New Echota Birthplace of the American Indian Press

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, HAROLD L. ICKES, *Secretary*

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, NEWTON B. DRURY, *Director*

SEQUOYAH (From a pencil drawing by Samuel O. Smart based on reproductions of the original portrait).

New Echota
Birthplace of the American Indian Press*

By Hugh R. Awtrey, Associate Recreational Planner, National Park Service.

NEW Echota Marker National Memorial is one of the smallest and most obscure of the 162 areas administered by the National Park Service. Few travelers turn aside from the Dixie Highway (U. S. Route No. 41) onto the rural road that leads from the present town of Calhoun to a pastoral scene in the north Georgia hills where a modest stone chronicles briefly the rise and fall of a nation. The story seldom is told, yet merits constant and eloquent repetition; for it is the recital of an unparalleled human achievement. It is the record of a people raised in a scant decade, by its own intellectual bootstraps, from unlettered savagery to the refined estate of a government by published code—and a literature by the printed word. It is the moving but tragic history of the Cherokee Indians.

American ethnologists, political economists, social and religious historians, and students in numerous allied fields may find at this abandoned eastern capital of the Cherokees the subjects for fruitful investigation into many questions of aboriginal culture. The present discussion is intended merely to suggest some of the little-trod trails of inquiry which might lead to profitable discoveries in the realm of Indian journalism, a surprisingly prolific institution which had its origins 112 years ago at New Echota before it spread westward and gave the first periodical press to at least two of the young States beyond the Mississippi.[1]

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* From *The Regional Review* (National Park Service, Region One, Richmond, Va.), Vol. IV, No. 3, March 1940, pp. 24–35.

New Echota's unique page in the history of world journalism is an incidental gift of Sequoyah, that incredible genius whose career still awaits a comprehensive biography which overreaches academic quibble. Long recognized as "America's Cadmus," that untutored linguist, who spoke no word of English or any other "civilized" tongue, endowed his fellow tribesmen with a written language which offered to the eye an easy and faithful transcript of their ancient speech.

Strange to tell, Sequoyah, hero of his nation, beneficiary of the only literary pension ever granted by the United States Government, recipient of a medal from Congress, commemoratee in Statuary Hall at the National Capitol, official emissary in Washington, veteran of the War of 1812, subject of an oil portrait by a leading painter of the day, drunkard turned prohibitionist, artisan who developed silvercraft to the highest point attained by North American Indians, inspiration for the name of a famous giant tree, and, above all, inventor of a remarkably efficient system of language signs, remains today, a century after his death, something of a man of mystery.[2]

This fact becomes all the more astounding when it is considered that many inquiring visitors, including men of literary reputation, interviewed Sequoyah in his later years. Nevertheless, his paternity, the time and place of his birth, and even the details of his death are unproved questions which have tantalized numerous researchers. One of them,[3] after a cautious review of the evidence, believes that "it may be enough to say that Sequoyah was born of a Cherokee mother, somewhere in the lower Appalachian region, between the years 1755 and 1775."

Fortunately for those lay readers who are not disagreeably insistent upon microscopic substantiation of pleasantly plausible theories, most students of the Sequoyan saga concede, with varying degrees of reservation, that the gifted Indian was born about 1760 at Fort Loudon, near the original Echota in east Tennessee, the son of a white man.[4] The somewhat uninspiring etymologi-

cal thesis has been advanced that the hero's name is derived from *Sikwa,* suggesting "pig pen." [5] Another explanation, which perhaps could not withstand the dissolving acids of philological scrutiny, is that the Indian mother, forsaken by her itinerant spouse before the arrival of their child, chose the name *Sequoia,* meaning "he guessed it." [6] Happily, such discussions are but academic bypaths which stem from the high road of achievement blazed by the man himself.

Divested of split-hair carpisms, the essential story starts with Sequoyah's recognition of the superior power that written speech, "talk on paper," conferred upon the men who understood it, in contradistinction to those who could transmit their ideas only by mouth. He began in 1809 to devise a system of symbols for words and ideas which developed gradually into an elaborate, laborious, and inflexible pictography similar in basic principle to Chinese. Aware of his error, he made a new start; and there was his stroke of genius. He noted carefully every sound in the Cherokee language and designated each by an arbitrary character.[7] After a decade of experimentation, while enduring patiently the jeers of relatives and friends, he perfected a system of 85 fundamental symbols, plus one recurrent prefix, and evolved, not precisely an alphabet, but a syllabary—a phonetic transcription of the entire Cherokee vocabulary with its bewildering 9 modes, 15 tenses, and 3 numbers (singular, dual, and plural).

The prime significance of Sequoyah's invention, however, was not his own mastery of a complex lingual problem. It was the amazing facility with which others could learn the system. A considerable number of the Cherokee Indians, some of them cultured and wealthy, commanded polished English, and a few perhaps were scornful of the syllabary. The unschooled tribesmen, however, found it a linguistic open sesame which unfolded magnificent new vistas of knowledge and vicarious experience. Scoffers were quieted by a successful public demonstration of the system in 1821, and thousands of Indians were conversant with

it by the following year.[8] It was adopted officially in 1825 by the general council of the Cherokee Nation.[9]

Stirrings of powerful new intellectual interests among the Indians soon were observed by workers at Brainerd Mission, an institution near the present city of Chattanooga, which had been established in 1817 by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.[10] *The Missionary Herald* of February 1826, reported:

> A form of alphabetical writing, invented by a Cherokee named George Guess, who does not speak English, and was never taught to read English books, is attracting great notice among the people generally. The interest in this matter has been increasing for the last 2 years; till, at length, young Cherokees travel a great distance to be instructed. . . . In 3 days they are able to commence letter writing, and return home to their native villages prepared to teach others. . . . Probably at least 20, perhaps 50, times as many would read a book printed with Guyst's character, as would read one printed with the English alphabet.[11]

Dr. Samuel A. Worcester, a distinguished New England missionary who lived among the Cherokees for 34 years and served for a time as New Echota's postmaster, seized upon the Seyuoyan syllabary as a potent instrument for the diffusion of religious literature. He urged the immediate establishment of a press which would disseminate, by the new-found system, the message that he had sought to convey through the clumsy device of interpreted sermons and lectures. The Board of Commissioners had received an urgent plea as early as September 1825:

> The Cherokees have for some time been very desirous to have a press of their own, that a newspaper may be published in their own language. . . . Already the four Gospels are translated and fairly copied; and if types and a press were ready, they could be immediately revised and printed and read.[12]

The Missionary Herald of December 1827,[13] contains several items of superlative significance in Cherokee history. One is the eleven-line reproduction (see illustration on p. 7) of Dr. Worcester's translation of the first five verses of Genesis—the initial

CHEROKEE ALPHABET.

CHARACTERS AS ARRANGED BY THE INVENTOR.

Ꭰ Ꭱ Ꭳ Ꭴ Ꭵ Ꭶ Ꭷ Ꭸ Ꭹ Ꭺ Ꭻ Ꭼ Ꭽ Ꭾ Ꭿ ᎀ ᎁ ᎂ ᎃ ᎄ ᎅ ᎆ ᎇ ᎈ ᎉ ᎊ ᎋ ᎌ ᎍ ᎎ ᎏ ᎐ ᎑ ᎒ ᎓ ᎔ ᎕ ᎖ ᎗ ᎘ ᎙ ᎚ ᎛ ᎜ ᎝ ᎞ ᎟ Ꭰ Ꭱ Ꭲ Ꭳ Ꭴ Ꭵ Ꭶ Ꭷ Ꭸ Ꭹ Ꭺ Ꭻ Ꭼ Ꭽ Ꭾ Ꭿ Ꮀ Ꮁ Ꮂ Ꮃ Ꮄ Ꮅ Ꮆ Ꮇ Ꮈ Ꮉ Ꮊ Ꮋ Ꮌ Ꮍ Ꮎ Ꮏ Ꮀ Ꮁ Ꮂ Ꮃ Ꮄ Ꮅ Ꮆ Ꮇ Ꮈ Ꮉ Ꮊ Ꮋ Ꮌ Ꮍ Ꮎ Ꮏ Ꮐ Ꮑ Ꮒ Ꮓ Ꮔ Ꮕ Ꮖ Ꮗ Ꮘ Ꮙ Ꮚ Ꮛ Ꮜ Ꮝ Ꮞ Ꮟ Ꮠ Ꮡ Ꮢ Ꮣ Ꮤ Ꮥ Ꮦ Ꮧ Ꮨ Ꮩ Ꮪ Ꮫ Ꮬ Ꮭ Ꮮ Ꮯ Ꮰ Ꮱ Ꮲ Ꮳ Ꮴ Ꮵ

CHARACTERS SYSTEMATICALLY ARRANGED WITH THE SOUNDS.

Ꭰ a	Ꭱ Ꮕ	Ꭲ i	Ꭳ o	Ꭴ u	Ꭵ v
Ꭶ ga Ꭷ ka	Ꭸ ge	Ꭹ gi	Ꭺ go	Ꭻ gu	Ꭼ gv
Ꭽ ha	Ꭾ he	Ꭿ hi	ᎀ ho	ᎁ hu	ᎂ hv
ᎃ la	ᎄ le	ᎅ li	ᎆ lo	ᎇ lu	ᎈ lv
ᎉ ma	ᎊ me	ᎋ mi	ᎌ mo	ᎍ mu	
ᎎ na Ꮣ hna Ꮤ nah	Ꮟ ne	Ꮠ ni	Ꮡ no	Ꮢ nu	Ꮣ nv
Ꮤ qua	Ꮥ que	Ꮦ qui	Ꮧ quo	Ꮨ quu	Ꮩ quv
Ꮪ sa	Ꮫ se	Ꮬ si	Ꮭ so	Ꮮ su	Ꮯ sv
Ꮰ da Ꮱ ta	Ꮲ de Ꮳ te	Ꮴ di Ꮵ tih	Ꮶ do	Ꮷ du	Ꮸ dv
Ꮹ dla Ꮺ tla	Ꮻ tle	Ꮼ tli	Ꮽ tlo	Ꮾ tlu	Ꮿ tlv
Ᏸ tsa	Ᏹ tse	Ᏺ tsi	Ᏻ tso	Ᏼ tsu	Ᏽ tsv
᏶ wa	᏷ we	Ᏸ wi	Ᏹ wo	Ᏺ wu	Ᏻ wv
Ᏼ ya	Ᏽ ye	᏾ yi	᏿ yo	᐀ yu	ᐁ yv

SOUNDS REPRESENTED BY VOWELS.

a as *a* in *father*, or short as *a* in *rival*.
e as *a* in *hate*, or short as *e* in *met*,
i as *i* in *pique*, or short as *i* in *pit*,
o as *aw* in *law*, or short as *o* in *not*,
u as *oo* in *fool*, or short as *u* in *pull*,
v as *u* in *but* nasalized.

CONSONANT SOUNDS.

g nearly as in English, but approaching to k. *d* nearly as in English, but approaching to t. h, k, l, m, n, q, s, t, w, y, as in English.

Syllables beginning with *g*, except *ᏚᏬ*, have sometimes the power of k; *ᏗᏬ*, *ᏚᏬ*, *ᏩᏬ*, are sometimes sounded to, tu, tv; and syllables written with tl, except *ᏩᏬ*, sometimes vary to dl.

use, in printed form, of Sequoyah's phonetic symbols. Another is the announcement that a font of Cherokee type had been cast in Boston and "an iron press of improved construction" purchased. Reflecting the missionary group's interest in the venture, the note continues:

> A Prospectus has also been issued for a newspaper, entitled the *Cherokee Phoenix,* to be printed partly in Cherokee and partly in English. . . . All this had been done by order of the Cherokee Government, and at their expense. . . .[14]
>
> Among the Cherokees, then, we are to see the first printing press ever owned and employed by any nation of the Aborigines of this Continent, the first effort at writing and printing in characters of their own; the first newspaper, and the first book printed among themselves; the first editor; and, the first well-organized system for securing a general diffusion of knowledge among the people. Among the Cherokees, also, we see established the first regularly elective government, with the legislative, judicial, and elective branches distinct; with the safeguards of a written Constitution and a trial by jury. . . .

The Cherokee press and type were shipped by water from Boston in November 1827. They arrived at Augusta, Ga., via Savannah, and finally reached New Echota in January 1828, after an overland trip by wagon. Isaac H. Harris and John F. Wheeler, two printers who had waited at the Cherokee capital since December 23, 1827, greeted the equipment with professional enthusiasm. Wheeler, who went to Arkansas in 1834 and became a pioneer typographer in the new country of the West, designed the first Cherokee type case, probably while at New Echota, but never received a patent for it.[15] He later recalled the arrival of the printing materials in north Georgia:

> The Press, a small royal size, was like none I ever saw before or since. It was cast iron, with spiral springs to hold up the plates, at that time a new invention. We had to use balls of deerskin stuffed with wool for inking, as it was before the invention of the composition roller. . . . John Candy, a native half-breed . . . could speak the Cherokee language, and was of great help to me in giving me the words where they were not plainly written.[16]

The absence of newsprint caused a delay in the publication of Volume I, No. 1, of *Tsalagi-twi-le-hi-sani-hi*, the *Cherokee Phoenix.* A supply finally was obtained from Tennessee and, on February 21, 1828, there appeared the inaugural issue of the father of America's aboriginal newspapers. It was a journal of four five-columned pages measuring 21 by 14 inches. The vignette included a representation of the fabulous phoenix, the Egyptian bird which lived for 500 years, was consumed by a cleansing fire, and arose from its own ashes in all its youthful freshness. That first issue announced that the weekly *Phoenix* could be procured for $2.50 a year paid in advance, or $3.50 paid at the end of the year. Rates were reduced to $2 and $2.50 for non-English readers. Altogether, the paper justified the 1827 prospectus, already mentioned, which had said that it would contain:

1 ᏗᏓᎴᏂᏍᎬᎢ ᎤᏁᎳᏅᎯ ᎤᏁᎳᏜᎢ ᎦᎸᎶᎢ ᎡᎶᎯᏃ.
2 ᎡᎶᎯᏃ ᏂᏓᏤᎸᎾ ᎠᎴ ᎤᏍᏆᏔᏅᏒ ᎨᏎᎢ, ᎤᎨᏴᎩᏃ ᎠᎭᏑᎩ ᎦᏍᎢ ᎤᏕᏢᏃᏅᎯ ᎨᏎᎢ; ᎤᏁᎳᏅᎯᏃ ᎤᏓᏅᏁ ᎠᎹᏱ ᎦᏍ ᎦᏃᎯᎵᏙᎢ.
3 ᎤᏁᎳᏅᎯᏃ, ᎢᎦ ᎣᎦᏛᎩ, ᎤᏁᏁᎢ, ᎢᎦ ᎢᎬᏁᎢᎢ.
4 ᎠᎴ ᎤᏁᎳᏅᎯ ᎤᎪᎲᏎ ᎣᏏ ᎢᎦ ᎨᏎᎢ. ᎤᏁᎳᏅᎯᏃ ᏕᎤᎳᏅᏁ ᎢᎦ ᎤᎵᏏᎩᏃ.
5 ᎤᏁᎳᏅᎯᏃ ᎢᎦᎦᏛ ᎢᏳ ᏚᏬᎡᎢ; ᎤᎵᏏᎩᏃ ᎡᏃᏯ ᏚᏬᎡᎢ.

When the first five verses of the Book of Genesis appeared in this translated form in *The Missionary Herald* of December 1827, it marked the first composition printed in the Sequoyan syllabary.

(1) The laws and published documents of the Nation.
(2) Accounts of the manners and customs of the Cherokees, and their progress in education, religion, and the arts of civilized life, with such notices of other Indian tribes as our limited means of information will allow.
(3) The principal interesting news of the day.
(4) Miscellaneous articles, calculated to promote literature, civilization, and religion among the Cherokees.[17]

Here an admirable and tragic character appears on the journalistic stage of the American Indians. He is Elias Boudinott, known also as Kub-le-ga-nah (and other spellings), meaning "The

Buck," a brilliant young part-breed who had been singled out at Brainerd Mission and sent to a higher church school at Cornwall, Conn. Among his scholarly achievements at an early age was the distinction of having calculated a solar eclipse, "very neatly projected and the results stated in the usual form."[18] Boudinott, whose signature bore two "t's," although he had adopted the name of Elias Boudinot, Governor of New Jersey and President of the American Bible Society,[19] created something of a social ferment when he married Harriet Ruggles Gold [20] at Cornwall in 1822 and departed with his white bride for the wilderness of New Echota. Because of his superior mental powers and his excellent training, he was chosen clerk of the Cherokee National Council. With the issuance of the *Phoenix* he became America's first Indian editor.

Aware of the extraordinary handicaps imposed upon him by a pioneer publishing venture born in the wilds of Cherokee Georgia, young Boudinott was diplomatic but purposeful as he wrote his first editorial. The newspaper was not undertaken for profit, he explained, but would depend largely on the liberality of his supporters. He continued:

> We would now commit our feeble efforts to the good will and indulgence of the public . . . hoping for that happy period when all the Indian tribes of America shall arise, Phoenix-like, from the ashes, and when the terms "Indian depredation," "war-whoop," "scalping-knife," and the like, shall become obsolete, and forever be buried "deep underground."

Considering the objectives which it was created to serve and the unusual circumstances of time and place in which it was produced, the *Cherokee Phoenix* was a good newspaper. While it functioned, on the one hand, as the official organ of a nation, it also did duty, on the other, as something of a "local weekly." That second office was subordinated entirely to the first, however, and the struggling little paper maintained a journalistic standard whose catholic tone and editorial technique merit the respectful attention of present-day students of the press.

The earliest issues contained many reprints (in English) of

informational odds and ends from other newspapers. Some of them, such as those relating to the complexities of European politics, probably quickened few pulses among Cherokee readers; but the contents improved as editor and printers became better oriented and crystallized their "interest" formula. The paper was strongly educational, mainly, perhaps, because young Boudinott wished earnestly to convey to his more benighted tribesmen some of the knowledge that white men have gathered from the corners of the earth. There were carefully chosen articles on better farming and a series on natural history. Descriptions of Calcutta rubbed columnar elbows with excerpts from *Robinson Crusoe,* Washington Irving's *Traits of Indian Character,* and translations of *The Parable of the Prodigal Son.* An official duty was performed by the serial reproduction (in Cherokee and English) of the Cherokee Constitution and Laws, but there also were political announcements of district candidates for National Council seats, a poetry corner, lost and found column, and notices (printed bilingually) from husbands who foreswore responsibility for their wives' debts.

Resulting probably from the indirect sponsorship of missionary workers and from the fact that Editor Boudinott had been educated among them, the *Phoenix* had about it a distinct aura of proscriptive morality. There were frequent exhortations against the evils of intemperance, and generous reprints describing the tragic fate of those unfortunates who fell victims to the insidious beguilements of the bowl. Nicotine, as well as alcohol, was clad in the wanton garments of iniquity, for the issue of July 2, 1828, reported under the heading, "Warning to Snuff-Takers," the arresting case of an Englishwoman who, upon taking an overgenerous pinch, forthwith had sneezed her neck out of joint and died. An autopsy revealed "four and one-half pounds of snuff in the place where her brains should be."

Most significant of all the contents of the *Phoenix,* however, were its political editorials. They inveighed against the abuses,

ᏣᎳᎩ ᏧᎴᎯᏌᏅᎯ.

PROTECTION.

CHEROKEE PHŒNIX.

VOL. I. NEW ECHOTA, WEDNESDAY JUNE 18, 1828. NO. 17.

EDITED BY ELIAS BOUDINOTT

PRINTED WEEKLY BY

ISAAC H. HARRIS,

FOR THE CHEROKEE NATION.

At $2 50 if paid in advance, $3 in six months, or $3 50 if paid at the end of the year.

To subscribers who can read only the Cherokee language the price will be $2,00 in advance, or $2,50 to be paid within the year.

Every subscription will be considered as continued unless subscribers give notice to the contrary before the commencement of a new year.

Any person procuring six subscribers, and becoming responsible for the payment, shall receive a seventh gratis.

Advertisements will be inserted at seventy-five cents per square for the first insertion, and thirty-seven and a half cents for each continuance; longer ones in proportion.

☞All letters addressed to the Editor, post paid, will receive due attention.

[illegible]

AGENTS FOR THE CHEROKEE PHŒNIX.

The following persons are authorized to receive subscriptions and payments for the Cherokee Phœnix.

Henry Hill, Esq. Treasurer of the A. B. C. F. M. Boston, Mass.

George M. Tracy, Agent of the A. B. C. F. M. New York.

Rev. A. D. Eddy, Canandaigua, N. Y.

Male negroes	7	Total	
Female negroes	17		24
Whole population			1,383

There are in this District, eight white men married to Cherokee women, and one Cherokee man married to a white woman.

There are in this District, 211 spinning wheels, one grist mill, one blacksmith shop, 308 ploughs, fifty-three looms, 323 sheep, 2.419 swine, 1,506 black cattle, 554 horses.

CHICKAMAUGA DISTRICT.

Males under 18 years of age	484	
Males from 18 to 59 years of age	396	
Males over 59 years of age	43	
Total number of males	—	923
Females under 15 years of age	298	
Females from 15 to 40 years	374	
Females over 40 years of age	131	
Total number of females	—	803
Total of males and females		1723
Male negroes	90	Total
Female negroes	97	187
Whole population		1,913

There are in this District, fifteen white men married to Cherokee women, and four Cherokee men married to whitewomen.

There are in this District four Schools and seventy-two scholars of both sexes, a grist-mill, two saw-mills, one cotton gin, 121 looms, 368 spinning wheels—eighteen wagons, 354 ploughs, 1,175 horses, 2,505 black cattle, 8.900 swine, 111 goats, eleven blacksmith shops, five ferries, four stores, and 397 sheep.

HICKORY LOG DISTRICT.

Males under 18 years of age	397	
Males from 18 to 59 years of age	300	
Males over 59 years of age	42	
Total number of males	—	739
Females under 15 years of age	345	

of both sexes, seven blacksmith shops, one turnpike, five ferries, six public roads, one threshing machine, one store, ninety-three goats, 243 sheep, 6,080 swine, 1,730 cattle, 845 horses, 372 ploughs, seventy looms, 327 spinning wheels, twenty-nine wagons, three saw-mills, six grist mills, two cotton gins.

CHATTOOGA DISTRICT.

Males under 18 years of age	420	
Males from 18 to 59 years of age	400	
Males over 59 years of age	30	
Total number of males	—	850
Females under 15 years of age	339	
Females from 15 to 40 years	365	
Females over 40 years of age	95	
Total number of females	—	799
Total of males and females		1,649
Male negroes,	122	Total
Female negroes,	170	292
Total Population		1,941

There are in this District, eighteen white men married to Cherokee women, and three Cherokee men married to white women.

There are in this District, 6 schools in which are ninety two scholars of both sexes; and 1,318 horses, 7,018 cattle, 4,654 swine, 335 sheep, fifteen goats, 124 looms, 307 wheels, 446 ploughs, eleven blacksmith shops, five grist mills, two cotton gins, one saw-mill, and two stores.

HIGH TOWER DISTRICT.

Males under 18 years of age	347	
Males from 18 to 59 years of age	325	
Males over 59 years of age	26	
Total number of males	—	698
Females under 15 years of age	300	
Females from 15 to 40 years	306	
Females over 40 years of age	71	
Total number of females	—	677
Total of males and females		1,375
Male negroes	43	Total
Female negroes	36	79
Total Population		1,454

[illegible]

The following communication was this day made to the Council of the Cherokee nation:

NEWTOWN, 16*th Oct.* 1823.

FRIENDS AND BROTHERS: We are happy that a short time has been consumed in the correspondence between you and the State Commissioners.

This has afforded us an opportunity of becoming partially acquainted with several members of this Council.—For the whole body we entertain a high respect, and we trust, that, with some of you, we have contracted individual friendships. In saying this, we do not violence to our own feelings, neither do we lower the elevated character of the United States. People who have never seen you, know but little of your progress in the arts of civilized life, and of the regular and becoming manner in which your affairs are conducted.

Your improvement reflects the greatest credit upon yourselves, and upon the Government by which you have been preserved and fostered.—Other Governments would have triumphed in your downfall, and held you down by cruelty and oppression.—Such has not been the conduct of the United States. She has set an example which the whole civilized world ought to feel proud to follow. It has been your unhappy lot to be shut out from the advantages which many others enjoy. It has been the constant study and exertion of the Government to relieve you from your unfortunate condition. The struggle has been long, but not in vain. What was promised you by your first Father, Washington, has been fully performed by those great friends of mankind who have followed him. Under

Reproduced above is the upper portion of a typical front page of the *Cherokee Phoenix,* America's first Indian newspaper, which was published at New Echota, the capital town in northern Georgia. Column 4, printed in Sequoyah's phonetic symbols, reports the result of a general census that had been conducted on orders of the National Council.

some imaginary, others only too real, which the Cherokees suffered from white settlers and adventurers, and there were attacks but half restrained upon the Georgia government. More informative than carefully organized argumentation is the indignant note of February 19, 1831:

> Let our patrons bear in mind that we are in the woods, and as it is said by many, in a savage country, where printers are not plenty, and therefore they must not expect to receive the *Phoenix* regularly for awhile, but we will do the best we can. . . . This week, we present to our readers but half a sheet. The reason is, one of our printers has left us; and we expect another, who is a white man, to quit us soon, either to be dragged to the Georgia Penitentiary for a term of not less than four years, or for his personal safety to leave the Nation, to let us shift for ourselves as well as we can. Thus is the liberty of the press guaranteed. . . .

It may have been similar utterances, but more probably it was the moral zealotry of the editor, which had led the National Council on November 19, 1828, to instruct him to withhold "scurrilous communications which have a tendency to excite and irritate personal controversies, also he shall not support or cherish . . . anything on religious matters, that will savour sectarianism."[21]

Meanwhile, the fame of the *Phoenix* had spread afar. Mr. Duponceau, president of the American Philosophical Society, sent a copy of the first issue "to a learned society in France as a great curiosity!"[22] William de Humboldt, a German philologist, wrote a commendatory letter to the editor,[23] and *The London Times* exchanged on even terms with the Indian journal. The Georgia Government recognized it as an official organ and often sought to have notices inserted in it.

It must have become early apparent to Boudinott, however, that his publisher's duties were to be fraught with woes. In the issue of April 24, 1828, there was an announcement that, because of difficulties encountered in replenishing the supply of paper, no *Phoenix* would appear the next week. On June 18 he considered it desirable to inform his readers that the post office had promised better delivery service, and added ruefully:

> . . . Another complaint has reached us, and that is, our papers are not done up in a substantial manner. There we acknowledge the complaint is reasonable, but the fault is not designed, but altogether from necessity. Our readers probably know that we live in a wilderness, and of course cannot obtain paper without considerable expense. As soon as may be, we intend to supply ourselves with good wrapping paper.

Boudinott lamented in the issue of July 30, 1828, that the wealthiest and most influential tribesmen were not subscribers of the *Phoenix.* He announced his resignation on December 3, pleading ill health, but must have mended, or was dissuaded, for the next number to be found in the collection of the Library of Congress (February 4, 1829, Vol. I, No. 47),[24] contains an explanation from the same editor that the *Phoenix* was placed in the mails in routine fashion on the preceding week and no reason could be established to indicate why no one ever received it.

A month later, March 4, 1829 (Vol. I, No. 51), he directed attention, with some pride, to the forthcoming final number of the first volume of the newspaper. He then cited the lack of an assistant wherefore "it is impossible to devote a large portion of the paper to the Cherokee language, as the whole must be original." To reassure those readers who might construe his linguistic preference as an evidence of disloyalty, he asserted:

> . . . The paper is sacred to the cause of the Indians, and the editor will feel himself especially bound, as far as his time, talents, and information will permit, to render it as instructive and entertaining as possible to his brethren, and endeavor to enlist the friendly feelings and sympathies of his subscribers abroad, in favor of the aborigines.

A tragicomic misfortune overtook that issue. An editorial notice of the following week (March 11, 1829, Vol. I, No. 52) described the calamity. Mail from the small post office at New Echota was transported to that at Spring Place by a post rider. With bundles of the *Phoenix* slung across his saddle, the messenger fell from his horse while crossing Holly Creek and dropped his load in the water. The papers remained submerged for 7 hours

before they were recovered and taken to Spring Place. The postmaster notified Boudinott that all the papers were damaged and the addresses rendered barely legible. "In short," he wrote to the editor, "the whole mail is in a miserable situation." He proposed, however, to attempt to dry the papers as well as he could and to make the distribution as usual.

After Boudinott, because of illness, had omitted his editorial comments from the issue of April 1, 1829 (Vol. II, No. 3), he explained apologetically in the next *Phoenix:* "The Editor of this paper regrets that, owing to indisposition, he is not able to render his present number as interesting as he would wish." The issue of April 22 was skipped entirely for want of printer's ink, the editor announced in the following number (April 29, 1829, Vol. II, No. 7). He published at the same time the news that Wheeler, one of his printers, had married Nancy Watie at New Echota on April 23. The paper then suspended entirely until May 27 (Vol. II, No. 8), when it was explained that the shipment of ink had been delayed. The reader is left to wonder whether a bridal trip of the Wheelers might have been partly responsible for the hiatus of three consecutive issues.

The illness of "a hand" reduced the *Phoenix* of September 22, 1829 (Vol. II, No. 22) to two pages and, for the first time since its establishment, there was no Cherokee type in its columns. A study of the newspaper file reveals a diminishing quantity of material printed in the Sequoyan syllabary, an indication perhaps, that the poor health of Boudinott, who still was only about 26 years old, did not permit him to devote his entire time to editorial duties. Another explanation may be found in the fact that Boudinott and Dr. Worcester were busily engaged in preparing religious materials for publication on the *Phoenix* press. Portions of the Bible were translated from Greek into Cherokee, numerous tracts were issued, and an Indian hymn book, first printed in 1829 at New Echota, ran through new editions long after both co-authors had died.[25] Worcester began a Cherokee

New Echota Memorial erected in 1931.

geography, and a dictionary and grammar were in progress when he left Georgia for the West. One investigator estimated that the press produced 733,800 pages in Cherokee within 5 years after adoption of the syllabary.[26]

Boudinott's bad health was noted again in the *Phoenix* of February 12, 1831 (Vol. III, No. 37), and issuance of the paper became increasingly irregular thereafter. Wheeler's name had disappeared by April 9, 1831 (Vol. III, No. 44) from its accustomed position in the masthead and John Candy's took that place. Finally, on August 1, 1832, Boudinott laid down the editorial banner which he had borne so well through four and a half years of wilderness journalism. It was taken up by Elijah Hicks, a fellow tribesman who later became a leader in the Indian Territory and in 1839 and 1843 was a member of official missions in Washington.[27]

A precise determination of subsequent events awaits a thorough sifting of the records by a patient student. Activities of the *Phoenix* were linked inextricably to the long and complex three-sided controversy which raged between Washington, the Georgia Government, and the Cherokees concerning the removal of the Indians to the West. The New Echota newspaper, a strong voice for Cherokee independence, was marked as early as 1831 as a factor with which Georgia would have to contend, and it soon was assailed because it was a potent weapon against white encroachment. Dr. Worcester was imprisoned that year, won a decision from the United States Supreme Court in 1832, and was released at last in 1833.

Meanwhile, the *Phoenix* appeared more and more irregularly. It is conceded generally that the last issue was published May 31, 1834, and that the press and types were seized by Georgia authorities in October 1835. That was after Boudinott, still a resident of New Echota, had placed his signature sincerely but unadvisedly to a "treaty" providing for removal west of the Mississippi. He represented the views of only a small minority of the Nation and

his act cost him his life 4 years later in the West—a grim assassination with knives and hatchets.

The Cherokee National Council resolved in 1836 to remove its press from Georgia and set it up across the border at Red Clay, Tenn. When a wagon was sent to transport it from New Echota, possession was refused. Chief John Ross and other leaders complained to the Secretary of War that the equipment was being "used by the agents of the United States in publishing slanderous communications against the constituted authorities of the Cherokee Nation."

The tragic climax came in 1838. A few thousand Cherokees were taken West as prisoners on boats, but the majority, some 13,000, was sent in 13 overland parties on the journey of 3 to 5 months down the harrowing "Trail of Tears" to the West which, only by bitter irony, could be called "that happy land beyond the setting sun." About 4,000 died *en route.*

What became of the pioneer Indian printing press and its novel Sequoyan type? The National Park Service, or any public agency or private organization, could make a noteworthy contribution to the history of Indian journalism if, circumstances permitting, it might devote the required study to a determination of the fate of the mechanical apparatus which gave to an extraordinary people the printed pages that lifted thousands of common tribesmen from the illiteracy of the forest to the lettered realm of higher citizenship.

Dr. Grant Foreman, a leading historian of the Cherokee removal, writes: "In spite of my research and the examination of every scrap of evidence I could get my hands on, what happened to the *Cherokee Phoenix* press is still a mystery to me." [28] John P. Brown, a Chattanooga investigator cited above (*Old Frontiers*), is "of the opinion that the Georgia Guard demolished the printing press, as that would be the natural thing for them to do with the feeling then raging . . ." [29] Dr. Worcester took a press to the West with him and issued the first pages printed in what now

is Oklahoma, but the claim that it was the same machinery used at New Echota appears to be open to serious doubt. Dr. Foreman is "persuaded that Dr. Worcester obtained a new press which he brought out with him and set up at Union Mission in 1835."

A font of Cherokee type, 4 type cases, and 140 matrices were received by the United States National Museum in 1911 by transfer from the Office of Indian Affairs, but those materials were transmitted in 1915 to the Cherokee Orphan Training School, at Park Hill, Okla. (now the Sequoyah Orphan Training School, of Tahlequah, Okla.).[30] Although it had been believed by some students that the type was a part of the font used at New Echota, the archivist of the Oklahoma Historical Society reveals [31] the existence of official records which show that the metal had belonged to the *Cherokee Advocate,* established at Tahlequah in 1844 as the western successor of the *Phoenix* and published there as the official national organ until the disintegration of the tribal government in 1906.

E. D. Hicks, a grandson of Elijah Hicks (mentioned above as the second editor of the *Phoenix*), who has lived in Tahlequah since birth, discloses that the press and some of the other equipment of the defunct *Advocate* were sold to J. S. Holden, "Who tried to run a paper in Fort Gibson (Oklahoma), but he died and what became of the old outfit I do not know." [32] It appears improbable, in any case, that either the *Advocate* type, or that now to be found in a mixed case of English and Cherokee type stored in an attic of the school at Tahlequah,[33] ever served in producing the New Echota *Phoenix.*

Nevertheless, even though the historic physical equipment of publication be lost forever, there still must remain at New Echota Marker National Memorial the material for an exceptional volume of stories yet untold concerning the *Phoenix* and its monumental work. Those stories well may deserve public recital.

[1] Oklahoma and Idaho. John Clyde Oswald, *A History of Printing: Its Development Through Five Hundred Years* (D. Appleton & Co., New York and London, 1928), 232, 234.

[2] This formidable assortment of known facts and diverting legend is reviewed by John B. Davis," The Life and Works of Sequoyah," *Chronicles of Oklahoma,* Vol. VIII, No. 2, June 1930; Rodney Sydes Ellsworth, *The Giant Sequoia: An Account of the History and Characteristics of the Big Trees of California,* J. D. Berger, Oakland, Calif., 1924; Grant Foreman, *Sequoyah,* University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, Okla., 1938; George E. Foster, *Se-Quo-Yah, the American Cadmus and Modern Moses,* Office of the Indian Rights Assn., Philadelphia, 1885; Albert V. Goodpasture, "The Paternity of Sequoyah, the Inventor of the Cherokee Alphabet," *Chronicles of Oklahoma,* Vol. I, No. 2, October 1921; Samuel C. Williams, "The Father of Sequoyah: Nathaniel Gist," *Chronicles of Oklahoma,* Vol. XV, No. 1, March 1937.

[3] Davis, *op. cit.,* 155.

[4] One school of Sequoyan genealogists favors George Guess, a German peddler from Savannah. Another rejects him with scholarly vehemence and cites Col. Nathaniel Gist, friend of Daniel Boone, Orthographical variants include Guess, Guest, Gist, Guist, and Guyst. Government records concerning Sequoyah contain the forms Guess and Gist.

[5] Davis, *op. cit.,* 156.

[6] Herbert Earl Wilson, *The Lore and Lure of Sequoia, the Sequoia Gigantea, Its History and Description* (Wolfer Printing Co., Los Angeles, 1928), 90.

[7] Most of the signs are letters of our own alphabet employed normally, reversed, or upside down. Some investigators suggest that Sequoyah adapted them from an English spelling book (which he could not read), others that he followed the print in a newspaper picked up on the roadside.

[8] Foreman, *op. cit.,* 11.

[9] Davis, *op. cit.,* 166.

[10] George E. Foster, *Literature of the Cherokees, Also Bibliography and the Story of Their Genesis* (Phoenix Publishing House, Muskogee, Indian Territory, 1889), 23, 24. Cited hereafter as Foster, *Literature.*

[11] *The Missionary Herald* (Crocker and Brewster, Boston), Vol. XXII, No. 1, 47.

[12] Foreman, *op. cit.,* 7.

[13] Vol. XXIII, No. 12, 382.

[14] The Council, meeting at New Echota, October 15, 1825, had authorized the expenditure of $1,500 for a press and two type fonts. Three days later it directed that an editor be chosen at an annual salary of $300. On

November 2 it approved construction of a printing house "24 by 20 feet, one story high, shingle roof, with one fire place, one door at the end of house, one floor, and a window in each side of the house, 2 lights deep, and 10 feet long." On November 4 it appointed Isaac H. Harris "principal printer" of the Cherokee Nation at a salary of $400 a year. *Cf.* Foster, *Literature,* 38, 41–42.

[15] Carolyn Thomas Foreman, Oklahoma Imprints, 1835–1907: *A History of Printing in Oklahoma Before Statehood* (University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, Okla., 1936), 10.

[16] John P. Brown, *Old Frontiers: The Story of the Cherokee Indians from Earliest Times to the Date of Their Removal to the West,* 1838 (Southern Publishers, Inc., Kingsport, Tenn., 1938), 482.

[17] Robert Sparks Walker, *Torchlights to the Cherokees: The Brainerd Mission* (Macmillan Co., New York, 1931), 232.

[18] Grant Foreman, *The Five Civilized Tribes* (University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, Okla., 1934), 355.

[19] Foster, *Literature,* 55.

[20] Buried at New Echota. She bore six children. Boudinott later married Delight Sargent, a white missionary of Brainerd, who accompanied him to Indian Territory. *Cf.* Walker, *op. cit.,* 155–156.

[21] Foster, *Literature,* 51.

[22] *Cherokee Phoenix,* Vol. I, No. 22, July 30, 1828, p. 2.

[23] *Cherokee Phoenix,* Vol. II, No. 2, June 24, 1829, p. 2.

[24] There are 96 issues in the file: 28 of 1828; 33 of 1829; 15 of 1830; 18 of 1831, and 2 of 1832. Some 250 issues are available in the library of the American Antiquarian Society but, humiliating as it may be, the most nearly complete collection of originals is not to be found in the United States, but in the British Museum.

[25] A missionary wrote in 1861: ". . . they were singing a hymn in the Cherokee language. Never before did music appear half so sweet to me. The language is music itself. The air is a sweet one, and the deep feeling of devotion with which it was sung rendered it truly refreshing." Cephas Washburn, *Reminiscences of the Indians* (Presbyterian Committee of Publication, Richmond, Va., 1869), 42.

[26] Foster, *Literature,* 53.

[27] E. D. Hicks, of Tahlequah, Okla., a 76-year-old grandson of the late Elijah Hicks, who himself is a great-grandfather, revealed to the author, after original publication of this article, that the second editor of the *Phoenix* was born June 20, 1796, the son of Charles R. Hicks, second chief of the Cherokee Nation. He became clerk of the Council in 1822 and president of the national committee (the Senate) in 1827. He was a

captain of one of the Cherokee emigrant detachments transplanted west of the Mississippi River, signed the Constitution of 1839, and settled on the California Trail at the site of the present Claremore, Okla. He became clerk of the Cherokee Senate in 1845. He died August 6, 1856, and was buried at his home, now the cemetery of Claremore.

[28] Personal communication, February 17, 1940.

[29] Personal communication, March 4, 1940.

[30] Personal communication from the U. S. National Museum, February 29, 1940.

[31] Mrs. Rella Looney, personal communication of March 8, 1940, with transcripts of items 2017, 2018, and 2019 in *Cherokee-Newspapers,* Archives of the Society.

[32] Personal communication, March 19, 1940.

[33] Personal communication of March 16, 1940, from Superintendent Jack Brown, Sequoyah Orphan Training School.

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