

HUNTER & BIGBY.

DOWLING PARTY #7846

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Hummingbird & Bigby
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Interview with Martin Rowe
Stilwell, Oklahoma

DOWNING PARTY

Political parties were organized in the Cherokee Nation soon after the coming of the immigrants in the years of 1836, '37 and '38. In the election of 1840 the two main parties in the Cherokee Nation were the Ross and the Ridge Parties.

These parties started after their great leaders and the Cherokee people were divided. That faction that favored removal and sympathized with the Ridges and the Boudinots belonged to the Ridge Party.

That faction of Cherokees who did not favor the removal and stood loyal with their Chief, John Ross, organized another party that they called the Ross Party. These were the names of the political parties before the Civil War - Ridge and Ross.

When the Civil War broke out in 1860, the governments of both the North and the South sent representatives to the Cherokee Nation to induce the Cherokee Nation to favor one of the sections. But at that time there existed a hatred among the Cherokees themselves. The killing of Major and John Ridge

and Boudinot and several others who had participated in the treaty that had caused the removal, had made enmity which was severe.

So the followers of the treaty and the descendants of the Ridges and Boudinots all went with the South. In other words the Ridge Party went with the Confederacy.

The Ross Party stood loyal with the United States and the Ross Party favored the North. After the Civil War or at the election when Louis Downing was elected Principal Chief on the Downing ticket for the Cherokee Nation, the name, Ridge Party, was changed to the Downing Party in honor of its great leader.

Louis Downing was the only Cherokee ever elected Principal Chief who was almost a fullblood. He at once changed the name Ridge to Downing. Some old timers say that the change was made because there were so many Cherokees that hated the name Ridge.

The reason that Louis Downing was elected was because he was more Cherokee than any other Chief they ever elected, and therefore both sides among the fullbloods supported him in this election.

The name of the Ross Party also was changed after the death of Chief Ross. In the Civil War the Ross Party was known

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as the "Supporters of the Union" this was in the Cherokee language. After the death of their leader they changed their party name to the National.

So the leaders of the Downing Party were Louis Downing, their Chief and the council that was elected the year that Downing was elected. The beginners of the National Party were Rabbit Bunch and some of the Bushyheads. The exact date I do not know.