

**ANGIE
A
RUSSELL
1857-1941**



**MADELINE
BURWELL
CONKLING
1865-1937**



**INDUSTRIAL
SCHOOL
FOR GIRLS,
TECUMSEH**

In 1933 **Angie Russell** and **Madeline Conkling**, the first superintendents at the State Industrial School for Girls in Oklahoma City and later Tecumseh, were inducted into the Oklahoma Hall of Fame. Russell was the school founder in 1913 and Conkling was credited in raising the standard of the facility. The campus has gone through many transformations over the years. It has been known as Russell Industrial School, Oklahoma State Industrial School for Incurable Girls, State Industrial School for White Girls, Girls Town and Central Oklahoma Juvenile Treatment Center.

At various time, it has housed orphans, children in need of mental health treatment, and youthful offenders. This is the last stop in the juvenile justice continuum and the residents here have the highest levels of crime, risks, needs and are most likely to have poor outcomes. Through the state's investment, they are telling the girls that the state believes in them, their treatment and their future.

Angie Russell was born in New York in 1856 and came to Oklahoma in 1907. She founded the State Industrial School for Girls in Oklahoma City in 1913. The school officially opened in 1917. Russell used her own finances to provide equipment and maintain the school. She was a juvenile welfare leader for forty years. A prized speaker, she served as the Superintendent of Juveniles and was active in the growing issues of welfare across the state. Angie Russell died in 1941 at age 74.

Madeline Burwell was born in Linesville, Pennsylvania in 1865. She graduated from Meadville University in 1884. She taught school in McPherson, Kansas, where she married fellow teacher Roscoe Conkling in 1888. She was also a superintendent in Roseberry, Oregon.

In 1900 she came to Perry and then transferred to Oklahoma City as exchange manager for the Southwestern Bell Telephone Company. Suffering a nervous breakdown, she abandoned all business for six years. In 1913, she again entered the service of the telephone company, this time as exchange manager in Checotah. She moved to a like post in Wyoming in 1915 and served there until 1919.

In 1919, Governor Robert Williams appointed her superintendent of the State Industrial School for Girls in Oklahoma City. She moved the school to Tecumseh in 1921, and succeeded in removing the appearances of a correctional institution. She managed her school so successfully that it became nationally known and was rated higher in standards than similar institutions in sixteen states. Conkling employed no guards, just a number of supervisors and adopted the honor system for the girls.

The girls were taught the rules of self-government, good citizenship and rewarded for good conduct by a system of credits which operate toward early parole. Its system of Probation, Citizen, Honor, Sisterhood and Demotion groups was found to work with great success, giving opportunities for any inmate to prove worthy of trust when once freed into the general population. "Mother" Conkling, who had no children of her own, credited her success to the idea that "it was a prison school, it was run by love".

Conkling temporarily retired in 1931. The following year she became superintendent of the Oklahoma County Girls Home. Conkling, who died in 1937 at age 72, attained distinction for how she ran the facility. Before assuming the position, she had a broad range of experience in other fields, and brought this to bear in producing the results she accomplished.

"She was a woman of delightful personality, who attracted people by the force of her character and the intensity of her devotion to her calling. Kindly by nature, sympathetic to those in distress, she had well-earned the affectionate appellation of Mother."