

**HARRIET NEWELL
MITCHELL
WRIGHT
1834-1894**



**START
OF A
FAMILY
DYNASTY**

The Wrights were one of the most influential families in Oklahoma. Allen Wright and Harriet Mitchell were the first generation of this Choctaw dynasty to settle in Indian Territory.

Harriet Newell Mitchell was born in August 1834 in Dayton, OH. She descended from Mayflower leader William Brewster. She was named for Harriet Newell, one of the first Missionaries to India. From a young age, she seemed to feel that foreign missions were her calling. Harriet had intended to go to India, but was sent by the Presbyterian Board of Missions to Choctaw Nation in Indian Territory. Her parents didn't want her to be a missionary, but in 1855, at age 21, she embarked on a six-week journey to begin her teaching assignment, knowing nothing of the people or the land, only that she was called to serve. Six weeks later, she arrived at Goodwater Female Seminary.

There she met Allen Kiliahote Wright, born in Attala County, MS in 1826. His mother died in June 1832 and the surviving family members left Mississippi in October 1833 and settled near Lukfata, McCurtain County in March 1834. Allen attended schools at Bok-tu-lo and Lukfata. In 1840, at age fourteen, he was taken in by Reverend Cyrus Kingsbury near Doaksville and attended a mission school at Pine Ridge. Here he shed his Choctaw birth name Kiliahote and took the name of Allen Wright, a noted Presbyterian missionary among the Choctaw.

Wright attended Choctaw tribal school Spencer Academy and then was selected by the Choctaw Council to attend college back east, attending Delaware College in Newark, DE (1848-50) and earning a Bachelor of Arts from Union College in Schenectady, NY (1850-52) and a Masters of Arts in Theology at Union Theological Seminary in New York City (1853-55), becoming the first Native American student from Indian Territory to do so.

When Allen returned home, he was probably the most highly educated full-blood Indian, well-versed in Choctaw, English, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. He was ordained as a minister, becoming the principal instructor at Armstrong Academy and was elected to the Choctaw General Council. In February 1857, Harriet and Allen were married. They departed for their new home at Mount Pleasant station.

Dr. Wright took over the Old Boggy Depot church in 1859. They built a residence there, which became a gathering place for family and visitors. Wright gained fame for suggesting the name Oklahoma, meaning 'red people' for the new territory during his role as lead negotiator of the Choctaw-Chickasaw Treaty of 1866. He also served as principal chief from 1866 to 1870.

Reverend Wright died in Boggy Depot in December 1885. After traveling to evangelize the Gospel, he contracted pneumonia after having to swim a river to continue his journey. He was buried in the Boggy Depot cemetery, near Cyrus Kingsbury. Shockingly, Allen Wright was not inducted into the Oklahoma Hall of Fame until 2019, after his daughter-in-law Ida Belle Wright (1937) and his granddaughter Muriel Hazel Wright (1940).

After his death, Harriet moved to Atoka so that the younger children could attend school and continue her Christian duties. Her friends ranged from the highly classed to plain folk. She passed away on Christmas night 1894 at age 60 of lung congestion, while attempting to walk about three blocks on a bitter cold night at attend a church meeting. Pilgrim Harriet Mitchell Wright married a Choctaw tribal leader, causing her parents to disown her. In a way, she became the first lady of a nation.