

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

REPORT

OF THE

COMMISSIONER OF INDIAN
AFFAIRS

TO THE

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR

FOR THE

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we have several suits now being prosecuted in an effort to undo some of the gross wrongs that have been committed.

GENERAL AGRICULTURAL CONDITIONS.

The limits of this article will hardly permit extended reference to the tribes in the western part of the State, numbering approximately 17,000 and embracing the Kiowa and Comanche, Cheyenne and Arapaho, Shawnee, Iowa, Kaw, Kickapoo, Otoe, Pawnee, Ponca, Pottawatomie, Sac and Fox, and other small bands. They complete the large Indian population of a great State, and, I am proud to say, hold a forward place in the progress of our continental Indian life. In the agricultural industries that hold the roots of civilization they are among the active and prosperous of their race.

The area of land cultivated by the Indians in Oklahoma has doubled in the last six years. This significant fact is a striking approval of the policy which has been pursued for helping these Indians make the most of their lands and create an interest in their greater possibilities.

I have encouraged the sale rather than the leasing of inherited lands, and have insisted, especially in the case of noncompetent Indians, on the expenditure of the proceeds for improvements, and have refused to allow the Indians to lease such improved homesteads. As most of the Indians inherit other land, this plan is resulting in the upbuilding of Indian homes which compare favorably with white homes of the community. It results also in eliminating the lease income upon which the Indians are apt to rely for support and which removes the incentive for vigorous effort to promote their own welfare and materially better their condition. Generally the Indians use the proceeds of the sales of their inherited lands for the betterment of their homes. This is a radical change from the old system which permitted the Indian to lease practically all of his land, living on the rentals as long as they lasted, and then merely existing.

With few exceptions, due to varying conditions, the Indians of Oklahoma have had sufficient money of their own to equip them for farming. There were some, however, who were not fortunate in having inherited land sales to aid them or oil or gas royalties to provide revenues. These have been assisted from the reimbursable (repayment) funds which Congress has wisely appropriated during the past six or seven years.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS.

I have thus far referred chiefly to the material interests of the Oklahoma Indians, which in no sense means that less importance is attached to their educational status. No civilization can long endure unless the work of the schools is built into its foundation, and no better example of achieving the self-sustaining development of the Indians by means of education is found than in Oklahoma, where there have been evolved through many years those Government boarding and day schools for Indian children which have recently approached an ideal system with standards and practice comparable to those of the best schools elsewhere.

The educational facilities for the Five Civilized Tribes had their origin, and for some years their management, under the tribal system of government, which was unfortunate because too often selfish and political considerations prevented efficient instruction, economical methods, and material upkeep. Although there was Federal legislation as early as 1906 providing for taking over the control of these schools, it was not until 1910 that their entire management passed to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs. Since then they have come within the general plan of organization, superintendence, and course of study as applied

to other Government schools for the Indians, and to-day, under capable instructors and economical supervision, they rank with the best schools of like grade in our Service. No greater wealth has come to the Five Civilized Tribes than these schools have brought to their children, who are there taught the things most practical and valuable in real life.

Eastern Oklahoma is now quite generally well supplied with public schools to which, as a rule, Indian children are cordially admitted, and our efforts for some time have encouraged this attendance, for we have great faith in the public-school system as an effective agency for shaping the right beginnings of our democratic life. There is good statesmanship in the law which permits the use of Federal funds in payment of tuition for the attendance of children of nontaxed Indians in the public schools, and we employ this legal provision wherever practicable. I am glad to say that of the 20,000 children of these tribes who attend school nearly 17,000 are now in the public schools.

Outside of the Five Civilized Tribes and principally in western Oklahoma, schools are maintained under thorough organization on the Cheyenne and Arapaho, Kiowa, Osage, Pawnee, Seger, and Seneca Reservations, several schools on other reservations having been recently closed because of adequate public-school facilities in those localities. All schools in operation are well attended and their work is conducted under the complete and uniform course of study promulgated in December, 1915, which outlines and grades the academic work and prevocational and vocational courses from the first to the tenth grade for use in all Government Indian schools.

THE CHILOCCO INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL.

In the northern part of the State, just across the State line from Arkansas City, is situated at Chilocco, Okla., one of the finest nonreservation schools in the Service. This plant is ideally located in a magnificent farming country and has a large farm and pasture splendidly adapted to diversified agriculture. The plant is modern and properly equipped. Its climatic conditions and soil possibilities are similar to those where its students reside, who are principally from Oklahoma. Full vocational courses, including the tenth grade, are given in home economics for the girls, and for the boys in the mechanic arts and trades, but with special stress upon agriculture and stock raising. Large classes of bright, progressive students are graduated each year, and the attendance is usually beyond the normal capacity.

I have been much interested in this school and am convinced that the conditions there offer a great opportunity for the Indians of Oklahoma to have an educational institution the equal in all modern essentials of State agricultural colleges, and I am taking all the steps to have it so constituted. Its capacity should be increased to at least 800, which would necessitate considerable additional building. The best obtainable stock and equipment are being procured, and I hope soon to see here an institution of learning that will furnish ambitious Indian boys and girls practical and scientific training in farming and stock raising and in all the requirements of sanitary and cultured home making. Such a school should draw many students from other States who are able to pay the cost of this better education, and its value to the Indians at large, and particularly to the State of Oklahoma, would be more than can now be estimated.

Here I am pleased to say that President Cantwell, of the State Agricultural College at Stillwater, is giving to the Chilocco Indian School splendid cooperation by way of personal advice and now and then the brief detail of members of his faculty for like service.