

"NEWS FOR THE CHOCTAWS"

By James D. Morrison

Charles De Morse, the father of Texas journalism, carried this item in *The Northern Standard* for May 20, 1848.¹

NEWS FOR THE CHOCTAWS

We understand that a newspaper press is about to be established at Doaksville; Mr. Ball, heretofore a Merchant in that place, having passed through here, yesterday morning, on his way to New Orleans for materials.

The "Mr. Ball" of the news item was D. G. Ball, publisher-to-be of the *Choctaw Telegraph*, pioneer newspaper in the old Choctaw Nation. Doaksville was the prosperous business and political center of the Choctaws which had grown up near Fort Towson in the southern part of the Nation. Little has been found concerning the life of Ball. Editor De Morse mentioned him occasionally in the columns of the *Northern Standard*, the first time in the summer of 1846 when the Mexican War was getting under way:² "By Mr. Ball of Doaksville, who left New Orleans on the 30th ult., and arrived in Town on Monday last, we learn that Troops were pouring into the City, from the upper Country."

Another item of the following winter strengthens the impression that Ball, pioneer publisher of the Choctaw Nation, and De Morse, pioneer Texas editor, were friends:³ "We are indebted to Mr. Ball of Doaksville for a late Washington Union." Ball's name appeared in a *Northern Standard* advertisement which ran through the summer and fall of 1846. He had been part owner of thirty-six cords of "Bois d'Arc Wood, at the mouth of Boggy on Red River, and sixteen cords, at Horse Prairie, on the bank of Red River."⁴ In the early 1850's Ball moved to Clarksville, Texas, and entered the hotel business. The editorial column of the *Standard* carried this item about the "Clarksville Hotel", whose advertisement in the same number was signed "D. G. Ball."⁵ "Clarksville

¹ Clarksville *Northern Standard*, May 20, 1848. For an account of De Morse and his contacts with the Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations see James D. Morrison (ed.), "Notes from the Northern Standard", in the *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, XIX, pp. 82-93, 269-283.

² Clarksville *Northern Standard*, June 10, 1846; James D. Morrison, ed., "Notes from The Northern Standard," *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. XIX, No. 1 (March, 1941), p. 90.

³ Clarksville *Northern Standard*, December 11, 1847.

⁴ *Ibid.*, July 15 through October 10, 1846.

⁵ Clarksville *Standard*, March 12, 1853. As the controversy over slavery developed, De Morse found it advisable to drop *Northern* from the name of his paper. Beginning with the issue of October 23, 1852, the title of the periodical was simply *The Standard*.

Hotel - We call attention to the advertisement of this well kept house." Nothing further has been discovered concerning the life of the publisher of the *Choctaw Telegraph*.

The editor of the *Telegraph*, when it appeared, was one of a famous Choctaw family. His name was Daniel Folsom, great-grandson of Nathaniel Folsom who founded the Choctaw branch of this family. Born in the Choctaw Nation in Mississippi, Daniel Folsom had removed at the time of the Choctaw migration. His home was at Doakville for several years; he died in Blue County, Choctaw Nation, the date being unknown.⁶

The initial issue of the *Choctaw Telegraph* was probably printed under the date of November 2, 1848.⁷ None of the first twenty-four numbers are known to exist. The extant copies are in the Library of Congress, and it is these which were the chief sources of information for this study.⁸ Written on the margin of many of these numbers is the name of Peter Force, American archivist and historian of the mid-nineteenth century, whose collection of historical material was sold to the Library of Congress just before the Civil War for \$100,000.⁹

A typical issue of the *Telegraph* was almost entirely in English, despite the announcement in the prospectus to the effect that one half would be in Choctaw and the other in the English language. Each of the four pages contained five columns. The editorial page was usually the second and would be perhaps half in Choctaw;

⁶ Elizabeth Knowles Folsom, *Genealogy of the Folsom Family* (2 vols.; Rutland, Vermont, 1938), II, 848. The *Choctaw Intelligencer*, successor to the *Choctaw Telegraph*, listed Daniel Folsom as an officer of the Choctaw Division of the Sons of Temperance, June 20, 1850. (Daniel Folsom, aged thirteen, was enrolled at the Choctaw Academy, Blue Springs, Scott County, Kentucky, and was listed in attendance in the first report of this school in November, 1825. In September, 1829, he was one of six Choctaw boys selected by Colonel Richard M. Johnson, founder of the Academy and member of Congress from Kentucky, to return to their homes in Mississippi. This was in compliance with the rules of the school on attendance, each boy to be supplied a "suitable outfit" of clothes and a pony upon leaving for their homes in the Choctaw Nation. The selection of the boys was in the nature of graduation, and each was given a commission of recommendation signed by the Reverend Thomas Henderson, Superintendent. For an interesting account of this famous Indian school, see Carolyn Thomas Foreman, "The Choctaw Academy," in *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. VI, No. 4 [December, 1928], and Vol. X, No. 1 [March, 1932].—Ed.)

⁷ The *Fort Smith Herald*, November 8, 1848, remarked editorially: "We have received the first number of the Choctaw Telegraph, printed in Doakville, Choctaw Nation, edited by Daniel Folsom, a native, and published by D. G. Ball. It is neatly printed on a super-royal sheet and is well edited. We extend to them the right hand of fellowship. May it prosper."

⁸ These were read from microfilm. Acknowledgment is due the Frank Phillips Collection, University of Oklahoma, and the Librarian, Southeastern State College, Durant, Oklahoma, for the use of their microfilm readers. Not only are Numbers 1 through 24 missing, but also Numbers 28, 29, and 47. Microfilm of the *Telegraph* are in the files of the Oklahoma Historical Society and the Library of Southeastern State College.

⁹ *Dictionary of American Biography* (New York, 1933), VI, 512-513.

occasionally part of page one would also contain articles written in the Indian tongue. All important announcements were in both English and Choctaw, but the advertisements, headings, and most of the paper were in English.

The subheading on page one stated that the *Telegraph* was "A Family Journal: Devoted To the Interest Of Our Race, Agriculture, Education, Morality and General Intelligence, &c.&c."¹⁰ Subscription rates were on a sliding scale "At Three Dollars per annum if paid in advance; three and a half dollars if paid at any time within six months; or four dollars if payments be delayed until after the expiration of the year."¹¹ The terms of advertising were one dollar for the first insertion of a "square" of ten lines, fifty cents for each subsequent insertion. Ten lines for a year could be run for twenty dollars, the charge decreasing proportionately for a greater number of lines. Further specifications were that "No personally abusive articles will be admitted at any price" and "All letters must be Post Paid."

Nine men were named as agents for the *Telegraph* by this statement:¹²

The following . . . gentlemen, will render a favor by acting as agents for this paper.

T. McKenny, Choctaw Agency.
Col. R. Humphreys, Fort Washataw. [sic]
A. Robinson, Eagletown.
Jno. H. Heald, New Orleans.
Wm. H. Douglass, Shreveport, La.
C. F. Stewart, Mayhew, C. N.
Jacob Folsom, W. Bend " "
L. Gooding, Ft. Washita. [sic]
E. Upshaw Esq., Paris[,] Texas.

These were all prominent men of the Red River region. It is not known whether any of them were backers of the paper or not.

¹⁰ This is in agreement with a "Prospectus for the '*Choctaw Telegraph*,' *A Weekly Journal to be Published in Doaksville, Choctaw Nation*" which stated: "The undersigned proposes to commence as soon as three Hundred subscribers can be obtained, a *Weekly Paper*, under the above title, to be devoted to the advocacy and dissemination of Morality, Education, Agriculture and general Intelligence—one half in the Choctaw and the other in the English language. Our sheet will be as the publisher designs, a Family Newspaper (neutral in religion and politics) . . . The '*Telegraph*' will be furnished to subscribers, at three dollars in advance. . . mailed every Thursday morning. All letters, on business with the office, should be addressed to D. G. Ball, *Doaksville*, Choctaw Nation, post paid. D. Folsom, Editor." —*Indian Advocate*, November, 1848, as quoted by Carolyn Thomas Foreman, *Oklahoma Imprints, 1835-1907* (Norman, Oklahoma, 1936), 151-152.

¹¹ *Choctaw Telegraph*, May 3, 1849. Hereafter, any date cited alone will refer to the *Telegraph*.

¹² *Ibid.*

The evidence is to the contrary as this quotation from an editorial, just before publication was discontinued, will illustrate:¹³

The publisher has not received *two hundred* dollars, during the past year; the consequence was, that he had to go in debt for the greater portion of his paper, and for his board. At the expiration of this volume, there will be due the office, between seven and eight hundred dollars. And will our friends remember us?

If the *Telegraph* had been strongly backed by men of the caliber listed as its agents, it is hard to believe that the paper could have reached such financial condition as this item indicates.

Who were these agents? Of some we have rather complete information; of others we know nothing. "T. McKenny, Choctaw Agency" was, of course, the most prominent citizen of the Skullyville community in the northeast corner of the Nation.¹⁴ "Jno. H. Heald, New Orleans" was a former partner in the well known firm of Berthelet, Heald, and Company. Robert M. Jones, Choctaw tycoon of the times, was the "Company." Heald was not connected with the partnership at this time but was in the Crescent City as a member of the firm of Moses Greenwood and Company.¹⁵ "C. F. Stewart, Mayhew, C. N." was a prominent merchant of Connecticut birth. His establishment was located at the crossroads where the Fort Towson-Fort Washita road was cut by a north-south road from Fort Smith to Beal's Ferry on Red River.¹⁶ "L. Gooding, Ft. Washita" and "Col. R. Humphreys, Fort Washataw"

¹³ December 6, 1849.

¹⁴ "T. McKenny" should not be confused with the Thompson McKinney who was principal chief of the Choctaw Nation, 1886-1888. "Recollections of Peter Hudson," *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, X, 513; Angie Debo, *The Rise and Fall of the Choctaw Republic* (Norman, Oklahoma, 1934), 167. ("T. McKenny" was a misspelling for "T. McKinney" or Thompson McKinney, of Skullyville, for whom Principal Chief Thompson McKinney (1886-88) was named. Thompson McKinney of Skullyville served as School Trustee and held other responsible positions in the Choctaw Nation before the War of the States. His daughter, Susan Priscilla McKinney, married Victor M. Locke, Sr., and they were the parents of several children, among them Ben Davis Locke, Edwin S. Locke, Mary Locke (now Mrs. C. E. Archer of Antlers), and the late Victor M. Locke, Jr., Principal Chief of the Choctaw Nation 1911-17.—Ed.)

¹⁵ Clarksville *Northern Standard*, July 1, 1848. Editor De Morse made this comment: "We call attention to the card of Moses Greenwood & Co., in our advertising columns. Mr. Heald who has lately associated himself with the firm, is the former partner in the firm of Berthelet Heald & Co., lately existing at Doaksville and Fort Smith. We need not say a word in respect to the mercantile capacity, integrity and accommodating spirit of this gentleman, to any one who ever had business with him, when living in this section of the country; but to those who never had; we will take the responsibility of recommending the House, as one of the best in New Orleans, with which our planters or Merchants could make business arrangements." By 1853 Heald had become the senior partner in the firm of Heald, Massie, and Co., 35 Natchez Street, New Orleans. *Clarksville Standard*, October 15, 1853. For a summary of Heald's life see Muriel H. Wright, "John Hobart Heald," *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. II, No. 3 (September, 1924), pp. 311-318.

¹⁶ Muriel H. Wright, "Tryphena," *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. IX, No. 2 (June, 1931), pp. 180-194; *Telegraph*, November 29, 1849. An advertisement for "Beal's Ferry" ran in the *Clarksville Northern Standard*, July 3, 1852.

pose a little problem. It is likely that L. Gooding was related to G. C. Gooding, longtime post sutler and postmaster at Fort Towson, and held a similar position at the more westerly post.¹⁷ "Ft. Washita" must have been the military center the site of which was selected some fifteen miles above the mouth of the Washita River by Zachary Taylor in 1842. "Fort Washataw" might then refer to the temporary post built three miles above the mouth of the Washita by the Leavenworth Expedition in 1834.¹⁸ As for the other agents, they were undoubtedly men of prominence and integrity in each of their respective communities.

The frontier newspaper of that day performed a number of public services; the *Telegraph* was no exception. One of these services was the frequent publication of lists of letters left unclaimed by the addressees in the Doaksville post office. In May, 1849, the Doaksville postmaster ran a list of one hundred thirteen names for whom mail was being held. Listed were such well known Indian families as Wade, Colbert, Dwight, Folsom, McKinney, Pitchlynn, and Garland.¹⁹ A midsummer list of eighty names included "Female Stockbridge," Alfred Wright, and "Geo. Washington."²⁰ In the fall a similar list of thirty-four names contained those of Jackson Kemp, Martha Ann Kemp, Lucina Nail, and "P. P. Pitchlynn 3," all prominent Indian families.²¹

One difficulty of frontier life was the maintenance of an adequate mail service. Editor Folsom complained of the "Express Rider" between Fort Towson and Fort Washita because of his exorbitant charges for carrying "letters, papers, &c., to and fro." He requested that the "Quarter Master at Fort Washita" in-

¹⁷ G. C. Gooding was at Fort Towson nineteen years. *Choctaw Intelligencer*, October 15, 1851. An "L. S. Gooding" is mentioned in the Gooding family Bible as marrying "Matha [sic] Woodridge Oct 20th 1859 in Paris Texas." This Bible is in the possession of a granddaughter of G. C. Gooding, Mrs. J. E. Plank of Grant, Oklahoma.

¹⁸ W. B. Morrison, *Military Posts and Camps in Oklahoma* (Oklahoma City, 1936), 72-75, 81-92. (In 1930, Mr. and Mrs. James Y. Bryce and Muriel H. Wright visited and erected temporary markers on many historic sites in eastern and southern parts of Oklahoma. The site of Camp Washita was near an old spring about 200 yards south of the Rock Creek Crossing, about two miles from the mouth of the Washita River, on the east side, in Township 7 South, Range 7 East, Bryan County, now inundated by Lake Texoma. For an account of the 1930 tour, see J. Y. Bryce, "Temporary Markers of Historic Points," *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. VIII, No. 3 [September, 1930].—Ed.)

¹⁹ May 3, 1849.

²⁰ Stockbridge was the mission station founded by the Rev. Cyrus Byington in 1837, and named by him for his birthplace in Massachusetts. This mission was near Eagletown in present McCurtain County. In 1842, the Choctaw General Council established Iyanubbi Female Seminary at the mission station. The name "Stockbridge" for this location remained in common use for some years. See, "Recollections of Peter Hudson," *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. X, No. 4 (December, 1932). (The expression "Female Stockbridge" listed in the *Telegraph* referred to the "Female Seminary" at Stockbridge Mission.—Ed.)

²¹ October 11, 1849.

investigate the case and find a more suitable man.²² Evidence of the fact that Doaksville was a frontier crossroads is found in the schedule for the arrival and departure of the mails. An item like this was printed in most issues:²³

Eastern—Arrives every Wednesday & Saturday at 6 o'clock P. M., departs every Thursday and Monday at 6 o'clock A. M.

Southern—Arrives every Thursday at 6 P. M., departs Friday at 6 A. M.

Northern—Arrives every Friday at 10 A. M., departs the same day at 1 P. M.

Other public services were weather reports, items on the condition of Red River with regard to navigation, mention of the arrival and departure of river steamers, and notices of the spread of epidemic diseases. The final issue of the *Telegraph* reported some cases of the dreaded cholera as near to Doaksville as the Red River town of Shreveport.²⁴ Nearly every number carried an item similar to the following:²⁵

The Weather and River.—The weather continues disagreeable and cloudy, with alternate changes of rain and snow, though every now and then a fair sky—furnishing a glimpse at Old Sol, but for only a short while. The River is in fine boating order. The Texas, Capt. Clayborne, came up Tuesday morning last, laden partly with commissary stores for Fort Towson, and goods for this place. The Texas is a new boat, strongly built, and is in every other way well adapted for running in Red River. And from the experience in boating on this river and the accommodating conduct of Capt. Clayborne, that he will no doubt prosper [*sic*]. Success to the Texas Red River Packet.

An item in August of 1849 referred to the "unprecedented rains" of the past spring and summer. Since the rains had ceased, the editor expressed hope for a more favorable season "than was anticipated a few weeks since" to allow every farmer to "secure a good supply of hay and fodder."²⁶

There was little of what the modern reader would call "sports" in the *Telegraph*, but perhaps this item would come under such classification:²⁷

A Ball-play comes off on the fourth ultimo, near the Dividing-ridge, between Musholotubbi and Apukshanubbi Districts; fifty select men from each District compose the players. The play was arranged by Mr. Thompson McKinney.

²² September 20, 1849.

²³ July 19, 1849.

²⁴ December 20, 1849. The August 23, 1849, edition had reported: "The cholera is abating throughout the United States."

²⁵ December 20, 1849.

²⁶ August 16, 1849.

²⁷ July 26, 1849. Among the various activities of Thompson McKinney was included that of sports promoter.

Crimes committed in the region naturally received notice in the frontier paper. Notice of the killing of Colonel Benjamin Love in the western part of the Nation first appeared in the issue for July 19, 1849. Other notices culminated in an article which explained in detail the method of the murder. This was derived from a confession made by a Shawnee Indian arrested for complicity in the crime.²⁸ Robbery of the "Post Office Store" in Doaksville was reported in the autumn of 1849, eighty-five dollars being taken from the post office and twenty-five or thirty from the store.²⁹

One cause of violent death, then as now, was liquor. Evidently the light horsemen, law enforcement officers for the Choctaw Nation, had killed some whisky runners who resisted arrest during this period. Editor Folsom, in answering the question as to whether the "Light horsemen are justifiable in taking the life of a person, who having whisky . . . and resisting the efforts of the officer, from taking and destroying it," quoted in full a Choctaw law of 1834 on the subject. The law stated that if any person refused to allow his "ardent spirits" to be destroyed by the Light Horsemen, he did so at his own risk; if such person were killed, the Light Horsemen were protected by the laws of the Nation. The editor continued, after quoting the law, to remark that "no less than three persons [have] lost their lives in the past three or four weeks" because of "whisky encounters."³⁰

Since one of the avowed purposes of the *Telegraph* was to propagate moral influences among the Choctaws and Chickasaws, much space was given to letters and articles on temperance and religion. Two letters from a correspondent who signed himself "J." will serve as examples. "J." estimated that three hundred barrels of whisky were sold annually at Preston, just across Red River in Texas and above the mouth of the Washita. He dwelt at length on the evil effects of whisky and the good effects of temperance.³¹ In this connection it is only proper to note that when the Choctaw Division of the Order of the Sons of Temperance was organized in Doaksville, both the editor and publisher of the *Telegraph* were listed among its officers.³² And in the November 29, 1849, edition was an editorial which urged all "advocates of

²⁸ August 16, 1849.

²⁹ October 25, 1849.

³⁰ July 19, 1849. These deaths were not all caused by the efforts of the Light Horsemen to enforce the law. Several were the result of brawls caused by drunkenness.

³¹ August 23 and October 11, 1849.

³² June 20, 1849. Officers elected were: H. P. Hadden, O. S.; Daniel Folsom, I.S.; Sampson Folsom, A.C.; Jas. M. McLeod, C.; D. P. Lanus, T.; S. M. Willard, F.S.; D. G. Ball, A.R.S.; W. L. Poalk, R.S.; Rev. John Carr, W.A.; Rev. Samuel Corley, W.P. The significance of the initials used for the offices can only be surmised.

temperance" to take a firm stand in opposition to the intemperance which was wont to accompany the payment of the annuities.³³

Many items of a religious nature filled the columns of this frontier weekly. One quaint example of a notice of religious worship was:³⁴ "The Rev[.] Mr. Noble will preach in town next Saturday evening, at early candle lighting." A Choctaw New Testament, just published by the American Bible Society under direction of the Rev. Alfred Wright, was the subject of one fairly long article. It ended:³⁵ "Our hearts are like the ground was this summer when there was no rain, hard and dry. Give us thy Spirit like rain from above, so that this good seed, thy holy word, may fall upon hearts softened as the earth after a shower."

The "Bible Society of the Choctaw Nation" was organized in the fall of 1849 at Spencer Academy, Choctaw boys' school a few miles north of Doaksville. The Reverend Cyrus Byington presided, and Daniel Folsom was named on the Executive Committee. The *Telegraph* printed the complete Constitution of the Society, as well as a Resolution of the Presbyterian General Assembly advocating support of the American Bible Society.³⁶ Editor Folsom also took part in the organization of a "Union Tract Society" during the summer of 1849, being one of a committee of three which reported on the best methods to be used in evangelizing the Choctaws. He was also elected to the board of managers along with Cyrus Byington and Peter P. Pitchlynn.³⁷ In November the appointments

³³ November 29, 1849. The editor stated: "As the annuities approach, the apprehension, naturally arises in the minds of all sober and law abiding citizens; that as intemperance is wont heretofore to prevail, to a greater extent then, than at any other time, and the law is less regarded—that some corresponding effort should be put forth, to suppress its encroachments, both by civil authorities and the persuasionists. The annuities seem to be viewed by some as the annual arrival of a period, at which time, they are at liberty to give the greatest scope, to their inebriate disposition."

³⁴ *Ibid.* This was probably John S. Noble, Methodist missionary at what was called Robinson's school.

³⁵ September 13, 1849. This item may have been quoted from a religious publication, perhaps a tract of the American Bible Society.

³⁶ October 4, 1849. Officers elected for the Choctaw Bible Society were: Alfred Wright, president; Joseph Dukes and N. Cochnauer, vice-presidents; Caspar R. Gregory, secretary; John P. Kingsbury, treasurer; Alexander Reid, Henry K. Copeland, Daniel Folsom, John P. Kingsbury, and Caspar R. Gregory, executive committee. A letter, July 9, 1941, from Margaret T. Hills, librarian of the American Bible Society, states that the Bible Society of the Choctaw Nation was active until 1860 and was listed through 1871.

³⁷ May 17, August 9, and August 23, 1849. Officers of the Union Tract Society were: Cyrus Kingsbury, president; Alfred Wright, vice-president; Charles Fishback, secretary; John P. Kingsbury, treasurer; Alexander Reid, Joseph Dukes, Cyrus Byington, Daniel Folsom, and P. P. Pitchlynn, board of managers.

of the Methodist Indian Mission Conference were listed in full detail, this item being taken from the *Cherokee Advocate*.³⁸

Choctaw educational matters were also reported fully, an evidence of the desire of the editor and the publisher to carry out the stated aims of the periodical. It was the practice of the Choctaws and Chickasaws to send their best young men east to college. A tragic item in illustration appeared in the issue of the *Telegraph* dated May 3, 1849, when resolutions of respect from the "Athenaeum Literary [Society] of Delaware [sic] College," were printed concerning the death of "our much esteemed fellow student, and brother member, Wm. F. Howell, of the Choctaw Nation." Accompanying those of the literary society were resolutions of the student body as a whole; these stated that all would attend the funeral and, "as a testimonial of respect for the memory of our beloved brother," would wear "crape on the left arm for thirty days."³⁹

Announcements concerning the times of the examinations at the various Choctaw boarding schools, as well as the resulting reports of the trustees, were published.⁴⁰ July and early August, 1849, were very rainy so that high water prevented even the school trustees, who conducted the examinations ordinarily, from attending some of the inspections. The *Telegraph* reported that a number of citizens expressed the "highest gratification at the elaciry [sic] and correctness, given by both girls and boys, to the

³⁸ November 29, 1849. For the Choctaw District, N. M. Talbert was presiding elder; Fort Coffee and New Hope, W. L. McAlister; Doaksville, John H. Carr; Robinson school, J. C. Noble [sic]; Moshulatubby, Erastus B. Duncan, John Page; Kiameshia, Isaac Chuknubbe; Chickasaw, Ezekiel Couch; Chickasaw Academy, Wesley Browning; Porto school and Circuit, Dixon H. Lewis. Others were to be supplied at Doaksville, Fort Coffee, and Brushy.

³⁹ This young man was the son of Dr. Calvin C. Howell and his wife, nee Rhoda Pitchlynn, sister of Peter P. Pitchlynn. They resided at Eagletown at this time. Mrs. Laura Howell Youngblood of Davis, Oklahoma, was kind enough to show us some letters written by this young student before his untimely death in Delaware. Mrs. Youngblood is the daughter of the late Dr. Thomas P. Howell of Davis and a niece of the William F. Howell here mentioned.

⁴⁰ May 17, 1849. "There will be an examination of the following schools, on the days specified, previous to the vacation of the terms, viz. Armstrong Academy, Tuesday July 24, 1849; Iyanubbi Female Seminary, Friday, July 24 [sic]; Koonsha Female Seminary, Friday, June 28; Pine Ridge Female Seminary, Saturday, July 28; Norwalk Male Seminary, Monday, July 30; Wheelock Female Seminary, Tuesday, July 31; Spencer Academy, Thursday, August 2; Choctaw Academy, near Robinsons, Saturday, August 4. The parents and friends of the students, are requested to attend at the places, and on the days above mentioned.

G. W. HARKINS, Trustee."

(The "Choctaw Academy" mentioned above was opened in 1847, near the home of Captain Robinson (a Choctaw), a day's ride from Spencer Academy, probably east near Little River. This was a neighborhood school at first but grew into a boarding school under the auspices of the Methodist Church South and continued as such until the early 1850's. This "Choctaw Academy" should not be confused with the noted Choctaw Academy in Kentucky, which was operated under the auspices of the Baptist Association in that state until about 1847.—Ed.)

various complex questions propounded in connection with the recitations." The singing was reported to be improved. Some "very nice needle work" at the "female schools" was offered for sale, the proceeds to be used for "benevolent purposes."⁴¹ In the fall there appeared the complete report of the trustees, Thompson McKinney, George W. Harkins, Forbis LeFlore, and Robert M. Jones, as made to the General Council of the Choctaw Nation.⁴²

With the exception of two academies, the trustees generally expressed satisfaction with the work done in the schools of the Nation. At Norwalk Male Seminary they found that the scholars did not evidence much knowledge of books. Since they blamed this lack on the teacher, "Mr. Pitkin," the trustees reported to the Council that a request for Pitkin's removal had been dispatched to Alfred Wright.⁴³ Dissatisfaction with the work done at Spencer Academy was expressed in these words: "We . . . regret to say that our expectations have not been fully realized in the attainments made by the students in the knowledge of books." Attention was called to the fact that the students taught by "Miss Dutcher," however, had done well. The trustees were of the opinion that the lack of progress at Spencer could be blamed on the frequent changes in the teaching staff which had just occurred.⁴⁴ They finally recommended that the Academy be divided into two parts, being convinced that there were "too many Choctaw youth,

⁴¹ August 2, 1849.

⁴² October 18, 1849. This report is also found in *The Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs*, 1849, pp. 1104-1107.

⁴³ October 18, 1849. There was another reason for the dissatisfaction of slave owners like Robert M. Jones with the work of "Mr. Pitkin," as this item from the *Northern Standard* for July 2, 1850, will explain: "The Choctaw Missionary, Mr. Pitkin. In a previous number we came out and exposed the abolitionism of this gentleman, and further than that we have nothing against him, and as we understand that he is uneasy concerning his personal safety in visiting this part of Texas; we take this occasion to say to him that he is perfectly safe. — We think Mr. Pitkin's fears are unfounded, and we promise him that he shall be perfectly safe, whenever he shall see proper to visit us.

"We have no fears ourself whatever in visiting the Nation; no more than we ever had, and should feel perfectly safe in Mr. Pitkin's own beat, and we wish Mr. Pitkin to feel as comfortable as we do. — Mr. Pitkin we believe is the only individual in a hundred miles of us who understands the repairing and tuning of pianos, and as most of these instruments in Clarksville need his assistance; we take this occasion to invite him over. Come over Mr. Pitkin. Come over and see us; and bring your friend the younger Kingsbury." Kingsbury was the editor of the *Choctaw Intelligencer* who had answered previous editorial attacks in the *Northern Standard* charging the missionaries to the Choctaws with preaching abolition. The editorial quoted and the others mentioned were not written by Charles De Morse as he was making an extended visit to the East at the time.

⁴⁴ October 18, 1849. Alexander Reid and almost a complete new staff had just succeeded the old superintendent, James B. Ramsey, and his co-workers. Spencer Academy had been established to take the place of the Choctaw Academy operated by Richard M. Johnson in Kentucky. At this time Spencer was under the supervision of the Presbyterian Board of Missions. "Recollections of Peter Hudson," *op. cit.*, pp. 518-519.

thrown together at this institution, to learn to speak the English language as speedily as if there were fewer."⁴⁵

Superintendent Alexander Reid of Spencer Academy answered the charges of the trustees with a letter quoted in full by Editor Folsom. Admitting that Spencer had not come up to expectations, Mr. Reid argued that the difficulty had been lack of harmony among the teachers; that this situation had now been corrected by the replacement of the former superintendent and his staff; and that the new staff was composed of congenial personnel who would work together for the good of the common cause. He finished his plea with these lines:⁴⁶ "Let the friends of education and religion among your people, cordially co-operate with us, and all will be well. If you are not prepare to do this, then *prove us for one year longer*—we ask no more at present, *only let us alone*." The plea of Superintendent Reid was heeded. The Choctaw school enjoyed a prosperous twelve years under his supervision, the outbreak of the Civil War marking the end of his administration.⁴⁷

During the winter of 1849-1850 the *Telegraph* published an item concerning the neighborhood schools of Pushmataha District. Three "superintendents of the neighborhood schools of Pushmataha District," George Folsom, William McCoy, and P. Battiece, announced that four schools were to be established in the District. One was to be at "Yaknachukma Fields" or Goodland; a second at "Bennington, near Rev. R. D. Potts;" another at "Lubboon Bokfalaya [Long Creek] settlement;" and the fourth at "Winchester near Chickasaw Dist. line." For the support of each school one hundred dollars annually was available for three years. For the same period forty-nine dollars annually was appropriated for a "Sunday school at or near Vttoka, on Boggy." Folsom, McCoy, and Battiece concluded their announcement with this explanation:⁴⁸

In conclusion, we are sorry to say, that with the small sum of \$1347, it is not in our power to meet the numerous applications that have been made to us for schools, and though we are doubtful whether our arrangements will be satisfactory, in general or not. It is nevertheless, the best that we can do. [sic]

Affairs of state occupied much space in the *Telegraph*. An item of early October, 1849, called the attention of readers to the fact that "General Council . . . had organized, and would proceed immediately to the discharge of their duty." At the same time the editor stated that he would "be pleased to hear of the Council pass-

⁴⁵ October 18, 1849.

⁴⁶ October 25, 1849. The italics are Reid's.

⁴⁷ Robert Elliott Flickinger, *The Choctaw Freedmen* . . . (Pittsburgh, 1914), 24.

⁴⁸ December 6, 1849. For an explanation of "Sunday school" see Debo, *Choctaw Republic*, op. cit., 61 f.

ing a resolution, offering a stone for the Washington Monument."⁴⁹ The next issue printed a full report of the activities of the council:⁵⁰

The General Council, which convened on the 3rd, adjourned on the 13th, inst., being in session ten days. A feeling of harmony appeared [sic] to pervade both branches of the Council, and an [sic] union of action among the members, to labor for the benefit of their country.

The first day the Chiefs delivered their Messages. The two succeeding days were occupied, principally in presenting petitions, the reports of the different schools, and appointing Committees.—After the several Committees were organized, upon Schools, Laws, & Claims, they retired to a convenient place, when the petitions, &c. were taken up in order and read. Whereupon such laws were drafted, as seemed to be required, and presented to the House of Representatives [sic] and Senate, for their approval.

The establishing of Schools for the education of the youth, seems to be the grand object among our people. Numerous petitions were presented in favor of more schools, saying, "we are very poor, yet we want schools."

During the session, very interesting lectures were delivered upon the subjects of agriculture, temperance, education, &c., by the members. And every morning before proceeding to business, prayer was offered by one of the members.

Some important laws were passed, against Gambling, Bigamy, &c., and requiring all marriage ceremonies to be performed by the law. A marriage ceremony performed, contrary to the provisions of this act, either by a Captain or a minister of the Gospel, he is liable to be fined twenty-five dollars. A white man living with an Indian woman without being lawfully married, is required to marry her, or else leave the Nation, and forever stay out of it.

There was quite an interest taken in the election of District officers. Alfred Wade, was elected National Judge, Brazil Leflore Treasurer, Lewis Garland Auditor, for Apvksinubi District. Brashears Turnbull Supreme Judge, William Harrison Treasurer, Jonathan Cogswell Auditor, for Poshmataha District. Canada McCurtain Supreme Judge, James Trahan Treasurer for Mosholatvbi District. George D. James Treasurer, Henry McKenney Auditor for Chickasaw District.

We will publish the laws as enacted by the last Council, as soon as we can, in a pamphlet form.

The last two editions of the *Telegraph* contained thirty-eight of the laws passed by this session of the General Council. They were printed in Choctaw only. Following most of these laws was the name of the "anumpa ikbi" or "law maker" who was author of each. The name of the *Telegraph* editor followed No. 31, "Taniel Fvlson" being the Choctaw form. After No. 35 was "Labvt Chons" for "Robert Jones;" attached to No. 36 was "Wilim Pichlin anumpa ikbi;" to No. 37, "Sampsin Fvlsvm;" to No. 23, "Chisi Wal" for

⁴⁹ October 11, 1849. The Council must not have met in Doaksville because Editor Folsom obtained the information for this item from "a letter received of a friend."

⁵⁰ October 18, 1849. No auditor was named for "Mosholatvbi District;" no judge for the Chickasaw District.

Jessie Wall, brother of Tryphena Wall Stewart of Mayhew; to Nos. 25 and 29, the phrase "N Kukna anumpa ikbi," for "Nicholas Cochenauer, legislator."⁵¹

Another Choctaw item in November, 1849, concerned the payment of the annuities.⁵²

VLHPITA ANOWA HOKE

Tesimba nitvk 11 ma Poshimataha Vlhti hvt vlhpita chi hoke. Tesimba 18 ma Apvkshinabi Vlhti hvt vlhpita chi hoke. Micha nitak hullo chito nitak fehna, Lukfoata aivlhpita chi hoke.

Freely translated, this announced that annuities were to be paid for Pushmataha District on December 11, for Apukshunubbi District on December 18, and at Lukfata on Christmas Day.⁵³ The annuity weather was not of the best, as the editor duly noted:⁵⁴

The Weather.—We have had for the last week, a true specimen of old winter, which usually commences in this country about annuity time, by raining, snowing, hailing, and freezing. We are far from envying, just at this particular time, any of the pleasantry [*sic*] that may have been anticipated, by those attending the annuities.

Fire was an enemy, as well as friend, of this frontier community. Choctaw homes, business and government buildings, and schools were invariably constructed of wood and easily destroyed by fire. One loss from this cause was hinted to be of incendiary origin: "The Senate house in the nation, was burnt down on the third inst. It is not known by whom or the cause for which it was done."⁵⁵

Miscellaneous items of varying dates included notice that "Gen. Belknap of the U. S. A." was in Doaksville en route to Fort Towson on a tour of inspection; a charge of fraud against the "firm of Daniel Safferans & Co., who have been merchandising

⁵¹ December 13 and December 20, 1849. The Choctaws used phonetic spelling for words and names taken into their language from the English, substituting for sounds which did not occur in their alphabet such as D, J, and R. Other examples than the names given are: "Aktoba" for October; "Tesimba" for December; and "Chisus Klaišt" for Jesus Christ. See Cyrus Byington, "A Grammar of the Choctaw Language," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 1870, XI, 317-367; and Cyrus Byington, *A Dictionary of the Choctaw Language* (Washington, 1915).

⁵² November 22, 1849.

⁵³ Lukfata, meaning "white clay," was located halfway between the present towns of Idabel and Broken Bow in McCurtain County, Oklahoma. "Recollections of Peter Hudson," *op. cit.*, 512 f. A note in the *Telegraph* on December 13, 1849, may explain what region was served by the payments at Lukfata: "It is desired by the Commissioners, to meet on the 20th of the present month, at Lokfoata depot, those orphans, residing on Little River, Mountain Fork, and Iyanvbi, that they may be identified as the proper persons to receive their portions of the orphan's fund. The orphans and their heirs are requested to be present on that day." Payments for Mushulatubby District were made at the Choctaw Agency or Skullyville, across the mountains from Doaksville.

⁵⁴ December 13, 1849.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* This item was also repeated in Choctaw: "Tesimba nitak 3 ninak osh Sinit chuka vt luat kinafo tok miashke, kana hosh michi kia ikakostini cho miash ke."

in the Nation;" the suggestion of the "Rev. Anson Gleason, of Charlestown New Hampshire" as a fine man to be the new Agent for the Choctaws; and mention of the marriage of C. F. Stewart, agent for the *Telegraph* at Mayhew, to "Miss Juliette Slate, both of Connecticut."⁵⁶

In the absence of national press associations the country weekly of this period filled many of its columns with news, features, and anecdotes lifted from exchange magazines and papers. The *Telegraph* was no exception. Some scattered headlines will give an expression of the contents of these borrowed items: "Singular Discovery of a Homicide" was a rather morbid horror story; "The Lungs", an explanation of the nature and functions of those organs of the human body; "Protect Your Sheep," a method of training a sheep dog; "Poetry of Science," an attempt to popularize the study of science; and "Studying a Child's Capacities," psychology of a century ago.⁵⁷

Most of the humor was also copied from the exchanges. A typical example was headed "A Desperate Race. A Story of the Early Settlement of Ohio." It was in the classic American frontier mold. A frontiersman, entertaining a group with an account of his youthful experiences, droned on and on about a certain Indian battle of his career. Finally, he related, he found himself alone and all of his companions killed, surrounded by hostile redskins. His rifle was broken and an Indian was only a few yards away with a loaded rifle. One hearer, unable to contain his curiosity further, blurted out, "And the Indian?" To which the frontiersman replied, "Fired and killed me!"⁵⁸

Most matter on pages three and four of each issue was invariably advertising. Under "Professional Cards" in May, 1849, there appeared a single one, that of "Dr. Walner" who "respectfully offer[ed] his services to the public generally." Instead of the used car advertisements of modern papers there were occasional notices offering a carriage or wagon for sale.⁵⁹ After the withdrawal of J. H. Heald from the firm of Berthelet, Heald, & Co., this advertisement appeared over the names of the two remaining partners:⁶⁰

NOTICE. ALL persons indebted to the late firm of *Berthelet, Heald & Co.*, or to *Berthelet & Jones*, who have not settled their accounts, within the

⁵⁶ May 3, October 4, October 11, and November 29, 1849.

⁵⁷ July 19, 1849.

⁵⁸ July 26, 1849.

⁵⁹ May 3, September 6, and November 29, 1849. The carriage offered for sale was "A New and Splendid Double-harness Carriage Made of Fine Materials, and well adapted for this Country, which will be disposed of on accommodating terms." An advertisement offering a wagon and draft animals for sale read: "FOR SALE. A first rate *Wagon*, two yoke of *Oxen*, and *Three Horses*: For reference, enquire at this office."

⁶⁰ November 29, 1849.

last 12 or 18 months, are respectfully solicited to make arrangements to pay up by the 1st. of January next, either in *Cash, Corn, Cotton*, or in any way most convenient to themselves.

Those who do not, cannot expect further accommodation, neither will it in any instance, be granted.

BERTHELET & JONES.

Other advertisements in a typical issue were for the "Post Office Store;" the "New Orleans Type Foundry and Printer's Depot;" and a number of periodicals such as "Sears' Pictorial Dollar Magazine", which labeled itself the "Cheapest Periodical in AMERICA!", and the famous "*GODEY'S LADYS' BOOK*."⁶¹

As mentioned previously, the publisher was in dire straits by December of 1849, for he was owed four times as much as he had collected.⁶² In an attempt to increase circulation and attract more advertising, Publisher Ball announced reduced subscription rates in the last number of the *Telegraph* printed. The new rate would be two dollars yearly and the hope was to increase the number of subscribers to five hundred.⁶³ The fifty-second number, dated December 20, 1849, had this item: "There will not be any paper issued from this office next week, Christmas." But in spite of the efforts of friends, the *Telegraph* never appeared again.⁶⁴

Details of the transaction have not been found but the property of the *Choctaw Telegraph* was sold to new owners early in 1850. The name was changed to the *Choctaw Intelligencer*. The new publisher was L. D. Alsobrook; the new editors were J. P. Kingsbury and J. E. Dwight.⁶⁵ A period of more than five months elapsed between the last issue of the *Telegraph* and the first issue of the *Intelligencer*, which was dated June 6, 1850.⁶⁶ Thus ended the

⁶¹ July 19, 1849.

⁶² December 6, 1849.

⁶³ December 20, 1849. "*Terms Reduced*. The terms of subscription to this paper, has been reduced to *two dollars, per annum invariably in advance*."

⁶⁴ In the number dated December 13, 1849, an editorial note seemed to indicate that the paper might be able to get on its feet. The editor wrote: "We are truly thankful [to] our friends and greatly encouraged by the new additions to our subscription list, that are daily coming in. And are especially under obligations to the generous friend, who sent us five new subscribers."

⁶⁵ *Choctaw Intelligencer*, June 13, 1850.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, June 27, 1850. "The Mississippi Girls Forever. Three dollars were received here a few days since, in [payment] of subscription to the former paper, although its publication had ceased for nearly six months. The young lady accompanied the money with the request that, whenever another paper should be published, it might be sent to her as a subscriber, and we most cheerfully comply with the request."

existence of the *Choctaw Telegraph*, pioneer newspaper in southern Oklahoma, a paper whose aims and ideals were high and worthy of emulation by the modern press of the same region. It is fitting that we let the editor of the *Telegraph* state those ideals as a closing paragraph for this study. He wrote only a few weeks before his paper ceased publication:⁶⁷

The practicability of publishing a paper and the necessity of one in the Nation, as a means of communication, we believe, is not now doubted by any: and to aid in supporting national interests, and in developing the resources of the country, together with the proper regard for morality, temperance, education, industry, &c.; a paper is indispensable.—And in giving our attention to these subjects, we will also try to make the *Telegraph*, as far as possible, a welcome visitor at the fireside of the farmer, by presenting such a variety of instructive and amusing reading, as the literature of the day, and that our position will admit—giving a prominent place in its columns to whatever we may meet with of value, or calculated to advance the interest of agriculture.

⁶⁷ December 6, 1849.