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Stolen Indian

Became Teacher

For years after their removal to Indian Territory, Osages and Cherokees waged war against each other to prove their courage. Before they made peace in the early 1800s, a 4-year-old Osage girl was taken captive and adopted by Blackcoat, a kind chief of the Cherokees, according to "Story of Oklahoma" by Muriel Wright.

One day a white man persuaded Blackcoat that he would give the girl many advantages because he had no children. The man sold the girl shortly afterward to a man who started to Louisiana with her, expecting to make a profit by selling the child into slavery.

While he was camping one night, some French boatmen discovered the little girl and reported it to Gov. Miller at the Arkansas post. A price was set for recovery of the girl and arrest of her captor.

A posse was organized and it caught up with the man near the Louisiana border. The girl was recovered, but the man escaped.

Miller put the girl in the care of missionaries at Dwight Mission in Indian Territory, where she was given the name of Maria James. She became a teacher and married a Cherokee named William Pettit. After the death of her husband, she rented her farm and moved back to Dwight Mission so her children could be educated.

She soon became endeared to all because of her kindness. Years later, she found some relatives in the Osage Nation and moved there after the children had left home.

The superintendent of Dwight Mission said of Mrs. Pettit, "There is no question in my mind that, had no other work been done in this old school than the education of Maria James, it was well worth all the cost."