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Smith, Stanley was a Creek Indian from Okemah, Oklahoma who came to Florida as a missionary to the Seminoles of Florida. He served as pastor of First Florida Seminole Indian Baptist Church, Dania. Smith and his wife, Nancy Smith were sent in 1943 by the Oklahoma Baptist Convention and the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board to minister to the Florida Seminoles.

—Herald Staff Photo

INDIAN MISSIONARIES sent by the Creek Indians of Oklahoma to tell the story of Christianity to the Seminoles of Florida are the Rev. Stanley Smith, left, and the Rev. Marcellus Williams, right. Mrs. Elsie M. Guinn, center, was sent by the home mission board of the Southern Baptist convention to help in the work. Headquarters are near Dania.

Indian-Missionaries Work With Seminoles

Seminoles who live in the Everglades west of Miami have a name for the two young Indians from Oklahoma. It's a long word in the Miccosukee tongue. It means "Nothing-to-talk-about-but-Jesus."

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Legislatu Faces 'Lo Last Wee

Much Work Lef On Jammed Cal

By United Press

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—lorida legislature that ded $12,000,000 in extra oves into its final we ith a lot of work still t at will probably mean nd probably evening ght up to the time of ent.

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but Jesus.

They say it disparagingly, but the missionaries don't mind. They were sent to Florida by the Indians of Oklahoma to tell the story of Christianity to the Seminoles.

Rev. Stanley Smith, 36, is a full-blooded Creek Indian from Okemah, Okla. He and his wife, Nancy, are in charge of the First Florida Seminole Indian Baptist church five miles west of Dania, near the government reservation.

VISITOR STUDIES PROGRESS

With them now is the Rev. Marcellus Williams, also a Creek Indian. He arrived two weeks ago to make a thorough study of the progress of the missionary work among the Seminoles.

"I will take back my report and present it to the Indians of Oklahoma, especially the young people, as a challenge," said Williams.

His eyes flashed as he spoke of the contrast between living conditions of Indians in Oklahoma and in Florida. They are relatives, he said, all springing from Muskogean stock.

GREAT REMOVAL RECALLED

"It goes back to the time of the Great Removal 110 years ago. Some rebelled from being moved to Oklahoma. Osceola led them to Florida. They were called Seminoles because that is a word in the Muskogean language meaning runaways, the separated or no-one-to-help them."

Since that time, Williams said, bitterness toward the white race has characterized the Seminoles. It has become tradition among them to shun the white man's civilization, including religion, education, customs and even modern clothes.

The Oklahoma Indian Baptist convention sent the Rev. Mr. Smith and his wife to Florida in November, 1943. Sent by the home mission board to help them is Mrs. Elsie M. Guinn, a graduate of the Moody Bible Institute and Philadelphia School of the Bible, who arrived in January, 1944.

96 CHURCH MEMBERS

The Creeks of Oklahoma, who accepted Christianity many years ago, have been sending missionaries to the Seminoles for 35 years. Several of them have been Indians.

"In 1920," says the Oklahoma record, "Rev. Martin Goat and Rev. Alfred Goat made a missionary tour down there baptizing the first four converts. Rev. Martin Goat baptized Jim Gopher and Mishi Tiger in St. Lucie river at Stuart, Fla., and Rev. Alfred Goat a week later baptized Mary Tiger and Adah Tiger at Indian Town before sunrise at their request. They were the mother and grandmother of Howard Tiger, first to enlist from his tribe."

The fiery Rev. Smith counts his church members at 96 of the 768 Seminoles in Florida according to the last census.

"Since Jan. 1," he said, "I have baptized 69 who live in the Big Cypress swamp. The Miccosukees are ruled by a council of four men. Two of these have been converted, including Josie Billy, who is now licensed to preach and is working in the Big Cypress."

TRANSLATING HYMNS

Another of Smtih's converts is Billy Osceola, identified as a great-grandson of the famous chief who warred against the United States.

"He wants to study for the ministry, and is already a deacon."

Smith is trying to translate a few hymns and part of the New Testament into the Miccosukee language. This is difficult, he explained, because the language has no alphabet. It is entirely a spoken language.

"But we will at least give them St. John's gospel," he declared, addressing Williams.

The men from Oklahoma can understand what a Seminole of the Miccosukee tribe is saying, in a general way, and vice versa, but they can't converse without an interpreter.

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Baptist Indian Ministers Say Seminoles Are Devout

By JOY REESE COLEMAN

To Jacksonville, from out of the dense, trackless swamps of the untouched Everglades, have journeyed two intense, dark-hued ministers to join the 750 church workers attending the Florida Baptist Convention which closes here tonight.

aglow with a desire to help their kinsmen . . . aglow with a fire kindled by the sympathies of the Creek people for their fellowmen left behind when the rest were transported to Oklahoma.

ARMORY LOSES GUNS

which closes here tonight.

They are the Rev. Willie King and the enthusiastic young Rev. Stanley Smith, both full-blooded Creek Indians who are devoting their entire time to work among the Seminoles in southern Florida.

Because white men who dealt with Indians of the five civilized tribes in Oklahoma, where both men were born and reared, could not spell or pronounce their tribal names, the ministers were given English names.

Smith, who was given his name "just because it sounded like a suitable name," frankly and laughingly admits that it's really much simpler than his honest-to-goodness name, Nokus Fixico. King likes his name, too, and its origin is not too complex. His father's name was "Micco," meaning king, or chief. His own first name was "Weele," hence the derivation Willie King.

Plump 71-year-old Willie King, who is one of the few converted men in the nation to enjoy the love and confidence of the suspicious Seminoles, lives with his wife in Okeechobee on the north side of the "Shining Big Sea Water" by the same name. No carpeted, reverence-inspiring church, no steepled spire have they; their's is the great outdoors, the thatched hut.

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King works all around the huge lake, talks to the people in their own language and cares for sick Indians in a small hospital room in his home.

In "old Pete," his ancient 1930 automobile which was only in June replaced by the Baptist women of Florida with a newer 1939 model, he has traveled for more than 11 years over thousands of miles of tangled underbrush, winding trails and hub-deep sand.

In all these years, only nine Indians, have, through him, definitely accepted the "Jesus way," but King's influence has permeated the whole tribe, both reservation and non-reservation. He has laid a firm foundation for introduction of new ideas and acceptance of white men.

Three in Congregation

Now he has been joined by vigorous Stanley Smith who with his comely wife lives at Dania where exists the only Seminole Indian Baptist church in Florida. These young people two years ago began their ministry with only three members.

"And even one of these died on me," said Smith today.

"It has been tough going. It is hard to gain the trust and confidence of the Seminoles."

Now, however, they have 44 members . . . the oldest a woman 114 years of age, a woman who was a girl of 14 during the Seminole Indian War . . . the youngest, a child of seven. One woman now awaiting baptism is 97 years old, he said proudly.

The fiery, cultured Indian is now "accepted" and has been elected to the Mekusukey tribe with the status of medicine man, and counselor.

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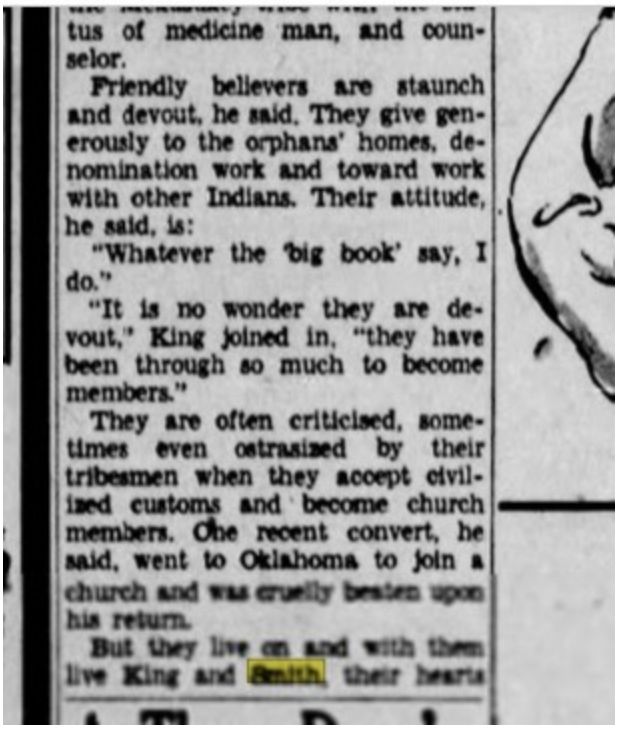

tus of medicine man, and counselor.

Friendly believers are staunch and devout, he said. They give generously to the orphans' homes, denomination work and toward work with other Indians. Their attitude, he said, is:

"Whatever the 'big book' say, I do."

"It is no wonder they are devout," King joined in, "they have been through so much to become members."

They are often criticised, sometimes even ostrasized by their tribesmen when they accept civilized customs and become church members. One recent convert, he said, went to Oklahoma to join a church and was cruelly beaten upon his return.

But they live on and with them live King and Smith, their hearts

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New Indian Church Is Seen As Move To Tribal Center

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The dedication service itself will start at 1:45 p.m. with Dr. J. B. Rounds. Oklahoma City, superintendent of Indian Mission work of the Southern Baptist church, delivering the sermon.

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livering the sermon.

The church will be dedicated in the name of two Christian Indians of the Seminoles who have died recently, Harry Tommie and Charles Osceola, Mr. Smith said.

The Sunday service will be the feature of a three-day series of services by the Seminoles, which will start today, Rev. Smith said. All of the services, which will include singing by the Indian choir, using the native rhythms, will be open to the public. Much of the service will be conducted in the Indian language.

Rev. Smith, who is a Muscogee, or Creek, Indian from Oklahoma, hopes to see an Indian center for the Seminoles, which will include schools, a hospital, handicraft shops, and other facilities, built on the 40-acre tract.

A great deal of progress has been made in the six years that he has been the minister at the church. He intends to make it his life work and is planning for the future.

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Growth Of Mission

When he became minister the mission had five acres, three members of the congregation and a few tumble-down buildings. Now it has 40 acres, all cleared, a number of new buildings, and 224 members of the congregation.

Many of the members of the congregation, 13 of them, in fact, live on the big Cypress reservation, 133 miles west of the Dania mission. They make the 266-mile trip to church once each month, the second Sunday of the month.

The forerunner of the present mission was established and supported by the Oklahoma Indians. The first mission was built, 41 years ago, 22 miles south of Jupiter, in a spot accessible only by ox cart.

Moved To Site

It was moved to its present site a number of years ago and has been in operation there since. It was supported by the Indians of the Muscogee and Seminole tribes of the Five Civilized Tribes of Oklahoma for a number of years.

Now; however, the mission is supported by the Southern Baptist church. The pastor and his workers, however, are Oklahoma Indians. The Indians of that state still do a great deal in the support of the mission.

The Seminoles of Florida are a portion of the original Seminole tribe. They split from their tribe more than 100 years ago when they refused to move from their homes in Alabama and Georgia to Oklahoma.

Resisted U. S.

They fled to the fastnesses of the Everglades and for years suc-

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Indian Church Moves Toward Tribal Center

(Continued From Page One)

cessfully resisted all efforts of the United States army to dislodge or subdue them.

In fact, the tribe has never signed a peace treaty with the United States. The army tired of the desultory war in the Everglades and finally gave up the idea of subduing the Seminoles.

The mission for years had to contend with a great deal of opposition from the Seminoles. Since education is not compulsory for members of the tribe and they are not required, by law, to attend school, the missionaries found themselves facin ga task of conversion and education.

Turn To Religion

However, over a long period this opposition has been overcome, and more and more of the Seminoles are turning to Christianity and to education. There is a problem of raising their economic level, too, Rev. Smith pointed out.

The Seminoles, unlike other tribes, have no land and no tribal funds. Some tribes received 160 acres of land for each member. Most of the other tribes have funds totaling about $18,000 for each member, on deposit with the government.

As a result these Indians have schools and hospitals, facilities which the Seminoles of Florida lack. They have a means of earning a living, the minister pointed out, while the Seminole must support himself by hunting, fishing, or by handicraft.

Plan Improvements

The missionary hopes to establish a handicraft center at the Dania mission, so that Seminoles may earn money, through the sale of their products, to support themselves.

He also hopes that a hospital, or at least a dispensary, may be established at the mission to provide medical care for the Indians. This medical care, which they do not have at the present, is one of the greatest needs of the people.

Living conditions for the Seminoles at the mission have been improved. Under the direction of Rev. Smith, sanitary facilities have been installed, including showers and several washing machines for clothing.

He is planning for the future of the mission and for the betterment of the Seminole Indians of Florida. Mr. Smith was converted at the age of eight and delivered his first sermon at the age of 13. Now, at 41, he has found his life's work.

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National Anthropological Archives

MS 4566 Papers of Stanley Smith, Baptist missionary among the Florida Seminole

Summary

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Languages:	Undetermined .
Physical Description:	190 Frames
Repository:	National Anthropological Archives

Administration

Existence and Location of Copies
Microfilm negative, 190 frames.

Using the Collection

Citation
Manuscript 4566, National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution

More Information

Local Numbers

NAA MS 4566

Local Note

Copied from originals borrowed from Mr Smith by W. C. Sturtevant, April, 1959.

Keywords

Keyword Terms	Keyword Types		
Seminole Indians	Cultural Context	Search Smithsonian Collections	Search ArchiveGrid
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