

OKLAHOMA
TERRITORY

TERRITORIAL TALES

Bits of
History
Before
Statehood

INDIAN
TERRITORY

SEP 4 1982

Missionary Taught Creeks to Write

The Cherokees had the first written language of any Indian tribe and undoubtedly it was the most widely used. However, efforts also were made to establish written languages or to adapt the English language for use by other tribes, with some success.

One such instance was that of the Rev. Henry F. Buckner, a Baptist clergyman who came to Indian Territory from Kentucky in 1848 as one of the earliest missionaries among the Creek Indians.

Buckner first was stationed at the Creek Agency near Muskogee. He went to Texas with members of the Creek tribe during the Civil War but was invited to return to Indian Territory afterward and he did so. Later he established a college at Witcherville, Ark., which bore his name.

History records that Buckner was a man of high scholastic achievements and that he made an exhaustive study of the Creek language. In addition to compiling and publishing a grammar in the Creek language, he also is credited with translating a large portion of the Bible into Creek. He translated into English many of the tribal songs of the Creek.

Buckner's brother was the founder of the Buckner Orphan Home

in Dallas. One of his sons, William V. Buckner, served in the 5th District of the Oklahoma legislature as a senator from McAlester.