative “Miss Sawyer ceased all her toils and suffering on the 22nd of February last. Her body

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268 Foreman, 401.
now rests near the school where she spend the last years of her life establishing a female seminary of the first standing in Arkansas.” Even after death she was known as Miss Sawyer, even to Susan Ridge who had been her friend for many years.

In her will, Sawyer left her property, including the seminary, to Rev. David Green of the ABCFM. Green later sold the property to Miss Daniels who took Miss Foster as her partner in 1858. The seminary was granted a charter in 1859, which created a six-member board of trustees and was exempted from taxes. According to Penton, this was done because “the institution was established in the beginning by a female, had been in operation to the present, and was still owned and carried on by females; and since so many donations of tuition have been made by the said females to poor and indigent children.” The Fayetteville Female Seminary continued until the Civil War. Like many other schools in the south it closed during the war, the buildings were used as a hospital, and in 1863 they were consumed by a fire.269

Sawyer’s commitment to education may also have influenced the Cherokee tribe’s founding of Cherokee Female Seminary in Indian Territory in 1851, three years before Sawyer’s death. It is possible that Sawyer was asked to teach in this school. Like Fayetteville Female Seminary, Cherokee Female Seminary looked to the New England model of female education and to Mt. Holyoke Female Seminary for its teachers. The Cherokee Female Seminary was a boarding school that had a curriculum and structure that was very similar to a boarding school for white girls. The Cherokee school was criticized because it did not teach about Cherokee culture and may have contributed to the loss of culture of the girls who attended. However, for most of the students it was a source of pride that they had attended the school. The school itself is evidence for how willing many of the Cherokee, especially those of mixed blood, to adopt the culture of the white man. Education was still seen as the primary way of being able to live successfully in the white world. Those parents in the Cherokee Nation who chose to send their daughters to Fayetteville Female Seminary were trying to accomplish this as well. However, after the Fayetteville school closed, the Cherokee Female Seminary continued, remaining open until 1909. A similar school was created for Chickasaw girls in 1852 and for similar reasons. Attendance at the Chickasaw Female Seminary was also a source of pride. The major difference between the two institutions is that missionaries were involved in the establishment of the

269 Foreman, 413. Penton, n.326
Chickasaw institution but not at the Cherokee institution. Also, the Chickasaw Female Seminary remained open until 1949.\footnote{Devon Mihesuah, *Cultivating the Rosebuds: The Education of Women at the Cherokee Female Seminary, 1851-1909* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1993) and Amanda Cobb, *Listening to Our Grandmother’s Stories: The Bloomfield Academy for Chickasaw Females, 1852-1949*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000).}

Sophia Sawyer arrived in Fayetteville and turned tragedy into opportunity. She had no other means of support except teaching. Sawyer had years of experience and had been running her own school for a short time after her arrival at Honey Creek. The decision to begin a school was probably not very difficult for her to make, after all what other means did she have of supporting herself. Fayetteville was a prime location to open a female seminary because, despite its remote location in relation to the rest of the state, it had the economic base necessary to support a privately funded academy. It was also just over the border from the Cherokee Nation where many of Sawyer’s students lived. Not only was her school a success, but also the atmosphere created by having such a school led to the creation of other schools and, eventually, colleges. It is also possible that her success in the mission schools in the southeast led Cherokee parents to advocate for the creation of the Cherokee Female Seminary. Even though she lived only until 1854, Sawyer's thirty-year history as a female educator and teacher of Cherokee lived on in later institutions.
CONCLUSION

“She hath done what she could.”

Sophia Sawyer is a figure worthy of historical study. Her letters help illuminate Cherokee and missionary history and how the two groups interacted with each other. She was a witness to change in the lives of nineteenth-century women and in the lives of the Cherokee Indians of the southeast. However, Sawyer was more than an observer; she was also an agent of change.

The key factor in Sophia Sawyer’s motivation was the education and indoctrination she received at the Byfield Female Academy under the tutelage of Joseph Emerson. Until that point, Sawyer’s life was fairly ordinary. She grew up on a New England farm, and, when her father died, she was left without a means of support. She did what many other young women did in her situation and alternated teaching with school attendance. However, she seemed to feel a calling to go beyond the limited education available for women at that time. She sought out the preeminent institution available for females in New England.

Joseph Emerson was a visionary in terms of women’s education. His influence encouraged young women like Sophia Sawyer, as well as Mary Lyon and Zilpah Grant, to go beyond their own and society’s expectations in terms of their ability to become influential educators themselves. Emerson must have seen some spark of Sawyer’s potential because he was willing to help pay for her education. He did this for other students as well, but one has to believe that he would not have been willing to be so supportive if a student did not show some potential. At Byfield, Sophia Sawyer was inspired not only to educate herself but also to use her talents and skills to educate other young women. This interest in instructing others later led to difficulties with her missionary supervisors.

271 Mrs. Anthony George Little, “Noted Daughters of Arkansas” (paper read at meeting of Charlevoix Chapter, D.A.R., Blytheville, Arkansas, March 1947).
Joseph Emerson inspired Sophia Sawyer to another kind of calling. Emerson encouraged his students to become missionaries. It is likely that he spoke of and read the promotional literature prevalent at the time to recruit missionaries to go throughout the world and save heathen souls. There was a common belief at the time that the new millennium, the second coming of Christ, was not far off. Young men and women responded to the call to save as many souls as possible before this event. Emerson taught each student to "feel her individual responsibility to serve her generation according to the will of God" and to make sure they were doing what they could to benefit the world. Based on the tutelage of Emerson, Sawyer had a particular interest in the education of Cherokee females.272

When Sophia Sawyer applied to be a missionary for the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions (ABCFM), she was typical of other young women of the time. Lydia Hoyle writes that these individuals felt “a desire for usefulness, a sense of calling, and a concern for the souls of the heathen.”273 However, Sawyer had internalized Emerson’s message to the point that she was willing to elevate her own calling and motivation above the objectives of the ABCFM and the male superintendents of the mission stations. She was inspired by Emerson to continually ask herself, “Am I doing the will of God?” In 1829, she reflected on her difficulties among the missionaries: “I must be allowed to use my own judgment, & act on my own principles. I am not sensible of being influenced by obstinancy or selfwill in coming to this decision; but from knowledge of my disposition, & the texture of my own mind. Could you know what I suffer at seasons when I feel responsibilities resting on me; & yet cannot act freely, you would understand what I cannot communicate. The suffering is involved particularly in the care of girls, where their morals are in danger.”274 She felt that she was following her calling to do what she could for her Cherokee students, even if it was different from the expectations of the Board. Sawyer especially differed with her superiors on the idea of what Cherokee females were capable of learning. Again this is evidence of the influence of Emerson who taught that women were capable of academic excellence.

Sophia Sawyer began to have control of her own school after she arrived at New Echota. Worcester was the missionary in charge of the station, but, even after his release from prison, he

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272 Rev. Ralph Emerson, Life of Rev. Joseph Emerson: Pastor of the Third Congregational Church in Beverly, MS and Subsequent Principal of a Female Seminary (Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1834), 430.
was too busy with the translating and printing of religious works in Cherokee to be too concerned with the school. Aware of her personality conflicts with the missionaries in the past, as well as the growing removal concerns of the Cherokees might cut short her time in New Echota, Sawyer wrote in 1833:

“Where what I shall do if I am driven from this school I do not know - but hope God will not throw me by as a broken vessel. I have made all the provision in my power in case of a sudden dismissal from the Cherokee Mission, & now rest satisfied. You know my unsuccessful attempts to labor in connection with missionaries - I utterly despair of being useful or happy among them, unless my responsibilities can be as they are here, without their control.

You say this is a bad account of yourself. Be it so, I am what I am & my employers better see things as they are. It would be trying indeed to be compelled to leave the Cherokees, after they have engaged so much of my affections & sympathy, & to enter at my age new, & untried scenes without any one to rely on for support or protection; but if I am called to do so without any wrong agency of my own, I need fear no evil.”

Sawyer recognized that she needed to be in control of the situation, and she continued to feel as if she was acting as God wanted her too.

The passage above also shows the depth of feeling that Sawyer had for the Cherokees. This is another point in her life when she was both a witness to and an agent for change. She was a white woman missionary living among a group of people that most whites saw as inferior, savage, and heathen. There was a growing idea among American policy makers during the early to mid-nineteenth century that “education…could rid society of crime, poverty, social and religious tensions, and political upheavals…The idea that a government could control society by controlling the education of children was a significant change in public policy.” Thomas McKenney, the head of the Office of Indian Affairs, agreed with this idea and believed it could be applied to the Cherokees as a “means of cultural transformation.” The method that was best suited to this transformation was the Lancasterian method of instruction. As a teacher in the

274 ABCFM, 18.3.1, Vol. 5, Part 2, Sophia Sawyer to Jeremiah Evarts, 31 January 1829.
275 ABCFM, 18.3.1, Vol. 8, Sophia Sawyer to David Greene, 24 December 1833.
mission schools, Sophia Sawyer used this method to teach her students how to read and write English, especially so they could read and understand the Bible. She was an agent of the change supported by McKenney, as well as many others, to transform the Cherokees into a civilized people.\(^{276}\)

As a resident of the Cherokee Nation in the 1830s, Sawyer was also a witness to their cultural transformation and to the upheaval caused by removal efforts. She worked with both mixed and full blood children. She visited with their families, and saw the advances made by mixed blood families such as the Ridges and Boudinots. Sawyer was living with Samuel Worcester when he was arrested by the Georgia Guard for not swearing an oath to Georgia. She herself was visited by the Guard and did not back down when they told her to stop teaching slave children. Sawyer was living among the members of the Treaty Party when they signed the Treaty of New Echota. Later, she moved out west to be with them in their new territory, and again witnessed tragedy when John Ridge was murdered. After years of living among the Cherokees, they had become her family, and she suffered with them during these difficult times. She recognized that they were more than a group of savage heathens. Her mission had transcended the goal of the Board. The bond between Sawyer and the Cherokees was solidified because they shared the experience of subordination at the hands of white officials.

The Cherokees saw in Sophia Sawyer someone who was willing to work for them, sacrifice for them, and defend them if necessary. They watched as she worked among the children in the schools. They were grateful when she continued teaching in her school in New Echota even after all the other missionaries had pulled out of Georgia. It was significant to them that she was willing to keep accepting students in that school even when she had little assistance. Word must have spread in the community when the Georgia Guard came to warn her to stop teaching slave children. Imagine how the Cherokees must have felt when she stood up to the Guard and talked to them for an hour about why she was not breaking Georgia law because she was living in the Cherokee Nation and not Georgia. She had become an advocate for them and risked the condemnation of her superiors and arrest by Georgia authorities.

The Cherokees chose Sophia Sawyer to be the teacher of their children when removal became inevitable. There is no record that they specifically requested any other teacher. They

were aware of her conflicts with the Board; they knew about her quirky personality; and yet they were willing to take her into their families. John Ridge wrote of her, she is “unsupported & uncherished by any relations in this world, because those who might have dearly loved her as she deserves are not now in the land of the living; she enjoys our keenest sympathy, & ought to be supported by the approbation of the Board. If she is not, I can not answer for the pangs of heart affliction she will experience, when the ties which connect it with the Indians in her devoted labors shall be cut asunder.” The Ridges, as well as the Boudinots, accepted Sawyer despite her weaknesses because she did the same for them. They recognized that she was somewhat of an outcast among the white missionaries just as they were outcasts among white society.277

After the Cherokee removal to their new territory west of Arkansas, Sawyer again took the risk of leaving behind friends and support and moved to be with her Cherokee family. Once more she was a witness to tragedy when John Ridge was murdered in front of his family. Once more she became a source of comfort and stability in a time of trouble. She helped care for the Ridge children, helped organize the move to Fayetteville, and probably helped support the family with her school.

The establishment of the Fayetteville Female Seminary was the ultimate achievement of Sawyer’s life. As early as 1824, she expressed concern over the education of females in the Cherokee tribe and made it clear that she felt she could do a better job than her male superiors. Although is took her another fifteen years to achieve her goal, the Fayetteville Female Seminary is the ultimate result of her original ambition, an ambition that was articulated and nurtured by Joseph Emerson while she was his student. In Fayetteville, Sophia Sawyer’s tenacity served her well. In a relatively short time, she was able to use the skills taught by Emerson to garner support for a school in Fayetteville. Despite the fact that she was not known to the community, she was able to secure a donation of land and funds for the building of her school.

Some people die without every realizing what they have accomplished in life. Sophia Sawyer was not such a person. In July 1849 Sawyer, believing she was dying, placed an ad in the Cherokee Advocate:

“The school…has of necessity assumed its present position before the public.
These houses, and these grounds, and all the facilities for giving instruction here, did not spring up by magic, in this new and uncultivated country. They have

appeared one after another, under God, by the most energetic, untiring, and I would add of true patient effort. But persevere I have until my nature is yielding under the pressure of complicated labor...And in the future, though through the imbecility of age, my labor in the drudgery of the school, may be deviating and uncertain, yet the undying part of my nature, guided by Infinite Wisdom, is going forward with unhesitating step to raise this Institution above competition - to an eminence, whose influence shall overlook the whole length and breadth of our State and surrounding country; looking into eternity, shall shed mortal light and knowledge upon all classes, from the lowest hut of the untaught Indian, and the humblest cot of the poor peasant to the spacious hall of the man of wealth and science.”

This passage demonstrates the ultimate aspiration of Sophia Sawyer: to create an “Institution above competition.” She wanted to create a school that would rival Mount Holyoke. The fact that she was able to achieve success in a frontier community such as Fayetteville is a testament to her drive and passion. It is also significant that she was able to do so with a student body that combined white students with Cherokee and mixed blood students. Fayetteville’s willingness to accept such an institution is evidence of the strong impression that Sawyer was able to make on the community.

Sophia Sawyer was a woman with a strong sense of duty. She was sent by the ABCFM to achieve a goal among the Cherokee Indians and exceeded that goal. Unfortunately, she also went beyond what the ABCFM felt was realistic and this led to tension between herself and her superiors. However, the Cherokees recognized her tenacity as an asset. In terms of current educational trends, one could say that Sophia Sawyer truly did not want to leave any child behind. She had a strong belief that the Cherokees were capable of learning, and it was her responsibility to teach them. When she had to let go of a child that was not achieving, it was distressing for her. Although there was still an underlying concern about morals and religiosity of her charges, Sawyer’s emphasis began to change from saving souls to teaching about the time

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of the third removal crisis. Her letters began to speak more of wanting to become a better
teacher and to receive further training in advanced subjects.

After Sophia Sawyer’s death, her pupils chose a marble shaft to adorn her grave. On this
monument was engraved: “She hath done what she could.” This was a common epitaph seen on
the headstones of many missionary women. Historian Barbara Welter has written “however
much religion involved the working out of social, political, and economic necessities, it was also
a matter of individual will and conscience. For the nineteenth-century American woman, on the
foreign mission field her life had meaning and joy and was infused by a sense of privilege at
being the special recipient of God’s grace.”279 This is especially true of Sophia Sawyer. As the
daughter of a New England farmer, Sawyer’s early life was fairly ordinary and did not forecast
the extraordinary events that she would witness or the things that she would achieve. She was
forced by difficult circumstances to make a choice. She could either live out her life dependent
on the charity of others, or she could do what she could to have some sort of impact on the
world.

Sophia Sawyer had a knack for turning misfortune into an opportunity. She was
idealistic and took the missionary calling to heart. Sawyer refused to accept the limited view of
her superiors at the ABCFM in terms of what her Cherokee students were capable of achieving.
Sawyer admittedly had a difficult personality, but it served her well in trying circumstances.
People leaned on her for support in times of sickness and hardship because of her stubborn,
tenacious nature in overcoming obstacles.

As a missionary, Sophia Sawyer was sent to do what she could for the Cherokees.
However, her epitaph is an understatement in terms of her life experiences and achievements.
She was willing to battle difficult circumstances and the bureaucracy of the missionary system
created by the Board and wanted to institute her own ideas and methods into the classroom. In
the end, Sophia Sawyer was sought after by the Cherokees for her ability to achieve results with
her students. She did what she could, exceeding the expectations of her superiors in the
ABCFM. For a spinster school teacher from New England, the Fayetteville Female Seminary
was the unlikely culmination of a lifetime of work in education.

279 Barbara Welter, “She Hath Done What She Could: Protestant Women’s Missionary Careers in
Nineteenth-Century America,” American Quarterly, Vol. 30, No. 5, Special Issue: Women and Religion (Winter
1978), 638.
APPENDIX

TIMELINE OF SOPHIA SAWYER'S LIFE
TIMELINE

1792  May 4 – Sawyer born in Fitchburg, Massachusetts, the youngest of five daughters and one son born to Abner and Elizabeth “Betsey” Perkins Sawyer. The son died while the family still lived in Fitchburg. Only Sophia and Betsey survived to adulthood.

1797  age 5 - Sawyer family moved to Rindge, New Hampshire after Abner sold the family farm in Fitchburg.

1809  age 17 - Sophia was apprenticed to a "tailoress". Up until this time, she only attended school five weeks in the summer and five weeks in the winter.

1810  age 18 - Abner Sawyer died. By this time, Sophia had also lost one of her sisters. After the death of her father she lived with various families, including those of Dr. Seth Payson and Capt. Joel Raymond. Linda Raymond was a friend of Sophia's.

1814  age 22 - July - Sophia wrote to Linda Raymond of the illness of her sister, Asenath, who later died of consumption. Sophia's mother and another sister also died of consumption, but it is unclear when. In a letter written in 1833, Sawyer mentions having only one sister. These are the only family members mentioned in her letters, except for cousins.

1817  age 25 - October – Sophia wrote to Raymond about her attendance at New Ipswich Academy, which is in a town near Rindge.

1817-20  age 25-28 - Little is known about this period of her life. She is listed as a teacher in Rindge, so perhaps she returned there and taught for a time after attending school herself. This is likely because she mentions in later letters that she had been able to save money to pay for further schooling.


1822  age 30 – She may have worked at Emerson’s school. A letter dated Dec. 23, 1821 tells of the Emerson’s allowing her to study and work for them instead of paying tuition. She also talked of trying to find a school.

1823  age 31 - November 20 - Sophia arrives at Cherokee Mission in Brainerd, Georgia as a teacher. Most of the following information is based on letters between Sawyer and the Board of Commissioners for the missionary society. There are a few more letters to Linda Raymond (who later marries twice), but these letters stop when Linda dies in 1834.

1823-28  age 31-35 - Sawyer teaches at school for Cherokees in Brainerd until February 1828 and leaves Brainerd because of personal differences with other missionaries.
1828-29 age 35-36 - Sawyer teaches at school for Cherokees in Haweis, Georgia until February 4, 1829. She leaves Haweis, again because of personal differences with other missionaries.

1829-34 age 36-42 - Sawyer teaches at school for Cherokees in New Echota, Georgia where she appears to have started the school herself. She lives with first with family of Samuel Worcester and his wife, Ann Orr Worcester, who had gone to Byfield with Sawyer.

1834-36 age 42-44 - Sawyer lives with family of John Ridge (Cherokee) and his wife, Sarah B. Northrup Ridge (white), and teaches at Running Waters.

1836-37 age 44-45 – The Ridges and Budinots leave for the Cherokee Nation in the west so Sawyer's school closes. Her travels include Rindge, Newark, and New York. Sawyer is taking a vacation and trying to determine if she will be allowed to go west with the Cherokees. She also taught at a school for blacks in New Jersey.

1837 age 45 - November - Sawyer leaves for Cherokee Nation and arrives in December.

1837-39 age 45-47 - Sawyer taught at school for Cherokees in Honey Creek, Oklahoma, and she lived with the Ridge family that she had met in Georgia

1839 age 47 - John Ridge is murdered in his home at Honey Creek.

1839 October 10 – Sawyer writes from Fayetteville, Arkansas. She has left the Cherokee Nation with Sarah Ridge and her family after the murder of John Ridge. Sawyer began the Fayetteville Female Seminary soon after her arrival.

1839-54 age 47-61 - Sawyer ran the Fayetteville Female Seminary in Fayetteville, Arkansas, which taught girls from the Cherokee Nation as well as local girls. Two of the teachers that came west to teach in her school were graduates of Mount Holyoke. Lucretia Foster graduated in 1849. She taught at the seminary from 1849 until 1856 when she married William A.J. Smith of Arkansas. Mary True Daniels graduated in 1852. She taught at the seminary from 1853-1858, and she married Presley Smith, also of Arkansas. There is also another teacher named Ann James, who came from England as a missionary, and a brother and sister from Germany taught at the school as well.

1854 age 61 - February 22 – Sophia Sawyer died of tuberculosis. The school continued after her death until a fire apparently destroyed the building in 1862.
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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Teri Castelow was born on April 16, 1965 on Castle Air Force Base in California. She spent her childhood in upstate New York and Northern Virginia before her family finally settled in Richmond, Virginia, where she graduated from high school in 1983. She received her Bachelor of Science degree in Social Science from Radford University in southwest Virginia in 1987. After teaching middle school for several years in Richmond, Virginia, Teri obtained a leave of absence in 1990 and completed course work for a Masters of Arts degree in American History at the University of Arkansas. However, the pleasant distraction of having two children in less than two years prevented completion of this degree until 1996. Teri’s journey around the southeast continued in Tallahassee, Florida where she entered Florida State University to begin work on a Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Foundations under the tutelage of Dr. Victoria-Maria MacDonald. During the years of pursuing these advanced degrees, Teri continued her career as a public school teacher. Teri’s husband, Peter, continued to inspire, cajole, and encourage her until she reached her ultimate goal of completing the Ph.D. and obtaining a position as an assistant professor at a university. Her research interests include the subjects of this dissertation but also teacher education and issues of reform in the public schools of the United States.