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Oklahoma Historical Society
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

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Choctaws who insist that their tribal offices should be held by Choctaw Democrats offer the argument that Choctaw affairs might receive more consideration in Washington if Choctaw officials were in sympathy and affiliation with the National administration. To this is offered the objection that if the Choctaws attempt to draw party lines their cause in Congress might suffer, for many of their best friends in Congress are Republicans.

The affiliated Choctaw and Chickasaw people have an undivided estate of \$30,000,000 for which they are asking per capita distribution, and which is menaced by various organizations of individuals who are seeking to "feather their nests" out of this vast wealth. In addition, the Choctaws and Chickasaws are praying to Congress for a final settlement of their tribal affairs, that each citizen may be released upon his own responsibility to live as white men live.

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number of subordinate tribal offices.

This proposed change will attract the attention of individuals and associations throughout the United States who for years have manifested an altruistic interest in the welfare of the Five Civilized Tribes, as it obtrudes a partisan political question at a time when the economic welfare of the Choctaws and Chickasaws are at stake.

Chief Locke did not attend the convention, taking the view that his office was not vacant. The bulk of the fullbloods are included in his following, and the wishes of the fullbloods have always received the fullest consideration in Washington. The convention was organized against Locke and without his resistance. He was willing, however, to submit the question to the Choctaw voters.

Chief Locke has a beautiful country home near Antlers. The house is big and roomy, with wide fireplaces, and from its open door at this season may be seen a winding stream, white-banked with the splendor of blooming dogwood. Chief Locke is a man of collegiate education, an industrious reader of the classics, but most of all a lover of nature. His complexion is swarthy. He is about 36 years old. His sympathies are

all with the fullbloods who have great affection for him. He speaks Choctaw fluently. He voted against both treaties for the abolishment of the Choctaw government, saying that he preferred to be called non-progressive, rather than expose the fullbloods to what he believed would be their certain destruction. He was sitting at dinner when news came that the Dawes Commission to the Five Civilized Tribes had arrived in Indian Territory. In extreme agitation and grief, he said that he hoped to die before the Commission had destroyed the happiness of the Choctaws. He bitterly resented the breaking by the United States government of treaties which the Choctaws had believed were made with sacred oaths. Yet, a few years later, Locke was a soldier in the Spanish-American war, upholding the flag of his new country. He is intensely patriotic, and a major in the Oklahoma National Guard.

The Choctaws not only want, but need the money which is deposited to their credit in the United States Treasury. The sum amounts to millions of dollars. The fullblood Choctaws in many instances are living in poverty. Citizens of mixed blood, known as "blue eyed" Indians, and those who hold citizenship rights by inter-marriage, are in more comfortable circumstances, largely

because the white man or the man with more white than Indian blood, is more capable of helping himself. The Indian has little business sagacity.

The fullbloods live in the remote and mountainous portions of the Choctaw country, and have lived there since earliest days. As a class they were opposed to the dissolution of their tribal government. Fullbloods fifty years old relate that in their boyhood the appearance of a white man in their neighborhood was so unusual as to attract the attention of the entire family.

"One day," said a fullblood, "my father showed us the tracks of a horse passing along the trail near our home. 'A white man has been here,' said my father, 'for the horse was shod.'" For a long time we were curious about that white man, and wondered what he could have been doing in our country."

Consenting, finally, to the breaking up of their tribal government, the fullbloods grew eager for their share of the tribal estate which in the old days was held in common. The land was divided, and each received his share. From time to time, there were divisions of money. The fullblood was in clover. Such of this money as was not speedily grabbed by white

was quickly and freely spent --- as freely and quickly as water rolls down the riffles of the Kiamitia.

The Choctaws knew that millions were to come, and neglected to bestir themselves in the ways of civilized industry. They spent all their money, and sat waiting for more. But the United States government was taking its own time and its own way in winding up the tribal estate. The task was herculean. Litigation of every sort interposed to delay the settlement. The enactment of laws to protect the individual Choctaws against the crooked schemes of white grafters who had flocked to the Choctaw country by thousands became imperative. The enforcement of those laws was obstructed in every possible way.

And all this time the Choctaw was saying, "Iskulli sa-bunnie, which means, "I want (my) money." With millions ultimately to be distributed, the Choctaw was "dead broke." His situation was rendered more intolerable during the last three or four years by bad crops at home, and general business depression throughout the country.

"Iskulli sa-bunnie" has become pathetic.

The Choctaws and Chickasaws owned their lands and moneys in common, all division to be on a per capita basis. Roughly, there are 30,000 Choctaws and Chickasaws by blood and intermarriage, which excludes negro freedmen. There are approximately 19,000 Choctaws, of which about one half are fullbloods. In additions to lands and moneys they have received under a per capita distribution, there is a remaining estate in round numbers, as follows:

Unallotted and timber lands to be sold, 175,000 acres, worth \$700,000; cash in United States Treasury, \$8,000,000; receivable on land sold, \$6,000,000; surface of segregated coal and asphalt lands, 240,000 acres, \$1,200,000; 450,000 acres coal and asphalt, worth \$12,000,000 at lowest estimate. Conservatively, the total sum amounts to about \$30,000,000.

Such a vast amount of wealth naturally cannot escape the eyes of greed. Stupendous schemes have been devised by enterprising white men to participate to the fullest possible extent in the enjoyment of this great fortune. Only the United States government stood between the Indians and those who sought to prey upon them.

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The Choctaws and Chickasaws now felt that their troubles were at an end, and renewed their incessant appeal, "Iskulli sa-bunni." But they were mistaken.

When the Choctaws came west of the Mississippi in the 30's, many of their tribesmen remained behind in Mississippi, after having been given their share of tribal property in that State. Those who remained behind were to receive full citizenship rights in Indian Territory if they should ever elect to remove there. This right was unimpaired until the citizenship rolls of the Choctaws were closed in this country, March 4, 1907. These Mississippi Choctaws were mostly of mixed blood and citizens by intermarriage.

There were fullbloods in Mississippi, however, for whom the Oklahoma Choctaws felt the strongest sympathy, and upon their removal to Oklahoma several years ago, to the number of 1634 persons, they were

given property valued at \$15,000,000.

Recently, the "blue-eyed" Choctaws remaining in Mississippi, and living elsewhere throughout the United States, decided to "git something while the gittin' was good." Their interests were syndicated, and their promotion in Congress undertaken by the Texas-Oklahoma Company, composed of lawyers and diverse other persons, and incorporated under the laws of Arizona, with a paid up capital of \$100,000. This company represents about 25,000 claimants, and recently had expended more than \$40,000 in trying to prevail upon Congress to recognize and authorize the citizenship rights of these claimants. If this should be done, not only would the \$30,000,000 due the Choctaws and Chickasaws be wholly consumed, but the latter would be in debt to the beneficiaries of the Texas-Oklahoma Company.

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This claim of these Mississippi Choctaws has received an adverse decision in at least seven different instances; namely, by the Federal Courts of Indian Territory; by the Dawes Commission; by the Choctaws and Chickasaws and the United States government in the preparation of the supplemental treaty agreement; by Congress when it closed the tribal rolls in 1907; by Samuel Adams, first assistant Secretary of the Interior; and in 1915 by a sub-committee of the House Committee on Indian Affairs, and by Secretary of the Interior Franklin K. Lane.

Those behind the claim were powerful enough in 1914, however, to defeat a per capita payment of \$100 to each Choctaw citizen in Oklahoma. Senator John Sharp Williams of Mississippi did it with an amendment which made the payment contingent upon recognition of the suit brought by the Mississippi

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