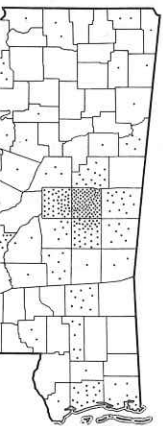


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Hopes for the Future

In recent years, some improvements have been completed by the Choctaws themselves and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. In 1945 tribal government was re-established. Later, the civil rights struggle, aimed at improving relations between blacks and whites, helped the Choctaws as well. Federal programs have been established under the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) and other agencies. College enrollment by Mississippi Choctaws is growing. Under the new self-determination policies of the federal government, tribal leaders are making active plans for a better future.

Emmett York, Tribal Chairman

Much of the Choctaws' struggle in recent years and much of the progress can be seen in the life of Emmett York. He was born in the Choctaw community of Standing Pine in 1903, during the final Choctaw removal. His father had gone to Oklahoma the year before to get his land allotment, leaving his family in Mississippi. For several years he commuted back and forth, but finally he lost the allotment because he didn't live on it continuously. However, he was able to buy 100 acres in Leake County, and unlike many Choctaws, who had to work as sharecroppers, he became a small farmer on his own land.

In 1918, when the Bureau of Indian Affairs opened its Choctaw Agency in Mississippi, several Choctaw children were sent to school in Oklahoma. Emmett was among them. He was then fifteen years old, and his only schooling had been a few months of "mission school." In about seven years he graduated from the ten-grade Oklahoma school and went to Nebraska to work.

He came back to Mississippi as a carpenter, working for the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Later he followed his mother and brother into tribal office, serving on the tribal council for 22 years. He helped to get Choctaw Central High School built in 1964, after years of delay. Now Mississippi Choctaw students no longer had to go to Oklahoma for high school. At about the same time, York helped re-establish a tribal court system, lacking in Mississippi since 1829.

York realized that Indians had to unite to solve their own problems, and he helped establish the United Southeastern Tribes, an organization of Cherokees, Choctaws, Miccosukees, and Seminoles. At the time of his death in 1971, he was its chairman.
