

Rev. J. Leighton Read received a call from the Board of Domestic Missions, Reformed Church in America, to the **Colony, Oklahoma** mission among the Cheyenne and Arapaho Indians (1918-1924) (Note: some sources state, 1917-1923). The name given for the church was Columbia Memorial.

He served there for 6 years, and was then transferred to the mission at **Lawton, Oklahoma** (1925-1931) (Note: some documents date his tenure as 1923-1931), among the Comanche and Apache Indians.

Rev. Read grew up with Indians, and understood them. He and Mrs. Read brought with them an accumulation of valuable knowledge of Indians and their way of life, along with a deep religious fervor. He worked both at the Comanche Mission and the Apache Chapel.



Located in northeastern Washita County, Colony (sometimes misspelled as “Colonie”) is sixteen miles east and four miles north of Cordell on State Highway 54B. The community took its name from the Seger Colony, founded by John Seger. In 1886 Seger arrived in the area in company with many Arapahos. Later, Cheyennes joined the colony. By 1887 the number of Indians had increased to over five hundred. In 1892 the first brick buildings in Washita County were constructed for an Indian industrial school. Under Seger's supervision, the Indians made the brick and cut the stone for many of the school structures.

Prior to the land run to open the Cheyenne and Arapaho lands to non-Indian settlement, many participants started their race at Colony. Seger was in charge of the more than two thousand prospective settlers whom the U.S. government allowed to begin inside the boundaries because of the dangers of crossing Cobb Creek en masse. In 1895 the Dutch Reformed Church founded a mission at the colony.

## Colony, Oklahoma



(Source: Oklahoma Historical Society)



Two of the Buildings Vacated at Seger Indian Training School,  
Colony, Oklahoma.



(Source: the Oklahoma Historical Society)



**The Comanche Mission  
Church, erected 1905, at  
Colony, Oklahoma**



**From “Taking the Jesus Road,” by LeRoy Koopman, we learn the following about the Rev. Read’s mission work at Colony:** “Gradually the demographics of Colony changed. It was no longer the center of population for the Cheyenne and Araphoe tribes, and by 1921, only about twenty Indian families lived in or near the village. The only way the pastor could contact the Indian population was by visiting them in their camps, an arduous and slow process. Most of the confessions of faith, about 20 each year, were made by students of the government school.”

“By 1922, Read was holding meetings in the various homes some distance from Colony. Meanwhile, camp meetings continued...” (p.96).

“In 1923, Read reported that ‘because of the strength of the peyote cult, very few of the older Indians can be reached by the regular services of the church.’ Worship services, he said, are attended mainly by the children of the Indian school, government employees, and white people from the community. He reported 190 communicants, but of these, 117 were on the absent list. Sunday School enrollment, he reported, was 180. In the fall of that year, ***after six years in Colony, Read left for the Comanche Indian mission in Lawton, Oklahoma, where he was to stay for eight years.***” (pp. 96-97).

The Colony mission was later formally reorganized by the Presbyterian Church with the name, Columbian Memorial Presbyterian Church, which is still there.



THE COLONY CHURCH AND WINTER CAMP

**Again, from LeRoy Koopman's "Taking the Jesus Road,"(p.177), we learn that Rev. Read's time in Lawton, Oklahoma, was a time of growth.** "With the eight-year pastorate of the Reverend John Leighton Read and his wife, Betty Lou, another era in the life of the Comanche Reformed Church began. Read, born in 1879, had originally come out of the Southern Presbyterian Church, graduated from Austin Theological Seminary, and served several Presbyterian churches in Arkansas before coming to the Colony mission in 1917, where he stayed for six years."

"Read began his work in Lawton in September of 1923, and a few months later he announced what he considered a minor victory in the form of the annual Thanksgiving dinner in which turkey was served:

"An Indian feast without "wohaw" is an almost unheard of thing, but there was no beef to be seen...All this is mute evidence that the Indian is taking up with the white man's ways more and more." (John J. Leighton Read, "Thanksgiving at the Comanche Mission," Christian Intelligencer and Mission Field, Dec. 10, 1924, p 793).

"The Thanksgiving dining schedule was an interesting one: non-Christians were admitted first, then visiting Christians, and, last of all, church members. The meal was served after the worship service, but attendance at worship was not a prerequisite for the meal."



“Under Read, the ministry continued at the government Indian school at Fort Sill. This included teaching Sunday School, preaching or teaching on alternate Sunday evenings conducting YMCA and YWCA meetings during the week, and leading Bible classes for catechumens. Boys and girls were required to take three months of instruction before making confession of faith. Read reported that, on Easter Sunday of 1924, “all of the 165 students of the Government School attended the morning service in a boy and, with other visitors, filled the house.”

(LeRoy Koopman, “Taking the Jesus Road,” p. 178 and Mrs. Leighton Read, “Resurrection and Reclamation at Comanche Mission,” *Christian Intelligencer and Mission Field*, May 7, 1924, p. 291).



Rev. Read instituted “little camp meetings” some distance from the main mission station, on the property of church members. One meeting in June of 1925, attracted over 100 people, and 20 people came forward mostly for recommitment. These 1 and 2 day camp meetings were help enthusiastically for several years, with families issuing an invitation and the Church giving approval. (Source: LeRoy Koopman, “Taking the Jesus Road,” p. 179).





Comanche Indian Camp Meeting, near Lawton, Oklahoma





**Vacation Bible School, Comanche Indian Mission, about 1927 or 1928: Rev. and Mrs. Read on back row; standing in front of Mrs. Katharine W. Read, (who is wearing glasses), is Betty Lou Read, and in front of her is Eleanor Read. Katharine Anne Read stands to the right/front of Rev. J. Leighton Read with her long hair; John Read, Jr., tongue out, lower left; Mary Read in plaid blouse, center.**



**A very important enterprise undertaken by Rev. Read, was the holding of Saturday afternoon street meetings, in a part of Lawton frequented by Indians of several tribes, who came to buy at the stores. Many attended the meetings. A small pump organ, played by Mrs. Read, supplied the music. Rev. and Mrs. Read, Miss Dubbink, Mr. Robert Chaat, and Mr. White Parker (Son of Quanah Parker) took part. Other Indians helped. The Parkers were active in the 1920's and 1930's Saturday afternoon street meetings In Lawton, Oklahoma, which was led by Rev. J. Leighton Read.**

**White Parker (1887–1956) was a son of Mah-Cheeta-Wookey and Quanah Parker, Chief of the Comanches. He married Laura E. Clark (1890-1962), a daughter of Rev. and Mrs. M.A. Clark, a former Methodist missionary to the Comanches. They had at least three children: Patty Bertha, Cynthia Ann Joy, and Milton Quanah (1914-1930).**



**White Parker (Top Row, on the end, Right)  
Quanah Parker, his father (Top row, 4<sup>th</sup>  
from Right)**

**White Parker felt called to do missionary work among the Comanche people. He studied for this ministry at Cook Bible School in Phoenix, Arizona. He joined the Methodist Conference, because the Reformed Church had no opening for him at that time, and performed his mission work under their supervision.**

**Parker had a varied religious background. His father, Comanche Chief Quanah Parker, was a member of the native American Church, and was, unfortunately, involved in a religious practice involving the Peyote plant, which produced a drug-induced trance.**

**The Parker family brought the first non-Catholic church to the state of Texas. He received his education at a Presbyterian/Reformed institution, but affiliated with the Methodists when no Reformed missionary appointment was available.**

**White Parker and his wife are buried in the Highland Cemetery, Lawton, Comanche County, Oklahoma.**



SATURDAY AFTERNOON STREET MEETING, LAWTON

**Rev. and Mrs. J. Leighton Read are seen here leading an evangelistic street meeting with Indians at Lawton, Oklahoma. Mrs. Read played a pump organ, which can be seen directly behind the little Indian girl in the white dress, in the center of the picture. Rev. Read can be seen on the right front side of the picture, in suit and tie.**

**In his younger days, White Parker and his sister, Wanada, (the son and daughter of the great Comanche leader Quanah Parker,) played starring roles in a rare, silent film, “The Daughter of Dawn,” seen here in this still photo from the film. . (Source: Oklahoma Historical Society).**







**White Parker is seen as first Indian, on the Left side.**

