



## THE COVER

*Loyal Au Mort* translates to *Faithful Unto Death*. These words adorn the personal bookplate of J. B. Milam as well as describing his philosophy and dedication toward his Cherokee Nation.

Jesse Bartley Milam (1884–1949), Cherokee Roll #24953, was born near Italy, Texas, of Sarah Ellen Couch Milam, a descendant of the Cherokee Adair family and a member of the Long Hair Clan, and William Guinn Milam. In 1887 the family returned to the Cherokee Nation near what is now Chelsea, Oklahoma. There J. B. Milam attended grammar school and went on to the Cherokee National Male Seminary in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, and, in 1901–02, to a course of study at the Metropolitan Business College in Dallas. After returning from college, he resumed work in his father's hardware store in Chelsea and, at the same time, entered the oil and gas business. With his brother-in-law he formed the Phillips and Milam Oil Company, which by the early 1930s

Bookplate courtesy of McFarlin Library, Dept. of Special Collections, The University of Tulsa

had an interest in more than one thousand producing wells. In 1904 he also married Elizabeth Peach McSpadden, Cherokee Roll #12943, and later produced two daughters and one son.

Milam was actively involved in the banking business, and in 1915 became president of the Bank of Chelsea, the first bank in the Cherokee Nation. He was also one of the founders and the first president of the Rogers County Bank in Claremore, Oklahoma, the hometown of another Oklahoma favorite son and fellow Cherokee, Will Rogers.

Perhaps Milam's most enduring legacy was as Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation from 1941 to 1949. In 1907 the dissolution of the Cherokee government in Indian Territory was coincident with the formation of the state of Oklahoma. After the death of the incumbent Cherokee Chief W. C. Rogers in 1917, the U.S. government would from time to time appoint a principal chief for a day or so to sign official Cherokee documents. In 1941 President Franklin D. Roosevelt appointed Milam as Principal Chief of the Cherokees for a one-year term. Milam set about to obtain better living conditions for the Cherokees, better schools, outlets for their arts and crafts, roads into remote communities, and more realistic appraisals of land belonging to Cherokee families.

As Chief, Milam had two main goals for the Cherokees: to reconstruct the tribal government and to reactivate tribal claims against the U.S. government. Another of Milam's goals was identification and preservation of items that were historically significant to the tribe. In 1942 he worked with representatives of the Carnegie Library in Tahlequah, the University of Oklahoma, and Northeastern State College in Tahlequah to recover historical items from these three institutions and place them in the Oklahoma Historical Society in Oklahoma City.

J. B. Milam also had a life-long interest in Cherokee history. In the 1920s Milam underwrote the expenses of having Emmet Starr, the author of several books on the Cherokee including the landmark *Early History of the Cherokees* (Claremore, Okla.: published by the author, 1917), carry out extensive research on the life of Sequoyah, including financing an expedition into Mexico to find Sequoyah's burial place. In the late 1930s, he began book collecting on the advice of his physicians to help control his high blood pressure. Even during his service as Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation, book collecting held a predominant interest for him.

In the obituary he wrote for the autumn 1949 *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, historian Grant Foreman noted that Milam had left "one of the most extensive and best selected libraries in the state." The obituary in the *Tulsa World* called the collection "one of the state's greatest private libraries with many rare books on the Cherokee tribe in particular." The library focuses on Oklahoma, the Southwestern United States, and

Cherokee Indian history. It contains more than 1,600 items, along with many photographs and hundreds of newspaper clippings.

Milam maintained author, title, and subject card catalogues, acquiring printed Library of Congress cards where available and producing type-written cards when they were not. Fragments of correspondence and occasional notes and marks in some books make it clear that he was in contact with booksellers in Oklahoma, Kansas City, St. Louis, Chicago, and elsewhere, buying from lists and catalogues and visiting bookshops whenever and wherever he traveled. He also maintained a fascinating accessions book with pages dated between 4 April and 21 July 1945, on which are recorded, apparently in the order acquired, 1,621 items. Milam was also in the habit of underlining in red pencil any occurrence of the word "Cherokee" and passages that related specifically to Cherokee history.

Among Milam's books and papers are an 1851 set of Schoolcraft's *History of the Indian Tribes of the United States* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo & Company, 1851-57), the second edition of the McKenney & Hall folios, minutes of the Cherokee government (1880-90) in longhand, and an extensive run of the books of his friend, the historian Grant Foreman of Muskogee.

Important government documents are part of Milam's library as well. Document 512 of the 23rd Congress gives notice from the U.S. Government to the Indian tribes to remove themselves from Georgia and Tennessee to the West; an original copy is in the library. A copy of the Final Rolls of the Five Civilized Tribes (the Dawes Commission Rolls) is there with the allotment maps of the old Cherokee Nation as the state of Oklahoma was created.

Milam's bookplate, which appears in virtually all volumes of his library, is 6.5 by 9 cm., with black letters on a silver background. *Ex Libris* and *J. B. Milam* appear prominently above and below the *Arms of Adairs*, which was virtually certain to have been borrowed from the crest appearing in *Adair: History and Genealogy* (Los Angeles: J. B. Adair, 1924). As a descendant of the Cherokee Adairs, J. B. Milam chose the heraldic symbolism of his ancestors to occupy the prominent position in the bookplate. Above the crest appears the Adair's motto *Loyal Unto Death*, and below the words *Manibus, Victoria, Dextris*. Milam was loyal unto his Cherokees until his death in 1949.

His eldest daughter, Mildred Milam Viles, added a room to her home to house her father's collection. In 1971 she and her two siblings made an agreement which called for donation rather than sale of the library following her death. She set out criteria for selection of a repository by a committee comprised of three first cousins, representing each of Milam's children. Mildred Viles died in 1987. Adhering to the criteria set forth,

the committee subsequently made inquiries of museums, universities, and three individuals as to their interest in the collection and their abilities to store and display the collection. In November 1989 the committee selected the University of Tulsa. Included in the gift were Milam's papers and correspondence from the eight-year period when he served as the Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation (1941–1949).

A great portion of the Milam Library filled in the gaps of TU's existing Native American collection, and a smaller portion represented duplicates which the library already held. During negotiations between McFarlin Library and the Milam family, it was determined that duplicate volumes would be identified for eventual sale and the resulting income would be used to establish an endowment for the collection. If the endowment income were sufficient, it would be used as well to help underwrite the tuition of history students, preference being given to students of Cherokee descent.

Founded in 1884, the University of Tulsa celebrated its centennial anniversary in 1984. The roots of the university lie in evangelistic and educational efforts among the Indians of the Presbyterian Board of Home Missions, which resulted in, among other things, the Presbyterian School for Indian Girls in Muskogee, the capitol of the Creek Nation. In 1894 the school became Henry Kendall College; and by 1900 Kendall College had the largest enrollment of any college in the territory that in 1907 would become the state of Oklahoma. Henry Kendall College moved to Tulsa in 1907, and in 1920 was rechartered as the University of Tulsa.

Alice Mary Robertson (1854–1931) bequeathed to the University of Tulsa her substantial private library, including the translation work of her parents, William Schenk Robertson (1820–1881) and Ann Eliza Worcester Robertson (1826–1905), who were interpreters, prolific translators, and missionaries to the Creeks. Her grandfather, Samuel Austin Worcester (1798–1859), was a missionary and translator among the Cherokees from 1825 until his death. Although he was respected by the Cherokees and operated the only printing press in their language, it was against Georgia law for a white to reside in Cherokee territory, and in 1831 he was arrested. His case led to Chief Justice John Marshall's enduring opinion in *Worcester vs. Georgia* reaffirming the freedom of the press. Worcester and his family followed the Cherokee and Creek to Indian Territory, where Worcester's Park Hill press became the first source of printed materials in Indian Territory.

Alice Mary Robertson's library also included her own and her family's papers, which date back to Samuel Worcester's 1824 journal, and several hundred letters exchanged between members of the Worcester and Robertson families before the Civil War. This contribution was the

foundation of the Cherokee and Native American collection. Other major contributions to this collection were made by John W. Shleppay, who bequeathed a remarkable collection of more than six thousand items, which he appears to have begun assembling before 1920 as a result of his exposure to native cultures as a Boy Scout. Shleppay acquired anything Cherokee which came his way, including James Adair's *The History of the American Indian* (London, 1755); James W. Mahoney's *The Cherokee Physician, or Indian Guide to Health, as given by Richard Foreman, a Cherokee Doctor* (Chattanooga, 1846); minutes, in Cherokee, for the KeetooWah Society, 1859–1870; and even the Cherokee syllabary (list of syllables) in phototype, apparently part of a project to produce a Cherokee dictionary, never published, but toward which he assembled a great deal of material.

McFarlin Library at the University of Tulsa has other important collections, including the Walt Whitman collection, considered one of the six most complete Whitman archives in the country. McFarlin also has an impressive collection supporting TU's programs in geology and petroleum engineering, and the library established a collection of petroleum exploration and production materials that continue to command international attention. Members of the university's Modern Letters program were instrumental in the acquisition of several collections, including Cyril Connolly's library. Founded at TU in 1962, the *James Joyce Quarterly* has been the impetus for a distinguished collection of materials on the famous Irish modernist. The Léon collection includes a set of proof sheets for Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*.

The donation of the J. B. Milam Library in 1989 has been an invaluable addition to the Special Collections of McFarlin Library. The agreement with the Milam heirs specified that the library would mount an exhibition and publish a catalogue of the collection. Several hundred copies of *The J. B. Milam Library: A Short-Title Catalog* (Tulsa, Okla.: McFarlin Library, The University of Tulsa, 1993) are still available for those interested in Cherokee and Native American scholarship. A guide to the J. B. Milam Library of Cherokee History as well as guides to all of the special collections at the University of Tulsa McFarlin Library are available.

In accordance with the wishes of Mildred Milam Viles and her two siblings, the grantors, their heirs, or qualified researchers will be granted "the specific right to have access to [the Jesse Bartley Milam Library] at all regular business hours."

*Jerrie Hall, Tulsa, Oklahoma*

*Philip Viles Jr., Tulsa, Oklahoma*

*Sidney F. Huttner, Curator, Special Collections, The University of Tulsa*