

Sequoya. Inventor of the Cherokee alphabet, born in the Cherokee town of T Taskigi, Tenn., about 1760; died near San Fernando, Tamaulipas, Mexico, in Aug. 1843. He was the son of a white man and a Cherokee woman of mixed blood, daughter of a chief in Echota. Besides his native name of Sikwayi, or Sequoya, he was known as George Gist, otherwise spelled Guest or Guess, the patronymic of his father, generally believed to have been a German trader. He has also been claimed as the son of Nathaniel Gist of Revolutionary note. Sequoya grew up in the tribe, quite unacquainted with English or civilized arts, becoming a hunter and trader in furs. He was also a craftsman in silver work, and ingenious natural mechanic, and his inventive powers had scope for development in consequence of an accident that befell him in hunting and rendered him a cripple for life. The importance of the arts of writing and printing as instruments and weapons of civilization began to impress him in 1890, and he studied, undismayed by the discouragement and ridicule of his fellows, to elaborate a system of writing suitable to the Cherokee language. In 1821 he submitted his syllabary to the chief men of the nation, and on their approval the Cherokee of all ages set about to ~~it~~ learn it with such zeal that after a few months

~~thousands were able to read and write their language.~~ Sequoya, in 1822, visited Arkansas to introduce writing in the Western division of the Cherokee, among whom he took up his permanent abode in 1823. Parts of the Bible were printed in Cherokee in 1824, and in 1828 The Cherokee Phoenix, a weekly newspaper in Cherokee and English (see Periodicals), began to appear. Sequoya was sent to Washington in 1828 as an envoy of the Arkansas band, in whose affairs he bore a conspicuous part, and when the Eastern Cherokee joined the old settlers in the W. his influence and counsel were potent in the organization of the reunited nation in Indian Ter. When, in his declining years, he withdrew from active political life, speculative ideals once again possessed his mind. He visited tribes of various stocks in a fruitless search for the elements of a common speech and grammar. He sought also to trace a lost band of the Cherokee that, according to tradition, had crossed the Mississippi before the Revolution and wandered to some mountains in the W., and while pursuing this quest ~~in the~~ in the Mexican sierras he met his death. See Mooney, Myths of the Cherokee, 19th Rep., B. A. E., 103 et sequ., 147, 148, 1900, and the authorities therein cited.