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W. G. D. Hinds,)
B. F. Jobe,) Proprietors

EDITORIAL ON CHOCTAW HISTORY

The trial of the suit of George S. Thebo vs. Green McCurtain and Wilson N. Jones in the district court here last week, and verdict in favor of defendants, closes a dramatic chapter of Choctaw history, and vindicates the official conduct of those who procured from the United States government and disbursed to the Choctaw people a sum of money exceeding two millions of dollars.

In this Governor Green McCurtain was the leader and moving spirit, as in nearly every matter affecting the welfare of the Choctaw people during the last decade, and especially since their entrance upon the transition period that is to mark their passage into the new order of things ordained by the United States government.

A brief history of the "Leased District" payment may prove interesting at this time:

By the treaty of 1866 the Choctaws and Chickasaws "leased" to the United States government a part of their lands, acquired under the patent of 1742, and lying west of the 98th degree of west longitude, for the specific purpose of settling friendly Indians thereon. Later,

the United States government assuming that the "lease" was an unconditional transfer, proceeded to open such lands to homestead settlement, and the territory of Oklahoma sprang into existence. The Choctaws and Chickasaws contended that the "lease" under the treaty of 1866 was not a transfer, and did not warrant the government in disposing of the land; but that upon violation of the terms of the "lease" the lands revert to them; and upon this theory, they demanded compensation for the lands so disposed of. By an act of the Choctaw council of 1889, a delegation was created for the purpose of pressing the claim of the Choctaws and Chickasaws for such compensation. This delegation proceeded to Washington, and finally, after a delay of some two years secured an appropriation of nearly three million of dollars, placing it in the hands of the President of the United States, to be delivered to the Choctaws and Chickasaw, when they should send delegations to Washington clothed with power to execute a transfer of the title to the lands in question. It was then that President Harrison exercised his executive prerogatives with a firmness rarely equalled. He asserted that the appropriation ought not to have been made, and refused to proceed. A commission composed of Wilson N. Jones, Governor, and Green McCurtain, treasurer of the Choctaw Nation, and Thomas D. Ainesworth, was created and clothed with power to relinquish the title of the Choctaws, and receive the money. A like Chickasaw delegation was created and empowered, but the President refused to move, and so the matter stood at the close of his administration. In June 1893 a few months after the beginning of

the Cleveland administration, the delegation was recognized, the relinquishments of the title executed in form satisfactory to the president, and the share of the Choctaw Nation in the money was paid over to Green McCurtain, treasurer.

By an act of the Choctaw council he was authorized to pay out per capita to the Choctaw people this vast sum of money. He set to work to make up correct rolls of Choctaw citizens, and by the end of the summer the rolls had been made and approved and the money disbursed, each Choctaw citizen, man, woman and child, receiving \$103 and some cents per capita. At the next session of the national council he rendered his report and it was approved by an act of the council.

The Thebo suit, just ended, is the last echo of that vast transaction, and its disposal adds to the approval of the Choctaw people the approval of the government of the United States of the Stewardship of Gov. McCurtain and his associates.