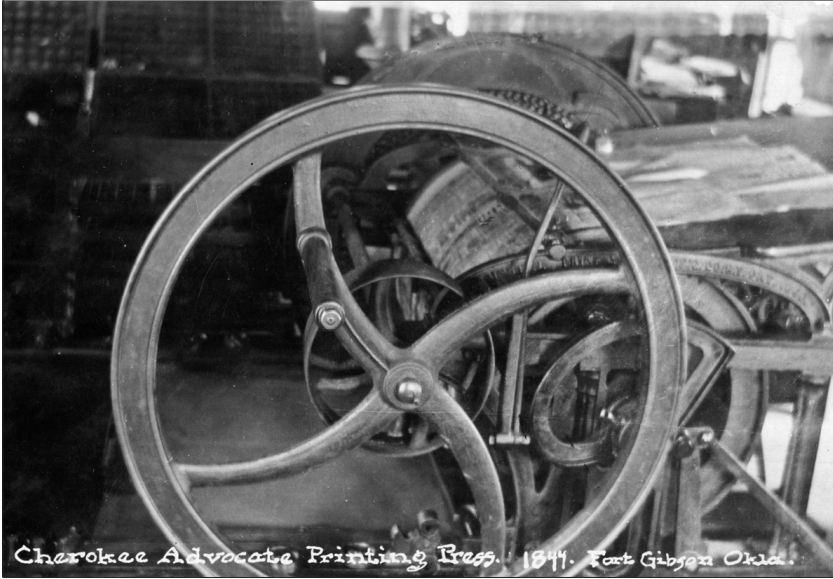


***“A Few Hundred People  
Can’t Do Anything  
with 75 Million!”***



***The Cherokee Advocate and the  
Inevitability of Allotment***

*By Robert D. Miller\**

The General Allotment Act, or Dawes Act, of 1887 represented the federal government's attempt to open additional American Indian land for Euroamerican settlement. Reformers believed that such legislation would help assimilate and "civilize"

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American Indians by transforming them into individual landowners and American citizens. Although the Dawes Act did not apply to the Five Tribes, Congress created the Dawes Commission in 1893 to negotiate the allotment of their lands. Many Westerners supported this policy as the allotment of tribal holdings would create surplus lands that the government could open for white settlement. Reformers, who generally voiced their support of the American Indian, also tended to encourage the allotment of Indian tribes' lands in order to speed up the process of assimilation.<sup>1</sup>

The Cherokees resisted coming to an agreement with the Dawes Commission longer than any of the other Five Tribes, even as the Tribal Council recognized the need for eventual allotment and sought to carry out the policy on its own terms.<sup>2</sup> Although the tribe's leaders grew more accepting of allotment, not until the passage of the Curtis Act of 1898 did the Cherokees come under significant pressure to reach an agreement with the government. Many Cherokees recognized that the Curtis Act served as a manufactured threat to force the Nation to accept allotments, but the leaders increasingly counseled cooperation with the federal government.<sup>3</sup> As the official mouthpiece of the Cherokee government, the *Cherokee Advocate*, a bilingual newspaper, defended allotment and the Dawes Commission, particularly after the closing months of 1901. The newspaper's editors tried to identify common ground with its readers to convince them of the need to accept land in severalty.<sup>4</sup>

During the period 1898–1906 the *Advocate's* editors included William Loeser, George Butler, and Wiley Melton. They argued that resistance to allotment accomplished nothing while cooperation prevented the Cherokees from completely losing their lands. Along with its resignation to allotment, the *Advocate* advised its readers to retain their lands by refusing to sell them to Euroamerican speculators. The *Advocate* trusted the Dawes Commission, even as it remained opposed to immediate statehood. Although the newspaper urged Cherokees to accept allotment, most of its editorials specifically targeted the culturally conservative members of the community. These “fullbloods” generally opposed allotment and resisted the Dawes Commission's efforts to enroll all the members of the Cherokee Nation.<sup>5</sup>

The *Cherokee Advocate* was active in the allotment debate from the end of the nineteenth century through the dissolution of the Tribal Council in 1906. Once the Cherokee Tribal Council ceased to exist, the *Advocate* halted its publication as it no longer had governmental backing. Each issue of the *Cherokee Advocate* contained





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*The offices of the Cherokee Advocate were housed in this building in Tahlequah (OHS Research Division photo).*

any land cessions. Finally, the resolution contained an appeal to the federal government urging it to protect and preserve the rights of the Cherokees and repair the damage caused by “unconstitutional laws.” This plea demonstrated the faith that conservative Cherokees still retained in regards to the American government, but the resolution concluded by explaining that the Keetoowah would not accept their enrollment by the Dawes Commission except under protest.<sup>9</sup>

The inability of the Keetoowah to halt the negotiation of a new agreement between the federal government and the Cherokee Nation prompted members to resist enrollment by hiding in the mountains. The government responded by issuing warrants for some of the Cherokees who refused to cooperate with the Dawes Commission, leading to the imprisonment of members of the Keetoowah Society. The government relied upon informants to procure the names of holdouts in order to enroll them without their knowledge or con-



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sent. Although the Keetoowah eventually fractionalized over the issue of allotment, the majority remained committed opponents of the policy. Consequently, the editors of the *Cherokee Advocate* needed to allay the suspicions of the “fullbloods” in order to promote the acceptance of allotment.<sup>10</sup>

In order to convince the “fullbloods” of the need for allotment, the *Advocate* attempted to create a sense of solidarity with readers who hesitated to endorse the dissolution of tribal lands. Despite its critique of resistance to allotment, the *Advocate* defended the Keetoowah in an attempt to win their support. Describing the Keetoowah as a social organization that provided mutual protection, the publication denied that the group’s members murdered those who accepted their allotments. Criticizing reporters who wrote negative stories about the Keetoowah, the newspaper’s editors explained that members did not care whether or not their neighbors filed their paperwork with the Dawes Commission. Instead, the Keetoowah merely wanted their views on allotment given equal respect. The editors thereby demonstrated sympathy for the Keetoowah in order to try to gain their trust.<sup>11</sup>

The *Advocate* repeatedly mentioned its preference for retaining a tribal government and, simultaneously, emphasized its patriotism for the Cherokee Nation. The paper explained that once the Tribal Council halted work in 1906, the joy that the Nation had experienced by having its own government would remain but a memory. Consequently, the editors predicted that the years following the termination of the Cherokee government would deprive the Cherokees of their independence and rob them of a source of pride. Yet this restricted sovereignty was not the only difficulty that the Cherokee Nation would face. The *Advocate* predicted that thieves and liars would attempt to cheat “fullblood” Cherokees of their lands by using “glittering things” to entice them to sign deleterious contracts.<sup>12</sup> In making these points, the editors emphasized their concern for the future of the “fullbloods” and highlighted their support of existing institutions.

Editorials conceded that requiring the “fullbloods” to abandon their traditions and values would create hardships and promise a future that would challenge and “discourage” many tribe members. The *Advocate* claimed that Euroamericans never tried to retain supposedly outdated traditions in order to claim that other populations had to sacrifice their cultures in the name of “progress.” The *Advocate* did not endorse the abandonment of Cherokee traditions out of a hatred of those values but argued that Cherokees had little

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*The Dawes Commission and nine Cherokee delegates. Seated, left to right: Commissioners T. B. Needles, Archibald S. McKennon, and Tams Bixby; Delegates R. B. Ross, Henry Lowrey, Percy Wyly, George Sanders, John E. Gunter, and Wolf Coon. Of the group standing, Commission Secretary A. L. Aylesworth is third from left; to the ladies' left are Delegates W. P. Thompson, W. W. Hastings (legal counsel), Cale Starr (?), and George Bengé (OHS Research Division photo).*

choice in the matter.<sup>13</sup> Yet the editors saw hope in a future when “happiness will once more knock at our doors.”<sup>14</sup> The newspaper predicted that allotment would have a harmful impact in the short term but that after a period of years the Cherokees would significantly improve their material condition. In arguing that the benefits of allotment would not accrue to them for many years, the *Advocate* did not echo the reformers who extolled the transformative benefits of private ownership. Instead, the publication’s editors focused on the dangers of resistance and the need for the Cherokees to adapt to a changing world.

The *Cherokee Advocate* highlighted the inevitability of allotment in order to convince the “fullbloods” that their resistance would be fruitless. The newspaper’s editors also concentrated their prose on the impossibility of expecting the United States to keep its word. In order to build this argument the *Advocate* referred to the incipient creation of an American Empire overseas. They noted that the United States had broken its promises to the Filipinos and to the Cubans. In particular, the American presence in Cuba after the Spanish-American War interested the *Advocate*. The paper discussed the debates about whether the United States should retain Cuba despite the nation’s pledge, in the Teller Amendment, that it would not seek annexation. The willingness of the U.S. government

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to consider abandoning its word provided a lesson for the *Advocate's* readers. The newspaper wanted the Cherokees to understand that leaders and representatives of the federal government looked upon the United States' agreements with the Cherokee Nation as revocable. Although the "fullbloods" might view treaties as sacred and inviolable, the United States did not share that interpretation.

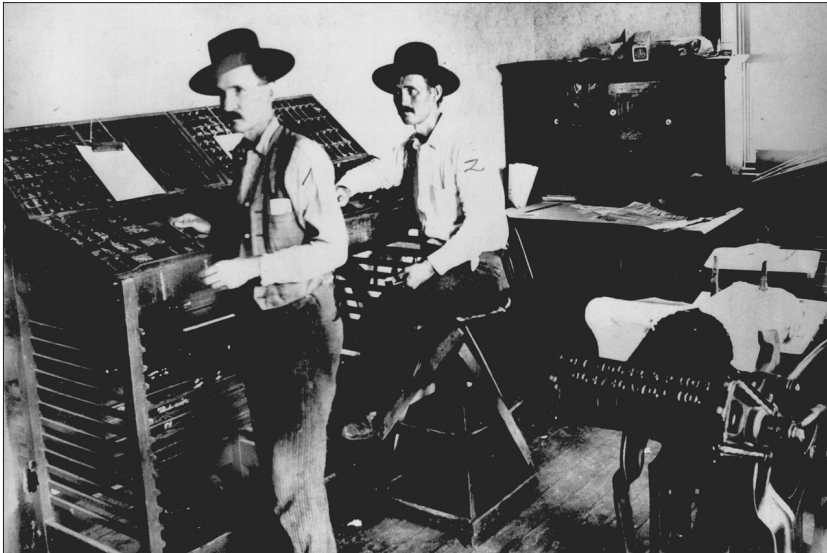
Consequently, the *Advocate* branded as foolish those who doubted the government's intention to enforce the Curtis Act of 1898. In addition, the editors noted, the Supreme Court case of *Lone Wolf v. Hitchcock* (1903) indicated that nothing would stop Congress from abrogating its earlier agreements with American Indians. For these reasons the *Advocate* defended the Tribal Council's decision to negotiate with the federal government.<sup>15</sup> Yet the newspaper did not explore the contradiction in its own argument. If the United States willingly abrogated its earlier treaties with the Cherokees, the Nation had little assurance that it would not ignore or overturn agreements yet to be made. However, this interpretation would not help the Tribal Council convince the "fullbloods" that allotment provided the best option. Consequently, the *Advocate* discussed the certainty that the United States would violate current treaties rather than acknowledging the possibility that the government might renege on future agreements.

The *Cherokee Advocate* furthered its qualified support of allotment by highlighting the futility of resistance. One editorial exclaimed, "Don't you know that a few hundred people can't do anything with 75 million!"<sup>16</sup> These sentiments reflected feelings of resignation. Even if the Cherokees did not see allotment as an advantageous policy, the Nation lacked the power to resist the federal government. Other editorials specifically mentioned the fate of the Filipinos following the Philippine War of 1899–1902. If seven million Filipinos could not wrest their independence from the United States, then a few thousand Cherokees faced even bleaker prospects. As the *Advocate* explained, "The Philippinoes [*sic*] objected also but this is all they could do."<sup>17</sup> In other words, the *Advocate* considered armed Filipino resistance against the United States as irrelevant because it could not change federal policies. Similarly, the *Advocate* observed the failure of the Cubans to prevent the United States from constructing a naval base at Guantanamo Bay. Resistance to the Dawes Commission would only result in humiliation and possible imprisonment while failing to halt the allotment of Cherokee lands. Armed resistance could only end in the extermination of the Cherokee Nation.<sup>18</sup>



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Because the *Advocate's* editors were pessimistic about the feasibility of alternatives to cooperation with the Dawes Commission, they published many editorials that critiqued potential courses of action. For example, during the 1890s a number of "fullbloods" considered moving to Mexico rather than accepting allotment. The plan appealed to culturally conservative members of many different tribes, including the Cherokees. Although claiming to remain neutral on the issue, the *Advocate* provided evidence to dissuade individuals from considering such a move. The paper argued that food would be much more difficult to grow in Mexico's hot climate. While noting the brutality of Mexican soldiers who massacred women and children, the newspaper neglected to mention instances of American atrocities committed against Native people within the United States. In addition, the paper explained that relocating to Mexico would require the Cherokees to learn Spanish. Most importantly, the paper cast doubts on the assumption that Mexico would permit the Cherokees to hold the title to land collectively or form tribal governments. The *Advocate* thereby demonstrated that "fullbloods" would derive no benefit from a move to Mexico as all of the sup-



*Inside the Cherokee Advocate printing office, with two printers busily setting type (OHS Research Division photo).*

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posed advantages of the proposal would fail to appear. Lastly, the *Advocate* noted that any plan to relocate a portion of the Cherokees to Mexico would further divide the Cherokee Nation. The scattering of tribe members would make it more difficult to keep avaricious Euroamericans from further encroaching on Cherokee lands.<sup>19</sup>

The *Cherokee Advocate* explored the intransigence of Euroamericans by printing numerous stories, editorials, and reprints of articles that questioned non-Native morality. The publication highlighted stories describing the abuses that Euroamerican land speculators committed against the Cherokees, and the editor even expanded the discussion to suggest that whites occupied their time scheming new ways to rob American Indians of their land. The newspaper also challenged two other papers, the *Purcell Register* and the *Minco Minstrel*, to explain what their editors would think if American Indians squatted on white lands and then demanded that the government divide the territory. The *Advocate* also criticized local newspapers, including the *Muskogee Phoenix* and the *Vinita Chieftain*, when they disparaged American Indians. One editorial turned the issue of “civilization” against the Euroamericans by noting that those who denied the abilities and accomplishments of American Indians must themselves lack “civilization.” The *Advocate*’s editors also addressed negative press from major cities such as Philadelphia. In addition, the *Advocate* charged Euroamerican newspapers with exaggerating the reports of problems within Indian Territory in order to justify further governmental intervention on the pretext of maintaining law and order while buttressing policies inimical to Cherokee interests. The paper admitted that in the future, greedy whites might still find a way to rob the Cherokees of their allotted lands because many Euroamericans regarded American Indian property as “lawful prey.” The greed of whites required the Cherokees to turn to the federal government as one of the few institutions that offered any protection.<sup>20</sup>

The *Cherokee Advocate* explained that while allotment might not provide an ideal solution for the Nation, it still reserved some land for the Cherokees. Despite the risks, the publication urged the Cherokees to take their allotments because the failure to do so would have serious consequences. The *Advocate* predicted that if the Cherokees continued their present course, “it would not be long before all [the land] would be gone.”<sup>21</sup> In another editorial the paper lamented that although “nothing would please [the editors] better than to be able to hold [Cherokee] lands in common,” the continuation of such an arrangement would lead to the complete alienation

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of tribal holdings.<sup>22</sup> The editors explained that if the Cherokee Nation had accepted the division of tribal lands during the 1880s, each member would have received five hundred acres. Under the proposed allotment, each Cherokee would receive eighty acres; the *Advocate* predicted that waiting for another decade would reduce that portion to twenty acres per tribe member.<sup>23</sup> Thus, the newspaper's arguments for immediate acceptance of allotment rested upon the consequences of continued resistance to the policy rather than any positive attributes of the proposal.

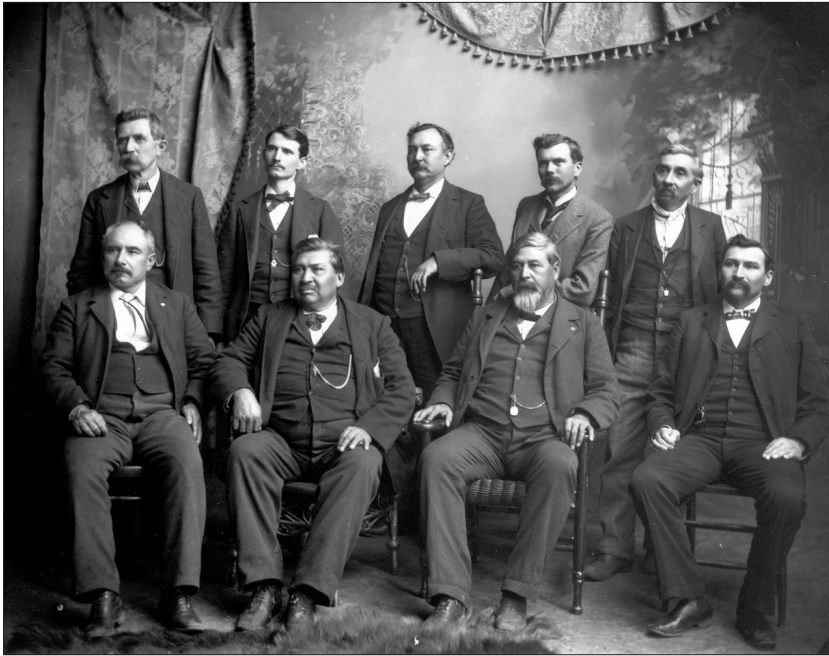
The *Advocate* argued that the "fullbloods" should embrace allotment for the good of their children. Even if the "fullbloods" had serious doubts, the *Advocate* explained that they had an obligation to accept the policy for their children, who had no choice in the matter. If the "fullbloods" failed to do so, they would take the blame for destroying the economic future of their children by consigning them to poverty. The publication also spoke about the wives of tribe members, imploring Cherokee men to consider their future well being. Allotment would provide Cherokee women with a secure retirement after years of hard work. The *Advocate* claimed that allotment would give parents sufficient financial resources to send their children to college to further their education.<sup>24</sup> In short, the paper challenged "fullbloods" to put the good of their families ahead of their pride and their own misgivings about allotment. The *Advocate* built on the theme of responsibility by speculating that allotment would most benefit the Cherokees who currently owned the least amount of property. In addition, the paper claimed that under their present situation, most Cherokees derived absolutely no benefit from tribal lands. With allotment, however, each Cherokee would receive a just amount.<sup>25</sup>

Beyond encouraging the "fullbloods" to support allotment, the *Advocate* also described what Cherokees should do with their land in order to preserve their economic future. Specifically, the paper implored its readers to refrain from selling their land because doing so would bring "poverty and misery" to their families.<sup>26</sup> To highlight the dangers facing the Nation, the *Advocate* published accounts of Cherokees who made poor land deals. For example, one story explained that Mrs. Alex Wolf received less for selling her land than many neighbors secured for leasing their holdings. The *Advocate* cautioned that once the Cherokees sold their allotments, they would receive no more land, and it would be too late to correct their mistake. With the allotment of tribal holdings, the Cherokees no longer had access to public domain lands. The publication urged its

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readers to watch out for the “schemers, grafters, [and] robbers of every kind and description,” who sought to steal their lands.<sup>27</sup> Last, the editors provided advice for any Cherokees determined to sell: If they could wait before selling, they would receive a higher price.<sup>28</sup>

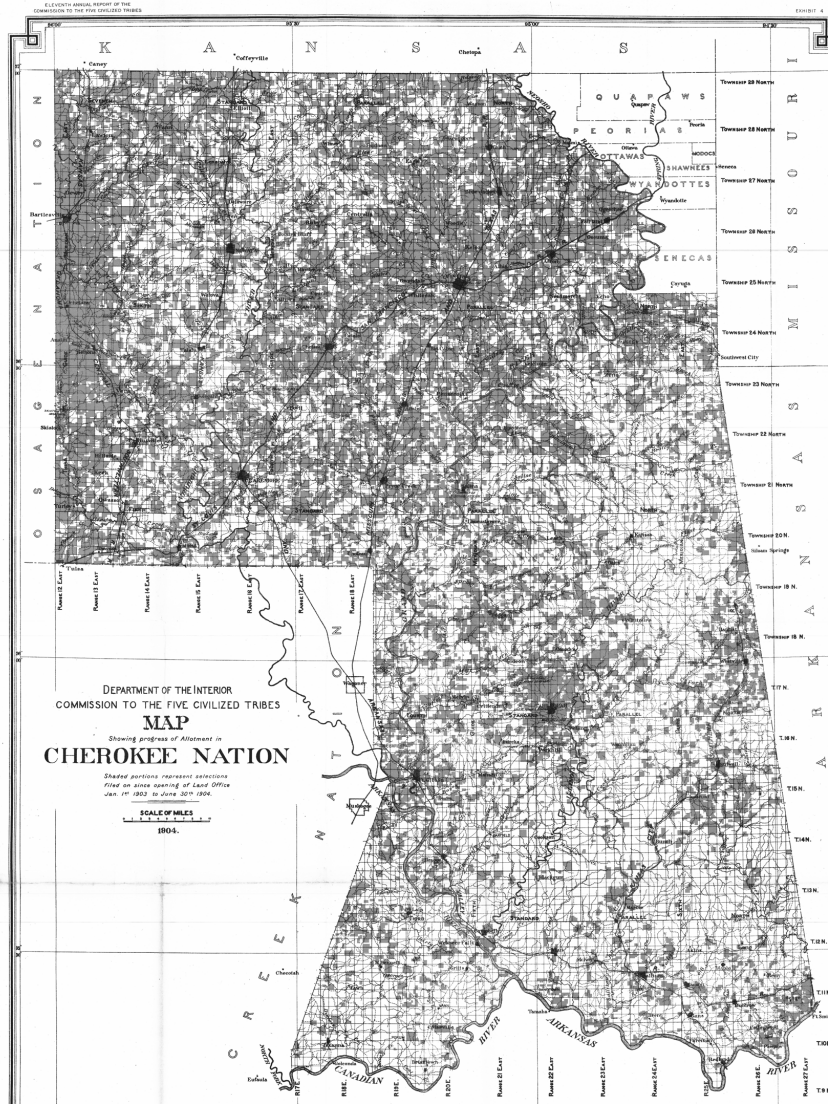
The *Advocate* referred to a biblical story to prove its contention regarding the selling of allotments. The paper pointed to the account of Esau and Jacob. Esau, the eldest son of Isaac, had the rightful claim to his father’s property. However, Esau sold his birthright to Jacob for a stew to satisfy his hunger after returning from a hunt. Just as Esau sold his inheritance for temporary gain, the *Advocate* urged its readers to avoid selling their lands for momentary



*Cherokee commissioners to the Dawes Commission. Seated, left to right: Henry Lowrey, George Sanders, R. B. Ross, Percy Wyly. Standing, left to right: Clement Vann Rogers, W. W. Hastings (legal counsel), George W. Benge, W. P. Thompson, John E. Gunter (OHS Research Division photo).*

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*A map of the progress of Cherokee allotment, dated 1904. Dark areas are claimed (OHS Research Division).*





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riches. The *Advocate* promised that the retention of allotted lands would grant the Cherokee material wealth in the future when they would possess orchards, vineyards, and tobacco. Making another biblical allusion, the *Advocate* compared this future wealth to the “milk and honey” of Canaan, the land that the ancient Israelites believed God had promised to them. The *Advocate* did not extend the analogy to explain just who or what it was that guaranteed the Cherokees access to this land of “milk and honey.”<sup>29</sup>

The *Advocate* did not make use of several arguments at its disposal which could have addressed the issues of Cherokee land tenure and Cherokee labor. In one editorial the editor explained that Cherokees “have been too willing to let [whites] assume the white man’s burden.” The wording of this quotation held two different meanings. It referred to the “white man’s burden,” a term coined by Rudyard Kipling in 1899 in a poem in which he urged the United States to take up the responsibility of empire. On this level the quotation cast an irreverent light on the Euroamerican belief in the “civilizing mission.” However, the *Advocate* also included the reference to describe the “white man’s burden” of physical labor. The editorial implored the Cherokees to stop denigrating manual labor. Instead, they should adopt Euroamerican forms of farming and labor in order to help the Nation prosper.<sup>30</sup>

In making these claims the *Advocate* largely accepted Euroamerican misconceptions of Native farming. Specifically, the newspaper tacitly endorsed the Euroamerican interpretation of Cherokee farming practices as communal. Although the Nation retained the title to Cherokee lands, individual members had usufruct rights and controlled the disposition of any improvements they made to the land. Consequently, the Cherokee system of land tenure did not resemble a communal system in which everyone received an equal share of the produce regardless of work performed. Because Cherokees already had incentives to improve their lands, reformers had no reason to introduce severalty to them in order to promote a system of individual rewards. Consequently, the publication missed an opportunity to defend the Cherokee Nation from unflattering charges that reformers leveled against many Native people. However, taking that as an editorial stance could have jeopardized the endorsement of allotment.<sup>31</sup>

Despite its ambivalent view of allotment, the *Advocate* spoke highly of the Dawes Commission.<sup>32</sup> The newspaper repeatedly argued that the Cherokees had nothing to fear from the commission,

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claiming “the Government is not going to take one dollar from [the Cherokees] wrongfully.”<sup>33</sup> Stories presented accounts of Secretary of the Interior Ethan Allan Hitchcock defending American Indians from the exploitation of unscrupulous whites. The *Advocate* shielded him from his detractors, claiming that his critics despised the secretary “because he will not set down and see defenseless Indians robbed left and right.”<sup>34</sup> The newspaper praised President William McKinley for using his veto to stop a bill that would have devastated the economic interests of the Navajo. The editors explained that McKinley’s stance required courage as he had to resist the economic interests of the “syndicates” attempting to exploit Navajo lands. The *Advocate* later praised President Theodore Roosevelt as friend and protector of American Indian interests who would ensure that every Cherokee citizen received the appropriate share of land. The publication demonstrated its support by offering advice to the Dawes Commission to aid it in its efforts to enroll the Cherokee. One editorial suggested that the commission enlist the help of prominent Cherokees to persuade “fullbloods” to add their names to the Dawes Roll.<sup>35</sup>

In addition to portraying the Dawes Commission as honest, the *Advocate* indicated its trust in the efforts to weed out “leeches” that could not provide proof of their citizenship. The newspaper clearly expected that the Dawes Roll would reveal the presence of many intruders who were inside the Cherokee Nation and posing as tribe members in an attempt to acquire land. This trust furthered the *Advocate*’s support for the Dawes Commission. As of November 1, 1902, the Dawes Commission had rejected more than seventeen hundred applicants for Cherokee membership. Secretary Hitchcock intervened in only seven of these cases. The *Advocate* explained that the Dawes Commission had gained an understanding of the troubles that the Cherokee Nation faced in trying to prevent illegal citizenship claims. The editors of the *Advocate* frequently used humor to mock those viewed as spurious applicants. For example, the newspaper singled out the Dawson family for barely having enough Cherokee blood “to sustain a flea.” Another editorial noted that many applicants had waited for years before suddenly realizing that they possessed Cherokee ancestry. The *Advocate* anticipated that the Dawes Commission would locate some individuals who genuinely deserved inclusion on the tribal roll but explained that such persons would represent a minority of disputed applicants. The paper considered this work so important that it labeled any citizen who impeded the commission’s work as a traitor to the Chero-

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kee Nation. The paper admitted that the requirement to share tribal land with adopted tribe members would reduce the amount of land available for the Nation's other citizens. However, the *Advocate* attempted to remain neutral on whether adopted tribe members should receive lands, but the paper wished that adopted whites would take the matter to court and bring about a permanent resolution of the issue.<sup>36</sup>

The *Advocate* criticized tribe members who advised the "fullbloods" to reject allotment. The newspaper *Advocate* demanded that these advisors correct their mistake and use their influence to enroll as many of them as possible. The paper also challenged the sincerity of tribe members who allegedly enrolled their own names while simultaneously asking the "fullbloods" to resist. If the "fullbloods" ended up without land, the blame would fall upon the advisors who encouraged their defiance of the Dawes Commission. The *Advocate* pointed at these individuals and asked the "fullbloods" to consider the reasons why their advisors had agreed to allotment.<sup>37</sup> Expressing the greatest frustration with tribe members who helped to defraud American Indians, the paper labelled their activities more harmful than the actions of predatory whites.

The editor also expressed anger with American Indians who disparaged their communities in front of white Americans. For example, Charles Gibson of the Creeks drew the *Advocate's* ire on several occasions. Gibson frequently wrote pieces for the *Indian Journal* from Eufaula, providing political commentary and information on Creek history and culture. In one issue he related a hypothetical story about two children who were sent to town to run errands. He claimed that the white child would always complete his task and then return home while the Indian child would get drunk and end up in jail. The *Advocate* wished that Gibson would use his talents to encourage and support American Indians rather than to degrade them to win favor with Euroamerican readers. The *Advocate* devoted particular attention to individuals, such as Gibson, as they could harm American Indians by reinforcing Euroamerican stereotypes that justified government intrusion into their lives.<sup>38</sup>

Although the *Advocate* ultimately endorsed allotment, its editors generally remained wary of statehood.<sup>39</sup> They explained that Congress could demonstrate its compassion for Indian Territory's inhabitants by postponing the creation of a territorial government until the American Indians faced more favorable conditions. In addition, the *Advocate* critiqued the efforts to rename a proposed Indian Territory without the consent of its residents. The editors com-

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pared the situation to that of a neighbor demanding to name the firstborn child of a young couple. The publication condemned the “half breeds” (the editor’s terminology) who actively pursued statehood for their own economic benefit. The paper sought to delay statehood so that the “fullbloods” could have a longer period of governmental protection before they had to compete openly with whites. The *Advocate* argued that under statehood, whites would take advantage of the “fullbloods.” The *Advocate* quoted a “Senator El Wright,” who explained that some in Oklahoma Territory, created in 1890, desired joint statehood with the Indian Territory because the former Oklahoma Territory would be able to dominate the new state’s politics. In addition, the added population would permit Oklahoma to acquire additional representation even as it controlled the political future of the Indian Territory. Another editorial explained that the residents of the Indian Territory did not want to pay taxes to benefit the people of Oklahoma. In making this argument the *Advocate* referred to Oklahoma’s significant debt; merging Oklahoma Territory with Indian Territory would make the Cherokees responsible for the debt of their neighbors. While the *Advocate* realized that the Indian Territory (which was not actually a territory in a legal sense) would make a transition to legitimate territorial status and then to statehood at some point, it hoped that the process would not involve fusion with Oklahoma.<sup>40</sup>

In addition to its fears regarding statehood, the *Cherokee Advocate* defended the right of the Nation to maintain political unity even after the dissolution of its government. Euroamerican papers chastised the *Advocate*, claiming that the Cherokees planned to sell their votes to the highest bidder. The *Advocate* countered these charges by explaining that if Euroamericans had the right to band themselves together in political parties, then so did the Cherokees. Finally, the *Advocate* pointed to the numbers of whites who appeared to be dedicated to overwhelming the Cherokees. The publication argued that the Cherokees needed to vote as a unit in order to preserve and protect themselves. If Euroamericans treated Cherokees with respect and stopped trying to cheat them of their lands, then the Nation would not need to take such measures. Without tribal unity, the *Advocate* feared, statehood would prove even more dangerous to the Cherokees.<sup>41</sup>

With the termination of the Cherokee tribal government in 1906, the *Advocate* ceased publication. In its final issue the editors reflected upon their efforts to help the “fullbloods.” The editorial claimed that the paper gave its best effort to convince them of the

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inevitable changes coming to the Cherokees and the Indian Territory. The piece also claimed that their efforts to tell the truth about the conditions facing the Cherokee people had only met with denunciations from critics within the Nation. Just as the *Advocate* had charged opponents of allotment with betraying the good of the tribe, critics of allotment had portrayed the paper's editors as traitors. The editorial claimed that the *Advocate's* detractors did not believe the paper's warnings and still doubted that the United States would actually follow through with allotment of tribal lands and elimination of tribal governments. The *Advocate* sympathized with its doubters and accepted them as sincere. Nevertheless, the paper lamented the refusal of many tribe members to heed its predictions about future calamity. The publication reminded its readers that it had provided ample warning that the U.S. government did not bluff about its intention to divide tribal lands. The editorial reiterated the plea for the Cherokees to retain their allotted lands and to continue to resist the temptation to sell. Finally, the *Advocate* urged its readers to "show to the world that you are not a lot of good for nothing Indians."<sup>42</sup>

In the early twentieth century the *Cherokee Advocate* consistently urged its readers to come to terms with allotment. Most of its arguments focused upon the necessity rather than the benefits of such a policy. The paper described the certainty of unilateral government action, the futility of resistance, and the need to preserve at least some Cherokee lands. These arguments frequently exposed contradictions because the publication's editorials required a belief that the federal government would protect individual allotments more successfully than it preserved tribal holdings. The newspaper praised the efforts of the Dawes Commission, for this group's efforts would help eliminate non-Cherokees from the tribal rolls. As its positions reflected the views of the Tribal Council, the *Cherokee Advocate* still has utility for scholarship because its pages highlight the efforts of Cherokee leaders to win the support of their people.

## ENDNOTES

\*Robert D. Miller is a candidate for the doctorate in history at the University of California, Riverside. The photo of the *Cherokee Advocate* printing press on page 24 was provided by the OHS Research Division.

<sup>1</sup> The General Allotment Law of 1887, better known as the Dawes Act, for its sponsor, Senator Henry Dawes of Massachusetts, provided for the dissolution of tribal lands. Although treaties from the 1850s and later frequently contained provisions calling for eventual allotment, the Dawes Act expanded the government's authority



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to create allotments on all reservations, overruling existing treaties where necessary. The act would transform American Indians into individual land owners. Many Westerners supported this policy because allotment would create surplus lands that the federal government could open for white settlement. Reformers, who generally voiced support for the American Indian, also tended to encourage the allotment of American Indian lands in order to speed up the process of assimilation. These reformers accepted concepts of social development that ultimately helped to shape American policies towards immigrants, its Pacific colonies, and American Indians. This understanding of social development explained that all people passed through stages of development leading from savagery to civilization. Although the Dawes Act of 1887 did not apply to the Five Tribes of Indian Territory, policymakers sought their inclusion during the 1890s. In 1893 Congress created the Dawes Commission to open discussions with the Five Tribes concerning the allotment of lands to individuals, thereby eliminating tribal titles. Although the Cherokee asked for the removal of illegal intruders from their lands before attempting allotment, the federal government stalled. The Dawes Commission tried to convince the Five Tribes that cooperation would produce better results than resistance, which would ultimately fail to halt allotment. Russel Lawrence Barsh, "Progressive-Era Bureaucrats and the Unity of Twentieth-Century Indian Policy," *American Indian Quarterly* 15 (Winter 1991): 2–5; Christine Bolt, *American Indian Policy and American Indian Reform* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1987), 86, 93, 95, 97, 100–101; Michael Coleman, "Problematic Panacea: Presbyterian Missionaries and the Allotment of Indian Lands in the Late Nineteenth Century," *Pacific Historical Review* 54 (May 1985): 143–59; Andrew Denson, *Demanding the Cherokee Nation: Indian Autonomy and American Culture, 1830–1900* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 232–33; Jill Martin, "Neither Fish, Flesh, Fowl, nor Good Red Herring': The Citizenship Status of American Indians, 1830–1924," in *American Indians and U.S. Politics: A Companion Reader*, ed. John Meyer (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2002), 65–67; James Mooney, *Historical Sketch of the Cherokee* (New Brunswick: Aldine Transaction, 2005), 153, 155–56; Morris Wardell, *A Political History of the Cherokee Nation* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1938), 312.

<sup>2</sup> By 1893 the *Cherokee Advocate* (Tahlequah, Cherokee Nation, I.T.) began encouraging the idea of severalty in order to provide homes for each tribe member. However, the appointment of the Dawes Commission initially encouraged greater Cherokee resistance to allotment. However, divisions appeared within the tribal leadership, and Cherokees such as Thomas Buffington, Dennis Bushyhead, and Elias C. Boudinot started to advocate allotment during the mid-1890s. In addition, although the Five Tribes initially stood together in rejecting allotment, by the beginning of 1898 only the Cherokees continued to reject the policy. Denson, *Demanding the Cherokee Nation*, 232, 239–41; Stanley Hoig, *The Cherokees and Their Chiefs: In the Wake of Empire* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1998), 256–58; Tom Holm, "Indian Lobbyists: Cherokee Opposition to the Allotment of Tribal Lands," *American Indian Quarterly* 5 (May 1979): 124–30; Wardell, *Political History of the Cherokee Nation*, 320–33.

<sup>3</sup> The Cherokee government negotiated three allotment treaties with the United States government. Although the National Council agreed to a deal in 1899, Congress failed to approve it because it left too much authority in the hands of the Cherokees. The Cherokee themselves rejected an agreement from 1901. Finally, both Congress and the Cherokee people accepted a third agreement negotiated in 1902, even as the Cherokees experienced increased levels of coercion. Accordingly, the *Advocate* en-

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dorsed the first treaty, urged the rejection of the 1901 treaty, and supported the third and final treaty. The *Advocate* accepted the need to form a new agreement with the federal government but it did not believe the Cherokee should accept “any old treaty.” *Cherokee Advocate*, August 11, 1900, 2; “What the Treaty Does,” *Cherokee Advocate*, April 11, 1901, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, December 14, 1901, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, December 21, 1901, 2; Denson, *Demanding the Cherokee Nation*, 232, 239–41; Hoig, *The Cherokees and Their Chiefs*, 256–58; Holm, “Indian Lobbyists,” 124–30; Wardell, *Political History of the Cherokee Nation*, 320–33.

<sup>4</sup> For the years under consideration, William Loeser, George Butler, and Wiley Melton served as the editors of the *Cherokee Advocate*. Loeser, a former business manager of the *Advocate*, edited the publication from November 1899 through November 1901. From November 1901 through November 1903 Butler, who was half Cherokee, took control of the paper. Although he did not possess fluency in the Cherokee language, he thought it important to keep all members of the Cherokee Nation informed of current events, leading him to include more than a page in Cherokee in each edition. Butler generally took strong editorial stances and lambasted the critics of American Indians. Melton, the final editor of the *Advocate*, worked on the paper until it ceased publication in March of 1906. He consistently printed two pages in Cherokee in each edition as he perceived the *Advocate* as one of the few sources of information available to the “fullbloods.” Daniel Littlefield, Jr., and James Parins, *American Indian and Alaska Native Newspapers and Periodicals, 1826–1924* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1984), 72.

<sup>5</sup> This work employs the term “fullbloods” to refer to culturally conservative members of the Cherokee Nation, although the term still carries problematic presumptions. The present article places the word in quotation marks because the term ignores the broad spectrum of possibilities that fall between the adoption of Euroamerican culture and the preservation of a traditional Cherokee culture. Cherokees no doubt adopted/adapted things from other cultures over the eons. Nevertheless, the paper uses the term “fullbloods” to reflect how the *Advocate* referred to culturally traditional Cherokees who generally rejected allotment. The term “mixed bloods” is similarly placed in quotation marks in order to denote those who generally accepted allotment.

<sup>6</sup> Popular accounts of the turn of the twentieth century frequently dismissed newspapers as sensationalistic purveyors of “yellow journalism.” These discussions, frequently centering on the Spanish-American War, ignored the restraint exercised by many publications. Eschewing the sensationalism of yellow journalism did not negate partisan coverage of the news, for many editors continued to advocate their respective political parties. Earlier scholarship failed to account for the dismal reputation the “yellow press” possessed, as evidenced by numerous denunciations of their sensationalistic reporting by papers throughout the country. In addition, part of the yellow press’s reputation stemmed from the boastful claims from men such as William Randolph Hearst. The organs published by Hearst and his rival Joseph Pulitzer frequently condemned the inaccuracies found in each other’s papers. Although the *Cherokee Advocate* did not participate in the debate regarding yellow journalism, explaining the diversity of turn-of-the-century papers helps to demonstrate their utility for scholarly analysis. Joseph Campbell, *Yellow Journalism: Puncturing the Myths, Defining the Legacies* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2001); George H. Douglas, *The Golden Age of the Newspaper* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1999), 110–14; Ted Curtis Smythe, *The Gilded Age Press* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2003), 186–93, 203–05.

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<sup>7</sup> Angie Debo, *And Still the Waters Run: The Betrayal of the Five Civilized Tribes* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1940), 8; "Indian Papers," *Cherokee Advocate*, October 13, 1900, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, February 3, 1906, 2.

<sup>8</sup> Kathrine Mae Evans, "For the Generations to Follow": Traditional Cherokee History of the Twentieth Century" (M.A. thesis, Arizona State University, 1990), 29–30; Robert K. Thomas, "The Origin and Development of the Redbird Smith Movement" (M.A. thesis, University of Arizona, 1953), 59–62.

<sup>9</sup> "Resolution Protesting the Implications of the Dawes Commission's Preparation of the Rolls of the Cherokee Nation," November 28, 1900, Folder 4, Box 2, Series 2, Indians of North America, McFarlin Library, University of Tulsa, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

<sup>10</sup> Kent Carter, *The Dawes Commission and the Allotment of the Five Civilized Tribes, 1893–1914* (Orem, Utah: Ancestry.com, 1999), 115–16; Thomas, "Redbird Smith Movement," 145–47, 154–56. "Fullbloods" rejected the idea of enrollment because they did not desire the allotment of Cherokee lands. They resisted the idea of allotting tribal lands to "mixed bloods" or whites who married into the tribe. Interestingly, reformers believed that the policy of allotment would help the "fullbloods," despite the continued resistance. Redbird Smith, one of the most prominent of these "fullbloods," formed the Nighthawk Keetoowahs. Redbird Smith thought that the federal government should not force the "fullbloods" to integrate into United States society so soon. In addition, he lamented allotment's contribution to the destruction of Cherokee spiritual practices; Redbird Smith sought to rectify this by reintroducing ceremonial dances. Furthermore, he wanted the United States government to honor its treaty obligations. Redbird Smith remained opposed to allotment until 1910 when he realized that further resistance would accomplish nothing. Wardell, *Political History of the Cherokee Nation*, 326.

<sup>11</sup> *Cherokee Advocate*, June 20, 1903, 2.

<sup>12</sup> *Cherokee Advocate*, February 1, 1902, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, May 31, 1902, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, June 21, 1902, 2.

<sup>13</sup> *Cherokee Advocate*, April 26, 1902, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, August 2, 1902, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, August 30, 1902, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, March 14, 1903, 2.

<sup>14</sup> *Cherokee Advocate*, January 4, 1902, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, February 1, 1902, 2.

<sup>15</sup> *Cherokee Advocate*, June 9, 1900, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, June 23, 1900, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, March 2, 1901, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, February 1, 1902, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, April 5, 1902, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, January 17, 1903, 2.

<sup>16</sup> *Cherokee Advocate*, April 5, 1902, 2.

<sup>17</sup> *Cherokee Advocate*, February 15, 1902, 2.

<sup>18</sup> *Cherokee Advocate*, March 22, 1902, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, April 26, 1902, 2.

<sup>19</sup> *Cherokee Advocate*, June 28, 1902, 2; "Emigration Scheme," *Cherokee Advocate*, April 30, 1898, 1; "Interesting Letters," *Cherokee Advocate*, April 16, 1898, 1, 2; Daniel Littlefield, Jr., "Utopian Dreams of the Cherokee Fullbloods: 1890–1934," *Journal of the West* 10 (1971): 407, 414; "That Emigration Scheme," *The Cherokee Advocate*, April 2, 1898, 2; Mooney, *Historical Sketch of the Cherokee*, 157–58.

<sup>20</sup> "Our People's Future," *Cherokee Advocate*, May 10, 1902, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, September 20, 1902, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, January 10, 1903, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, March 7, 1903, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, January 13, 1906, 1; "White Man's Avarice Toward the Indian," *Cherokee Advocate*, June 7, 1902, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, July 10, 1895, 2; "Indian Territory Libeled," *Cherokee Advocate*, June 23, 1900, 1; *Cherokee Advocate*, February 28, 1903, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, May 2, 1903, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, February 10, 1906, 2.

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<sup>21</sup> *Cherokee Advocate*, June 21, 1902, 2.

<sup>22</sup> *Cherokee Advocate*, June 14, 1902, 2.

<sup>23</sup> *Cherokee Advocate*, April 19, 1902, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, April 26, 1902, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, May 31, 1902, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, November 22, 1902, 2; "First Blood for Cherokees," *Cherokee Advocate*, January 3, 1903, 2.

<sup>24</sup> *Cherokee Advocate*, December 8, 1900, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, March, 22, 1902, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, April 26, 1902, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, August 2, 1902, 2.

<sup>25</sup> *Cherokee Advocate*, March, 14, 1903, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, July 18, 1903, 2.

<sup>26</sup> *Cherokee Advocate*, May 31, 1902, 2.

<sup>27</sup> *Cherokee Advocate*, February 24, 1906, 2.

<sup>28</sup> *Cherokee Advocate*, October 18, 1902, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, July 2, 1904, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, July 16, 1904, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, January 27, 1906, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, February 24, 1906.

<sup>29</sup> *Cherokee Advocate*, August 30, 1902, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, December 20, 1902, 2.

<sup>30</sup> *Cherokee Advocate*, August 30, 1902, 2.

<sup>31</sup> Although many whites claimed that American Indians needed individualized land holdings to encourage them to manage their land more effectively, the argument ignored crucial points. Native farming practices often produced more than sufficient food for a given community. For example, the supposedly subsistence-level farming of American Indians near Jamestown and Plymouth helped to keep early-seventeenth-century settlers alive. Another misconception about American Indians is that they did not manage or make use of their environments. Such notions helped whites justify their seizure of native lands as they claimed that whites would make use of the land. At the turn of the twentieth century a popular notion held that nature must remain pristine and devoid of any sign of human habitation. This new conception of nature helped to bring about the removal of American Indians from national parks in order to preserve the "wilderness." In terms of the Cherokee, Khaled Bloom demonstrates that the depiction of the Cherokee Nation as communal is inaccurate. Although the Cherokee Nation itself retained title to the land, members could control any portion of the land that they settled and improved. Furthermore, Cherokees could sell their improved land to other members of the Nation or pass their holdings onto their children. If a Cherokee abandoned a plot of land in favor of a new claim somewhere else within the Nation's territory, the abandoned land reverted to the control of the tribe. Consequently, Cherokee land practices gave usufruct rights to each member and permitted each to control and manage the land that had been improved. These land policies tended to limit Cherokee holdings to a size that one family could successfully farm. Some Cherokee managed to expand their holdings significantly by hiring workers to farm additional territory. Cherokees needed to hire whites from nearby states because the system of land tenure prevented the employment of other tribe members who could claim their own farms. Legally, Cherokees could employ these outsiders as workers but could not lease to them. However, many of the Cherokees who wanted to expand their holdings nevertheless leased to the white outsiders and lied about the status of these individuals. The Tribal Council tried but largely failed to control the consequent flood of whites seeking leases. Yet, by the 1890s even many of the smaller land holders within the Cherokee Nation became landlords. Khaled Bloom, "An American Tragedy of the Commons: Land and Labor in the Cherokee Nation, 1870–1900," *Agriculture History* 76 (Summer 2002): 497–523; G. E. Condra, "Opening of the Indian Territory," *Bulletin of the American Geographic Society* 39 (No. 6, 1907): 323–24; Mark Spence, *Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Re-*

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*moval and the Making of the National Parks* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Thomas Wessel, "Agriculture, Indians, and American History," *Agricultural History* 50 (January 1976): 9–11.

<sup>32</sup> Wardell, *Political History of the Cherokee Nation*, 326.

<sup>33</sup> *Cherokee Advocate*, March 15, 1902, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, March 22, 1902, 2. To buttress its claim that the Cherokees could trust the government, the *Advocate* pointed to its long history of loyalty. Yet, these claims of loyalty stemmed from a distortion of the Nation's history. In an editorial the *Advocate* portrayed the Cherokees as friends of the United States by citing the aid rendered to the Americans during the Revolution. The piece claimed that the Cherokees had never taken up arms against the United States. The *Advocate* explained that tribe members who supported the Confederacy during the Civil War represented only a small minority of the Cherokee people. This depiction of Cherokee history ignored the significant divisions that the Civil War created within the Nation. In addition, the sanitized history neglected the reasons why a portion of the Cherokee Nation sided with the Confederacy. Specifically, slaveholding Cherokees would tend to gravitate towards the Confederacy. In addition, the Cherokee Nation had little reason to show loyalty to a government that had uprooted it from its ancestral home less than twenty-five years before the outbreak of the Civil War. *Cherokee Advocate*, February 22, 1902, 2.

<sup>34</sup> *Cherokee Advocate*, September 20, 1902, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, July 25, 1903, 2; "Their Homes Saved by Secretary Hitchcock," *Cherokee Advocate*, October 4, 1902, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, February 10, 1902, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, October 15, 1904, 2; Debo, *And Still the Waters Run*, 61. In an editorial from 1895 the *Cherokee Advocate* referred to a white critic of the Dawes Commission as a "jackass." *Cherokee Advocate*, July 10, 1895, 2.

<sup>35</sup> *Cherokee Advocate*, December 14, 1901, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, May 12, 1900, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, March 15, 1902, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, March 22, 1902, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, April 5, 1902, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, May 21, 1902, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, March 22, 1902, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, August 23, 1902, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, September 20, 1902, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, December 13, 1902, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, February 28, 1903, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, March 7, 1903, 2.

<sup>36</sup> *Cherokee Advocate*, July 21, 1900, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, September 8, 1900, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, October 6, 1900, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, December 8, 1900, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, January 4, 1902, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, October 18, 1902, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, November 1, 1902, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, February 28, 1903, 2.

<sup>37</sup> *Cherokee Advocate*, February 1, 1902, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, March 22, 1902, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, April 26, 1902, 2.

<sup>38</sup> *Cherokee Advocate*, July 10, 1895; *Cherokee Advocate*, November 17, 1900, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, April 13, 1902, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, April 19, 1902, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, March 28, 1902, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, May 31, 1902, 2; "The Difference," *Cherokee Advocate*, September 6, 1902, 2. See also Daniel Littlefield, Jr., and James Parins, *A Bibliography of Native American Writers, 1772–1924* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1981), 60–67. At the time the *Advocate* published Gibson's pieces, Alexander Posey was the newspaper's editor. Gibson's writings also appeared in the *Tahlequah Arrow*, the *Chickasaw Enterprise*, and the magazine *Twin Territories*.

<sup>39</sup> Melton, the final editor of the *Advocate*, endorsed the Sequoyah Constitution of 1905 rather than the plans to combine the Indian Territory with Oklahoma Territory. Butler and Loeser, however, took editorial stances critical of statehood. Littlefield and Parins, *American Indian and Alaska Native Newspapers and Periodicals*, 72.



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<sup>40</sup> *Cherokee Advocate*, May 12, 1900, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, May 19, 1900, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, October 13, 1900, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, May 2, 1903, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, February 10, 1906; *Cherokee Advocate*, November 16, 1901, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, December 14, 1901, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, May 24, 1902, 2; *Cherokee Advocate*, October 29, 1900, 2.

<sup>41</sup> *Cherokee Advocate*, March 1, 1902, 2.

<sup>42</sup> "To the Cherokee People," *Cherokee Advocate*, March 3, 1906, 2.