

THE CHEROKEE PHOENIX: PIONEER OF INDIAN JOURNALISM

By Robert G. Martin, Jr.*

A crippled Cherokee and a Calvinist missionary made possible the first Indian newspaper in America, the *Cherokee Phoenix*.

The Indian sat by a campfire with several tribesmen one night in the early 1800's. When a brave remarked that white men must be wiser than red men because they could talk on paper, the crippled one shook his head. When his other comrades took issue with him, the cripple made a jest that he, too, could make written talk, and the conversation moved to other subjects. But the lame one remembered, and he spent nearly a dozen years perfecting an alphabet for the Cherokee language.

The Indian's English name was George Guess, but he is better known as Sequoyah.

Time was somewhere in the last third of the 18th Century when Sequoyah was born. Little is known of his parentage and early life, but records show he served with a Cherokee Indian unit against the British in the War of 1812, despite an early affliction which left one leg lame.

Information about the struggle to create an alphabet for his people is as obscure as are his early years. Authors picture him painfully sorting out the syllables of his language and inventing symbols to represent them, then encountering difficulties recalling which sounds went with which figures, and finally scratching them on a piece of wood with a nail.

Mixed with the Cherokee symbols are English capital letters. Sequoyah is reputed to have been walking along a Georgia road one

*Robert G. Martin, Jr., completed work for a Master of Arts degree in journalism at the University of Oklahoma in January, 1947. He is now employed as Director of Public Relations and Assistant Professor of Journalism at Phillips University, Enid, Oklahoma. In submitting his paper for publication, Mr. Martin has stated: "This article includes an integration of historical information about the *Cherokee Phoenix* and an analysis of the contents of copies of the newspaper available in the Frank Phillips collection at the University of Oklahoma library. The file in the collection includes most of the issues of the *Phoenix* published at New Echota, Georgia, between March 13, 1828 (Vol. I, No. 4) and December 10, 1829 (Vol. II, No. 35)."

An incomplete file of the *Cherokee Phoenix* is bound and preserved in the Newspaper Files of the Oklahoma Historical Society, beginning with the issue for April 17, 1828 (Vol. L, No. 9) and ending with March 29, 1834 (Vol. V, No. 43). This incomplete file shows several changes in the "flag" or title line during the period of publication in New Echota together with changes in editors and printers (see photostat illustrations in this article).—Ed.

day when he scuffed a piece of paper with his foot. He picked it up. It was a newspaper and from it the Indian Cadmus took the shapes of the biggest letters to use in his syllabary.¹

After several years of experimentation, during which time he removed to Arkansas with Chief Jolly's expedition of 1817, he had boiled his alphabet down to 86 characters, each one representing a sound syllable of the Cherokee language. But, during this time, many of Sequoyah's brother Cherokees must have come to think him crazy. They saw him let his farm grow up in weeds and heard him mutter word sounds to himself—sounds only his small daughter, of all who heard them, bothered to learn to connect with the strange lines Sequoyah scratched on stones or flat pieces of wood. So, when the Indian perfected his alphabet, he was still confronted with the problem of getting his tribesmen to accept it. This acceptance is supposed to have been brought about almost by accident.

One day, when Sequoyah was trying to convince several fellow Indians of his achievement, his little daughter came into the room and chanced to read aloud the words he had written for them. Impressed, the men for the first time began to think there might be more than a crazy man's pipe-dream in the symbols, and they persuaded tribal chiefs to arrange a formal test.

On the day the syllabary was put on trial, the lame Indian, in one room, wrote messages to his daughter, in another, as directed by tribal representatives. Since she had learned what each letter stood for, she was able to read them with sufficient accuracy to convince the more progressive Cherokees that Sequoyah's alphabet should be accepted by the tribe.

Sequoyah took written messages from the Cherokees living in Arkansas to relatives and friends in Georgia in 1821. There, he introduced his syllabary by teaching recipients to read the correspondence they received. It is said that a Cherokee of average intelligence could learn the alphabet in three days. Sequoyah had enabled his people to "talk on paper," in their own tongue, and he thus paved the way for the introduction of a printing establishment in the Cherokee nation.

The missionary, who was so important in the founding of a national newspaper, was named Samuel Austin Worcester. He made use of Sequoyah's creation to turn the dream of a Cherokee press into a reality.

Worcester left Boston in August, 1825, to teach the Cherokee nation the meaning of the terms "salvation" and "baptism." He was sent by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.

¹ Grant Foreman, *Sequoyah*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1938), p. 39.

To accomplish his goals, Worcester needed, besides his knowledge of the Bible, some understanding of medicine, bookkeeping, butchering, bargaining, teaching—in short, a knowledge of how to do everything a frontier community would need to have done.

Not the least of Worcester's goals was that of translating the Word of God into the Cherokee tongue. To do this by hand would be an endless task, Worcester must have reasoned, so the thing to do would be to show the Cherokees the value of having a printing press of their own.²

MATERIALIZATION OF A DREAM

Worcester repeatedly suggested that the tribe be provided with adequate printing facilities. He pointed out the benefits to be derived from the printed use of Sequoyah's characters. The first official steps in that direction were taken by the National Council shortly after the adoption of the Cherokee constitution in 1826. The Council appropriated money to establish a national press, and it turned to Worcester for help in executing the project.

The minister, in turn, appealed to his American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, who cheerfully undertook the job of securing a press and type fonts for its Cherokee friends. To the print shop of Baker and Greene, of Boston, went a sheet of paper bearing the strange symbols which comprised Sequoyah's alphabet. Punches were made and types cast. The Board also purchased a font of English type, and arrangements were made for the purchase of a press of "a very superior kind."³

The press was a "union" model, of a size called "small royal," made of cast iron and with spiral springs to hold up the platen. Frames were placed on its flat bed and the type in them inked with wool-filled deerskin balls, because rollers had not then been put in general use.⁴

The Board advanced money for this equipment and was later reimbursed by the Cherokees.

Meanwhile, the Cherokee National Council had voted to establish a weekly newspaper, which was to bear the name *Cherokee Phoenix*, pronounced *Tsa-la-ge-Tsi-le-hi-sa-ni-hi*. A statement by the Principal Chief to the National Council on October 13, 1827, asserted,

The public press deserves the patronage of the people, and should be cherished as an important vehicle in the diffusion of general information, and, as no less powerful auxiliary, in asserting and supporting our political rights. . . . The only legislative provision necessary for conducting the press . . . is to guard against the admission of scurrilous productions of

² Althea Bass, *The Cherokee Messenger*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1936), p. 37.

³ Grant Foreman, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

⁴ Althea Bass, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

a personal nature. The freedom of the press should be as free as the breeze that glides upon the surface.⁵

The chiefs selected as editor a twenty-seven-year-old named Elias Boudinot, a man who had been educated at the Cornwall, Connecticut, mission school. He had been born Galagina (The Buck), but, as a fifteen-year-old boy, was sent to the Connecticut school by Moravian missionaries to the Cherokees. While there, he adopted the name of Elias Boudinot, a celebrated New Jersey philanthropist, who was his greatest benefactor.

Worcester had been translating the Bible into Cherokee. By December, 1827, one book was ready for printing. Since Baker and Greene had completed the casting of Sequoyah's alphabet it was used for the first time to publish Genesis in the *Missionary Herald*.⁶

Soon after this, the press, type and office furniture were loaded on a ship in Boston harbor and started on their tedious journey to Georgia. While the press was en route, two printers, white men named Isaac Harris and John F. Wheeler, were engaged. When they arrived at New Echota, the Cherokee capital, Worcester and Boudinot set to work acquainting them with the Cherokee alphabet.

Harris seemed unable to learn the syllabary and Wheeler became the man who set type in the Indian characters. Wheeler took his work seriously. He adapted himself to life in the Cherokee nation, married into the Watie family, and even removed as far as Arkansas with the Cherokees in 1834. John Candy, who married a sister of Wheeler's wife, was a great help to the printers because of his knowledge of both the Cherokee and English written languages.

The town of New Echota, home of the *Phoenix*, was a result of Indian acceptance of white civilization. Its six frame houses and four stores clustered about the Council house. The appearance of the Cherokee capital city was much the same as that of many Georgia crossroads settlements. Set in red-soiled hills among the pines of Northwest Georgia, it was located two miles east of the present town of Calhoun.

A monument, paid for by Congress and dedicated in 1931, marks the site of the hewed log structure which housed the *Phoenix*. The building was thirty feet long and twenty feet wide, and was erected by Cherokee carpenters. Inside, crude type-stands were set up. Then, Wheeler spent many hours designing and building a special three by three and one half foot case, containing more than 100 compartments, to hold the letters and numbers of the Cherokee alphabet type.

⁵ Carolyn Thomas Foreman, *Oklahoma Imprints, (1835-1907), A History of Printing in Oklahoma before Statehood*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1936), p. 26.

⁶ Grant Foreman, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

The 1,000-pound press, and its accompanying equipment, arrived February 1, 1828, after a jolting 200-mile wagon trip from Augusta, Georgia, over mountainous traders' paths to the Conasauga valley. After the press was assembled, Harris took a team and wagon and scoured the nearby districts of Tennessee in search of newsprint. During the first three weeks in February, the *Phoenix* staff worked diligently to master the intricacies of their new machine and in hand setting copy for the inaugural edition. Worcester drew up a prospectus for the *Phoenix*, calling for the publication of information on four general subjects. These were: (1) Laws and documents of the nation; (2) accounts of manners and customs of the Cherokees, and the progress in education, religion and arts of civilized life; (3) principal interesting news of the day; and (4) miscellaneous articles, calculated to promote literature, civilization, art and religion.⁷

Boudinot had his own dreams for the paper. They were disclosed in his letter to a brother-in-law in Connecticut, Herman Vaill. His objectives were to keep missionary-minded people of the North interested in Cherokee affairs and to bring current news to isolated Indians. "We have nothing to recommend our paper," wrote Boudinot, "but novelty and our good intentions. We do not wish to be thought as striving to rival other papers of the day by exhibiting to the public learning, talents and information, for these we do not profess to possess. . . . Our object is simple, and in our opinion requires no great attainments. It is . . . the benefit of the Cherokees, who," Boudinot admitted, ". . . are uninformed."⁸

On February 21, 1828, Volume I, Number 1, of the *Cherokee Phoenix* was issued.

DESCRIPTION OF THE *Phoenix*

The title line, or "flag," of the newspaper carried the words "Cherokee Phoenix," printed in the Sequoyah syllabary. Between the two syllabary words was the figure of an eagle, with the English word, "Protection," semi-circling its head. Under this title line, also in English, the print read: *Cherokee Phoenix*.

The four-page paper named its editor and chief printer at the top of the left hand column on page one, and followed this with the subscription and advertising information in English, also repeated in Cherokee:⁹

At \$2.50 if paid in advance, \$3 in six months, or \$3.50 if paid at the end of the year.

To subscribers who can read only the Cherokee language, the price will be \$2.00 in advance or \$2.50 to be paid within the year.

⁷ Althea Bass, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

⁸ Ralph Henry Gabriel, *Elias Boudinot, Cherokee, and His America*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1941), p. 111.

⁹ *Cherokee Phoenix*, Vol. I, No. 4.

Every subscription will be continued unless subscribers give notice to the contrary before commencement of a new year, and all arrearages paid.

Any person procuring six subscriptions, and becoming responsible for payment, shall receive a seventh gratis.

Advertisements will be inserted at seventy-five cents per square for the first insertion and thirty-seven and a half cents for each continuance; longer ones in proportion.

All letters addressed to the editor post paid will receive due attention.

The pages of the Phoenix were five columns wide, each column measuring fourteen picas, or "ems," as compared to the twelve-pica width used at the present time by a majority of United States newspapers. Columns were twenty-two inches long.

Stories were set in ten-point body type. Sometimes ten-point capital letters, in black-face type, were used to headline the stories, but most heads were in fourteen-point black-face capitals. In accordance with the usage of the time, headlines were mere labels for the story rather than captions describing its contents. For instance, a story on the Cherokee land question would not be heralded, as we are now accustomed, by the statement:

GEORGIA SENATOR
CHARGES INDIANS
MISUSE PROPERTY

Rather, the article would be introduced by the single word:

INDIANS.

The National Council subsidized the Cherokee newspaper and guaranteed Boudinot a salary of \$300.¹⁰ Revenue from subscriptions was uncertain and advertising had not come into its own by 1828 as a major source of newspaper financial support.

What advertising the *Phoenix* did carry was placed at the bottom of the two right hand columns on page four. This usually amounted to no more than a square or two, set in six-point type. In this section, rewards were posted for lost pocketbooks or strayed livestock; official election returns were carried; runaway slaves and debtors were described; and other publications, such as the *Religious Intelligencer* published at Cumberland college, were advertised.

Once, Boudinot inserted the advertisement: "Wanted: a Journeyman printer for the *Phoenix*." Another time, court house bids were advertised; a carpenter and cabinet maker announced the opening of his shop; and a warning was issued against accepting certain notes of hand, which were often used instead of currency in those

¹⁰ Grant Foreman, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

days. And when a local academy was started, the *Phoenix* advertisement read:¹¹

EDUCATION: New Echota Academy has commenced and is expected to continue. . . . Board, lodging and washing may be had for \$1.00 per week.

Boudinot earned his \$300. He prepared a weekly editorial, corrected proof sheets, was business manager and also wrote most of the copy for publication in Cherokee.¹² He could not write as rapidly in Cherokee as in English; further, John F. Wheeler was the only printer who could set the type of Sequoyah's syllabary. As a result, the *Phoenix* averaged a little less than three columns of type in Cherokee, compared to seventeen in English, in each edition. However, since each Cherokee character represented a syllable, while it occupied only the amount of space taken up by an English letter, this difference was not so great as it might seem.

At the end of the first year of publication, Boudinot sought to obtain a more remunerative subscription list. He decried the number of subscribers not paid up, then followed up his comments with a restatement of the main topics to be discussed in the *Phoenix*. These the editor named as the removal question, religion and morals and domestic economy. He promised to use "as much Cherokee as possible" in the paper, but explained, "all of it must be original and this is a great burden."¹³

Boudinot promoted the widest circulation possible among Whites and Indians in other parts of America. Agents for subscriptions and payments were listed in each issue. By December of 1829, there were accredited agents in Boston, Massachusetts; New York City, Conandaigua and Utica, New York; Richmond, Virginia; Beaufort and Charleston, South Carolina; Statesville, W. T.; Powal, Maine; Mobile and Bellefonte, Alabama; Augusta, Georgia; and in the Choctaw nation. There was also "Mr. Thomas R. Gold, an itinerant gentleman."¹⁴

WHAT THE EDITOR WROTE

The editorial contributions of Elias Boudinot appeared in the *Phoenix* each week under the heading of "New Echota." An examination of sixteen issues of the journal, eight of them published in 1828 and eight in 1829, shows how much the Cherokee government used its official newspaper to publicly denounce injustices done the nation.

This subject prompted the principal editorial matter in no less than nine of the editions checked. Five of the papers discussed the

¹¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, No. 49.

¹² Ralph Henry Gabriel, *op. cit.*, p. 113.

¹³ *Cherokee Phoenix*, Vol. II, No. 2.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, No. 35.

land problem, the main controversy. The March 27, 1928 issue carried a factual editorial on this topic; the November 26 paper reprinted a long statement made by the governor of Georgia asking removal of the Indians.

By the summer of 1829, the land question had become a serious concern of the Cherokees. On June 10, Boudinot editorialized on a long letter from a "well-wisher," who told how unsatisfactory were the Western lands of the Cherokees and Creeks. The *Phoenix* editor also took this occasion to publish a heated denial of an article which had appeared in a Washington, D. C. newspaper asserting that the Indian tribes had made little progress in becoming civilized. The June 17 paper pursued the land issue, commenting on how well Georgia representatives were getting along in seeking to persuade President Andrew Jackson to favor their claims. Next, the July 1 *Phoenix* complained that an unfavorable survey had been made of the boundary between the Cherokee and Creek nations. Boudinot climaxed his editorials in this paper by remarking that Georgians might be elated by their new prospects for land, but that Georgia "will have to overcome one great obstacle before she becomes a great state—slavery."

Other examples of editorials lamenting treatment of the Indians told of an Indian-question debate in Congress;¹⁵ errors found in the Cherokee constitution by United States authorities, and about the deposition of the Creek chieftan by an Indian agent;¹⁶ and the extract of a letter from Colonel Thomas L. McKenney, which misrepresented Indian claims, according to Boudinot.¹⁷

The following reproduction of "New Echota" from the edition of April 29, 1829, provides a good sample of the form and style of Boudinot's editorial columns:¹⁸

Mr. David Brown, who is about to make a tour in Alabama and West Tennessee, is appointed an agent to procure subscribers and receive payment for the *Cherokee Phoenix*.

* * * *

We are under the disagreeable necessity of suspending our paper for a week, or possibly more, for want of ink. We have been disappointed in the expectation of a reasonable supply, which we made an effort to procure.

• • * •

We present to our readers, in our first page, the memorial of R. Campbell, of Savannah, to the Senate of Georgia. We received it in a pamphlet form. The author states in his advertisement, that the honorable Senate, after hearing two or three pages read, refused to hear any more of it, on account of disrespectful language, but committed it to the joint committee on the state of the Republic. This Committee also refused to hear any part of it on the same ground. This is a very good comment on the

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, No. 4.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, No. 7.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, No. 33.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, No. 7.

liberality of the Legislature of the State of Georgia. The memorial will speak for itself. We publish it especially for the benefit of the citizens of this nation, to *shew* them that they have worthy friends *even* in Georgia.

We understand that a party of the Creeks who emigrated to the West of the Mississippi not long since, have returned by way of Creek Path to their old country.

Many of the "New Echota" columns were longer than the one above.

Religious and moral issues were the second most prevalent type of editorial matter. For example, in the March 20, 1828 edition, Boudinot defended the work of missionaries among the Indians. On April 3, he deplored a condition which was allowing the lawless to go unpunished in the Cherokee nation. December 10 of the following year, the editor published an explanation from Judge George Saunders of the whipping of two white horse thieves; the judge asserted he had lightened their punishment by half in order to avoid criticism by Georgia authorities. A temperance resolution, formulated by the Cherokee Temperance Society, was reprinted in the issue of November 4, 1829.

Once, when Worcester had been accused of managing the *Phoenix* for his own purpose, Boudinot published a letter of denial from the missionary and added his own refutation.¹⁹ Another time, Boudinot published his resignation, asserting that since the National Council did not see fit to provide him with an assistant, his ill health would not permit him to continue as editor.²⁰ Apparently, however, he was persuaded to remain at his post.

Miscellaneous editorials in the sixteen journals perused for Boudinot's contributions included the mention of a school started at New Echota and a letter of praise from a European gentleman who had read the *Phoenix*.

The over-all picture of editorials submitted by the man who directed the *Phoenix* for more than four years shows a policy dedicated to championing Cherokee claims and the Christian religion.

LOCAL NEWS

Column after column of straight news matter in the *Phoenix* discussed the Indian land problems. Two full pages, clipped from Eastern newspapers, and presenting the Indian's side of the controversy, appeared in the edition of September 9, 1829. Another time, twelve columns were devoted to this subject. In the second year of publication, a standing head, "Indians," was used to introduce articles on Indian matters. This always appeared on the first page, often immediately following the masthead, in the left hand column.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, No. 37.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, No. 40.

Letters to the editor frequently were printed. Most supported the paper's editorial policy in regard to removal or temperance or religion. Many times these were signed, "A Friend," or with the writer's initials, rather than with a name. When Boudinot received a subscription request from William DeHumboldt, Berlin, Germany, he printed DeHumboldt's letter in his editorial column. When Richard Fields wrote cynically of the "spacious and fine country in the west . . . of all regions the most uninviting and the poorest I ever saw," that too, received full reproduction in the editorial section.²¹

The first three issues of the *Phoenix* were used to publish the Cherokee constitution. The next twenty-one editions carried all important laws of the nation passed in preceding years. Actions of the Council were reported, and, among other public information broadcast in *Phoenix* columns, was a complete Cherokee census and tabulation of livestock, farming implements and other possessions.²²

Local events seldom appeared in the *Phoenix*. There were no items concerning personal visits, social happenings, sports or other occurrences which took place in Cherokee communities. The only local reporting concerned itself with news of violence or legal action. This was not a shortcoming of the Indian journalists, for newspapers of the 1820's and 1830's did not attempt to secure such items. Newspapers did not record human interest stories until the rise of the penny press in the middle and late 1830's; minor local affairs were not "covered" until newspapers added general reporters to their staffs in the 1840's.

It can be seen from the description in preceding paragraphs that locally produced news in the time of the *Phoenix* did not correspond to our local coverage of this century.

RELIGION AND MORALS

The dominating tone of the paper can be told in a single word: morality. Only Indian affairs claimed more space in the *Phoenix* than the subject of religion. Four issues examined specifically to discover their religious content show the amount of emphasis placed on this subject.

One paper carried a long quotation from Cecil, citing the importance of religion; another contained three travelogues concerning the activities of missionaries; a third described an African mission colony and two other features told of the success of religious reformers. "The Moral Condition of London," a sermon, highlighted the fourth *Phoenix* checked for religious matter. This one included a stern warning to Sabbath-breakers with a detailed account of how a young man who insisted on ice-skating on a Sunday was drowned.

²¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, No. 23.

²² *Ibid.*, Vol. I, No. 17.

The constant, vigorous campaign for temperance conducted in the columns of the *Phoenix* is well-illustrated by the poem, "Rum," which contained sixteen verses like the following:²³

Sinews-robber, worth-depriver,
Strength-subduer, hideous foe;
Reason-thwarter, fraud-contriver,
Money-waster, nation's woe."

The paper praised Swedish laws against intoxication; reported deaths attributed to liquor; devoted a full page to the temperance address delivered at a New Hampshire medical meeting.

The unhappy results of using tight-laced corsets were told. One item, for instance, cited the "distressing particulars" attending a certain woman's death, which was "produced by tight lacing which caused an abscess to form near the pit of the stomach."

The *Phoenix* carried stories of this morbid ilk often. It showed much distress at the sins it encountered, and those sins were many. Its crusade for righteousness was unceasing and its greatest weapons in this war on evil were the depressing stories which chronicled punishment of the unrighteous.

CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL MATERIAL

Much of the material used in the *Phoenix* was clipped from other newspapers or extracted from books and magazines. This literature included both fiction and non-fiction. Some selections are plainly pointed toward influencing Cherokee readers, such as Socrates' "Intermarriages," and Washington Irving's "Traits of Indian Character." Other choices seem to be only for entertainment or filler; such as the translation of a German story entitled, "The Tiger's Cave," and an anonymous piece about "Abduhl Rahhahman."

Clippings maintained the moral tone conveyed in local material used in the Indian newspaper. A sermon by Bishop Heber was reprinted in full; Pollock's "Course of Time" was clipped from the *Boston Recorded*; some of Franklin's words and an abridgement of Johnson's *Typographica* were included.

Short, humorous items were included in the *Phoenix*. Examples of these, which were clipped from other papers, illustrate the tenor of humor in the 1820's. One read:

The present style of shirt collars requires them to be about three inches broad above the cravat, and stiff, sharp as a butcher knife. A rough wag of a fellow from the Blue Ridge lately met a man with his head esconded [ensconced] within one of these collars in the streets of Baltimore—and struck with his strange appearance, he accosted him—"Gouge me, my hero, if I don't believe you've gct your shirt on wrong end upwards."

²³ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, No. 40.

And another went:

A young man lately dining at a hotel in Connecticut undertook to dissect a fowl; but, being unsuccessful, resigned the job to an older personage with an apology for having attacked a biped some twenty or thirty years older than himself.

The *Phoenix* attempted to tell its readers some of the things which were happening in their world. Two columns were given in one issue to a three months old account of the Russian defeat of the Turks at Shumla in June of 1829. In another publication of the paper, three columns dealt with "The Turkish War and the Gypsies." London papers supplied a majority of the foreign news clipped for the *Phoenix*, and most of these items were about Great Britain.

This foreign news was first included with news from other sections of the American continent, but by the second year of publication, the *Phoenix* staff separated these under the label headlines "Foreign" and "Domestic."

A condensation of United States happenings evolved under the "Domestic" heading. These were seldom more than one paragraph each in length, and they told of events which occurred in New York, Boston, New Orleans, Atlanta or other localities of the country. In one column the inauguration of Andrew Jackson as president was reported, followed by a squib about penitentiaries in the United States and also by a story which suggested African colonization by American Negroes. Another *Phoenix* told of troop movements, a steam boat accident at New Orleans, about a severe storm in New England, and a report on the Bank of the United States.

TYPICAL EDITION OF A *Phoenix*

A word-summary of a typical *Phoenix* has been made in belief that this is the best way of giving the reader an example of its scope. For this purpose the March 18, 1829, issue has been used.²⁴

The masthead, carrying official data of the publication, is at the top of the left hand column on page one. This leads into information concerning subscription prices and a list of authorized subscription agents. About half way down in column one is a story clipped from the *London* (England) *Christian* on a religious subject. This story carries over to the second column from the left, and is followed by a series of letters exchanged by a Colonel Hugh Montgomery, U. S. Indian Agent, and a Colonel Thomas L. McKenney, on the subject of Cherokee emigration. The letters fill the remaining columns on page one and continue into the second column on the second page.

The next story is one on improvements made by the Indians, taken from the *Columbian Register*. Then comes the "New Echota"

²⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, No. 1.

heading which Boudinot always placed at the top of his editorial section.

In this issue, the editor commented on the Indian affairs correspondence mentioned, on the spread of religion among the Choctaws and in valley towns, and the availability of Scripture tracts at the *Phoenix* office. Boudinot also related the story of the lashing of two thieves, blamed the postal service for late delivery of the *Phoenix*, and complained that a number of subscribers "had dropped without paying their debts to the paper."

This editorial comment, coupled with two letters to the editor, extends to the middle of the third page. One letter, signed "A Cherokee Farmer," deals with the subject of Christianity and opposes removal to the Western lands. A second letter, from "Quizote," describes adventures of an exploring party made up of Arkansas Cherokees.

A brief lesson in the Cherokee alphabet and grammar appears next. This is signed "W" and might have been prepared by Samuel Worcester, or, perhaps, by John Wheeler, the printer.

The label head, "Summary," introduces the following one-paragraph items of national and international news: the birth of quintuplets in Arkansas, publication of a Webster dictionary, pigs in Georgia, General Scott's resignation, a British House of Commons debate, a Maryland edict permitting a divorce decree after seven years of separation, and a Tennessee man who made fire from ice.

Still on page three, the translation of Matthew, Chapter XVI, precedes another column and a half of type set in Cherokee symbols.

Page four, the back page, starts with the word "Poetry" in 1/2-inch type. Poems included are entitled "The Meeting of the Ships" and "A Mother's Love." Miscellaneous stories follow, including hints for the manner and conversation of women in society. "The Sultan," from Walsh's "Narrative," clippings about English newspapers, monarchy, good manners and the privilege of the honest.

Just preceding the final advertisements for a slave named "Manuel" and an announcement that a copy of the Cherokee laws was available at the *Phoenix* office, Boudinot made a plea for support for his newspaper.

STRIFE

The *Cherokee Phoenix* had its "family troubles." Denominationalism caused the most serious example of this within a year after the founding of the newspaper.

Isaac Harris, a devout Methodist, apparently looking upon the sponsorship of Worcester as detrimental, began to circulate rumors among the Cherokees that their weekly journal was under domina-

tion of the missionary. Bitter criticisms came to the attention of Boudinot. When he discovered their source he set about obtaining authorization from the Council to hire and discharge staff members as he saw fit. Further, he published an open letter from Worcester in the November 12, 1828 issue, denying these charges and added his own disavowal of the "dictatorship."²⁵ The matter ended in the dismissal of Harris and Wheeler's assumption of foremanship.²⁶

But internal troubles were overtowered by the great shadow beginning to creep across the Cherokee nation. The citizens and the government of Georgia had long looked with covetous eyes toward the Cherokee lands. With the cession of their western lands they had only the acres owned by the Indian tribes in which to expand. As their pressure for removal of the Indians to the West steadily increased, Boudinot used the *Phoenix* to attack the actions of Georgia authorities. He tried hard to arouse sympathy for the Indian cause among readers in Northern states.

However, among the Cherokees, Worcester's Puritan influence and Boudinot's own convictions prompted him to advocate non-violence. The *Phoenix* editor also assaulted the increasing intemperance of his people, knowing that the results of this social evil gave Georgia further excuse for agitating for Indian removal on the grounds of undesirability.

DEMISE OF BOUDINOT AND THE *Phoenix*

Events soon lead to the removal of Boudinot as editor. Once before, in December of 1828, he had announced his resignation on the grounds of ill health, after the Council had failed to vote him enough money to hire an assistant editor.

Now, however, the problem was one of graver issues. Georgia officials had imprisoned Worcester and Wheeler, charging that, as United States citizens, they were stirring up trouble among the Cherokees and agitating against removal to the Western lands. Boudinot and John Ridge went North on a speaking tour in March of 1832, leaving Stand Watie, Boudinot's brother, in charge of the *Phoenix*. The speakers hoped to win additional sympathizers to the Indian cause.

The United States Supreme Court, in the Worcester vs. the State of Georgia case, 6 Peters 515, freed the missionary, but state authorities chose to invoke their alleged right to nullify actions of the national government. The split in the Cherokee nation stemmed from this event. Boudinot and other members of the Ridge-Boudinot faction came to believe that it would be useless for the Indians to remain in Georgia. They thought that the only chance for preserving national sovereignty would be to move to the Western lands.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, No. 37.

²⁶ Ralph Henry Gabriel, *op. cit.*, p. 113-114.

Principal Chief John Ross and the majority party of the Cherokees did not believe removal was inevitable. Difference of opinion over this, the most important national issue, brought Boudinot's resignation on August 1, 1832. Ross appointed Elijah Hicks, his own brother-in-law, as the new editor.

The paper appeared regularly until its seizure, late in 1832, by Stand Watie and the Georgia authorities, who operated it in the interests of the removal party. Its publication was irregular from that date. No paper was issued between February 9 and April 17, of 1833, and only two issues from April 17 until July 20. Only thirty more issues came from the press of the *Phoenix* before its final edition on May 31, 1834.

Constituted national authorities of the Cherokees sought to regain control of the press in 1835. Chief Ross and the Council appointed Richard Fields editor, and passed a resolution calling for transportation of the press to Red Clay, on the Tennessee border. (Georgia had prohibited the Nation from conducting their activities within the state limits.) When a wagon was sent to New Echota to recover the press the Georgia militia placed an armed guard around the *Phoenix* office. This action was suspected to have been taken under orders from the Cherokee agent, with the assistance of Stand Waite.

"From that time," Foreman reports, "The Cherokees were not only denied the use of their press but it was used to print slanderous communications against the Cherokee tribal authorities."²⁷

THE *Phoenix* LIVED ON

The *Phoenix* did not die, but Elias Boudinot was dead before its resurrection. He was murdered June 22, 1839, the same day that Major and John Ridge were killed, because he had signed the Treaty of New Echota in 1835 which pledged the Cherokee nation to removal to the territory that is now Oklahoma. Four years after Boudinot's death the National Council passed an act authorizing the publication of a newspaper. It was named the *Cherokee Advocate*. The name was derived from the *Phoenix*, which had adopted the title *Cherokee Phoenix and Indians' Advocate* late in 1828. Years later, in 1876, when another Boudinot, William P., edited the *Advocate* he printed a brief history of the paper and referred to it as a successor to the *Phoenix*.²⁸

The first issue of the *Advocate* appeared September 26, 1844. The legislature elected as editor W. P. Ross, a Princeton graduate and a nephew of Chief Ross. The newspaper was a governmental in-

²⁷ Grant Foreman, *op. cit.*, pp. 15-16.

²⁸ Grace Ernestine Ray, *Early Oklahoma Newspapers*, University of Oklahoma Bulletin, June 15, 1928, p. 23.

stitution, and as such was available to all parties. Dr. Morris L. Wardell states:²⁹

* * * The editor was generally fair in editorials and seldom did he go to the defense of his uncle, Chief Ross. The paper was well spoken of and received favorable comments from eastern newspapers. There were, however occasions when partisan bias characterized it.

We find evidence of this dissatisfaction coming from the former *Phoenix* apprentice printer, John Candy, in the form of a satirical letter written by him in 1846 criticizing W. P. Ross. And again in 1854, when John Rollin Ridge, an exile, wrote Stand Watie suggesting that a newspaper be established in nearby Arkansas for the good of the Cherokee nation.³⁰ Both these men were probably connected with the Ridge-Watie-Boudinot Treaty party which fared poorest with the *Advocate*. On the whole, the influence of the *Phoenix* and the *Advocate* represented the will of the people. With the exception of 1835 to 1844 and 1854 to 1870 they served the Cherokees through the remainder of their national existence.

The *Phoenix* was typographically accurate. Nine columns of one issue were checked by the writer without finding a single error.³¹ In another edition the mistake "Indains" appeared in a headline.³² But, when errors were made, corrections followed in the succeeding issue.³³

This regard for accuracy and quality extended to the editorial matter of the *Phoenix* and earned for it the regard of Eastern newspapers. Carolyn Thomas Foreman reports that "the interest in the Cherokee newspaper was very great and people ordered copies from all over the country, while the London *Times* exchanged with it on equal terms."³⁴ In addition, favorable comments are on record from the Paris publication, *Revue des Deux Mondes* (*Review of the Two Worlds*) and from a sub-librarian at Oxford University in England.³⁵

A study of the contents of the *Phoenix* offers convincing proof that the paper was a shining ambassador of good will for the Cherokee nation among its readers of the United States. To the Cherokees themselves, Sequoyah, Worcester and Boudinot brought the printed word in their own language.

Because of the pioneering of these three men, and others who made the *Phoenix* what it was, half of the Cherokee adult males

²⁹ Morris L. Wardell, *A Political History of the Cherokee Nation*, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1938, p. 51.

³⁰ Edward Everett Dale and Gaston Litton, *Cherokee Cavaliers*, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1939, p. 82f.

³¹ *Cherokee Phoenix*, Vol. I, No. 35.

³² *Ibid.*, Vol. II, No. 27.

³³ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, No. 11.

³⁴ *Oklahoma Imprints*, op. cit.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

could read in 1828; because of this pioneering W. P. Ross could boast in 1852 that "the number of adults in the Cherokee Nation not able to read or write may be counted on your fingers."³⁶ Because of Sequoyah, Worcester and Boudinot "the Cherokees became better informed of their laws and actions than any other Indian tribe."³⁷

³⁶ Morris L. Wardell, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

³⁷ Grant Foreman, *op. cit.*, p. 74.