

THE LEFLORE FAMILY AND CHOCTAW
INDIAN REMOVAL

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PREFACE

The Five Civilized Tribes were significant to the development of the South and particularly to the history of the state of Oklahoma. These native Americans had a civilization which was impressive to the white man when he arrived in America. One of these tribes, the Choctaws, was almost always friendly toward the white man and as a result of this association absorbed some of his customs, and increasing degrees of his culture. Another consequence of this association was the mixture of the two races. As the frontiersmen and the Choctaws intermarried the offspring of these two hardy elements of the frontier became the leaders of the tribe. It is selected members of one of these families, the LeFlore family, that provide the subject of this thesis. The sons and grandsons of Louis and Michael LeFlore were active in tribal affairs both in Mississippi and after removal to Indian Territory where they helped rebuild the Choctaw Nation.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The five Indian tribes, Choctaws, Chickasaws, Cherokees, Creeks and Seminoles, who had long occupied portions of southern states, the Carolinas, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and parts of Florida, Kentucky, and Tennessee, came into early contact with the explorers and traders of the European nations. During the years of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries these tribes developed a culture that was advanced beyond that of those to the north and to the west. They engaged in agriculture and raised livestock in addition to their hunting and fishing activities, which led to a relatively settled way of life. These tribes also developed their government to a high level of refinement and centralization. By the time of removal in the 1830's they had become known as the Five Civilized Tribes.

Contact with the white man had its consequences as the Indians adopted many of the newcomer's customs, both good and bad. As the two races mingled, the names of the mixed blood families began to stand out among the leaders of the tribes. Mixed blood leadership was probably to be expected for several reasons. They were more inclined to take advantage of educational opportunities and consequently as a whole were the better educated members of their tribes. In many instances the children of mixed blood families were sent to academies in the states near the Indian nations. The mixed bloods were also the economic leaders of their

tribes. These were the men who had the successful trading posts, the largest herds of livestock, and the best farms. Through their contact with the white men as fur traders and through attending their schools the mixed bloods accepted the value system of the white men, which often times made them the more aggressive members of their tribes. Some of the many examples of mixed blood families are the Folsoms, Colberts, and LeFlores.

The LeFlore family, which is of interest here, is a good example of leadership and influence exerted by a mixed blood family. Louis and Michael LeFlore were French traders who migrated from Canada to the Mobile Bay area in the late eighteenth century. Both married Choctaw women. Louis LeFlore established himself as a successful proprietor of a trading post and as a rancher. He married Rebecca Cravat, who was related to former Choctaw chiefs. After Rebecca's death Louis LeFlore married her younger sister Nancy.

The offspring of these marriages became outstanding for their contribution to the development of the Choctaw Nation in Mississippi during removal, and in the re-establishment of the Choctaw Nation in Indian Territory. The most notable of the LeFlores was Greenwood LeFlore, who was the last chief of the Choctaws east of the Mississippi and who signed the Choctaw removal treaty.

Removal created controversy and strife among all of the southern tribes, and the Choctaws were no exception. The issue of removal split the Choctaw tribe into bitter factions. The LeFlore family was swept up in this controversy. Greenwood LeFlore did not move to Indian Territory with his people, although his brothers Forbis and Basil did make the move. Forbis had refused to support his brother's candidacy for chief

and was thus disowned by his father Louis LeFlore. Forbis then migrated to Indian Territory with his tribe and worked to re-organize and re-establish the Choctaws school system. The other brother Basil also migrated and served as governor of the Choctaw Nation. Thomas LeFlore, the son of Michael LeFlore, also went to Indian Territory following removal. He served as chief of the old Greenwood LeFlore district.

The personal and public life of these men of the LeFlore family as they concern the removal and development of the Choctaw Indians in Indian Territory is the subject of this thesis. The approximate years covered are 1792 to 1890.

CHAPTER II

LOUIS LEFLORE

There are three families in the old Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations that stand out prominently for their numbers and the distinguished part which they played in the development of these two Indian tribes. They are the Colberts, the Folsoms and the LeFlores.¹ The LeFlore family is the subject of this paper.

The founders of the LeFlore family were voyageurs of French-Canadian ancestry whose love for adventure led them down the rivers from Canada to Mobile Bay on the Gulf Coast. Two brothers, Louis and Michael LeFlore, accompanied by a sister, Suzanne, appeared in the Choctaw Nation about 1792. Little information is available to indicate the background of these brothers before they came to Alabama. They were probably typical young French Canadians who engaged in the fur trade with northern Indians and somehow found their way south along the rivers. Some sources indicate that there was a third brother and that Michael and the third brother moved on to Mexico while Louis and the sister remained in the Choctaw country.² If Michael did go to Mexico, it was only for a brief period before he returned to Mississippi, for there he married a Choctaw woman and produced a sizeable family of seven children: Thomas, Michael,

¹Joseph B. Thoburn, A Standard History of Oklahoma (Chicago: The American History Society, 1916), IV, 1503.

²Rebecca Florence Ray, Greenwood LeFlore, Last Chief of the Choctaws East of the Mississippi River, (privately printed), 9.

Joel, Ward, Johnson, Mary, and Sophia.³ The sons and daughters of Michael LeFlore took an active part in tribal affairs, and one of them, Thomas, became a chief of the Choctaws in Indian Territory after their removal in 1832.

Of the two LeFlore brothers, Louis was to be the more active in Choctaw affairs, and his career is somewhat easier to trace. Louis LeFlore has been portrayed by tradition as being handsome, charming and very graceful on the dance floor, where he earned the title, 'flower of the fete' which displaced his original name. Thus he was known as Louis LeFleur; later the spelling and pronunciation were Americanized and changed to LeFlore.⁴

There are no records available of any contemporary portraits of Louis LeFlore and only one recorded description by a man who knew him personally. J. F. H. Claiborne, who as a young man was acquainted with Louis LeFlore, described him as being a small man, a Canadian of French origin, who spoke a patois of provincial French and Choctaw. When Claiborne knew him he was over 80 years old, yet he was still an enthusiastic hunter who spent days in the prairies and swamps. LeFlore told Claiborne of how his name was replaced by the sobriquet.⁵ There is an artist's conception of what LeFlore looked like taken from various traditional descriptions and painted at the request of the owners of LeFleur's

³Horatio Bardwell Cushman, History of the Choctaw, Chickasaw and Natchez Indians, (Greenville, Texas: Headlight Printing House, 1899), 343.

⁴The change of name is tradition. There is no way of knowing if LeFlore was the original name and if not what it was.

⁵J. F. H. Claiborne, Mississippi as a Province, Territory and State, (Jackson, Mississippi: Power & Barksdale, 1880), 116N.

Restaurant near Jackson, Mississippi. A full scale model hangs on the wall of the restaurant, and a miniature reproduction appears on the napkins.⁶

There is no verifiable record of a third brother among the Choctaws. Another Frenchman who came to the Mobile area at the same time as the LeFlores and was associated with them, could possibly be mistaken for the third brother. This man was Louis Durant, who, with the LeFlores, is given credit for introducing cattle into the Yazoo Valley of Mississippi.⁷

In 1792, when Louis LeFlore came to Mobile, it was a small trading post; for a time LeFlore operated from there and became acquainted with the Choctaws and traded among them.⁸ The United States government, in accordance with its initial treaties signed at Hopewell in 1786, was establishing trading posts among the Choctaw Indians in an attempt to

⁶Edyth McGraw, Letter to Author: April 26, 1961.

⁷Cushman, 344. Cattle were unknown among the Choctaw Indians, and these three men related an amusing tale about the first meeting of a Choctaw warrior and a young calf. The Indian, who had never seen such an animal, observed it for a while and noticed that it was eating grass; he then associated it with the deer which was familiar to him and concluded that it could not be too harmful. In an attempt to capture this new creature he lunged after it, the calf fled with the Choctaw hunter in pursuit. "Finally the physical endurance of a Choctaw hunter proved superior to that of a city calf; for he ran but a few feet behind his coveted prize." In a last desperate attempt to capture the calf the Indian grabbed its tail and hung on. After effective use of its hind legs the calf managed to free itself from the Indian's hold and sped off leaving the poor Indian sitting on the ground in a daze. While sitting there he discovered that the top of his knee would move back and forth, and he was sure that it was broken. The LeFlores and Durant arrived to explain the anatomy of the knee and also to explain the strange new animal that the Choctaw Indian hunter had been pursuing. Soon the Indians discovered that the beef of the white man's cattle was equal to that of their deer. Ibid., 345.

⁸N. D. Deupree, "Greenwood LeFlore." Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society, VI, (1903), 141. McGraw, Edyth, "LeFleur's Bluff," Greater Jackson Advertiser, XXI, (March, 1961), 9.

develop better relations with them. Louis LeFlore was selected as an agent for one of the posts. According to all accounts his personality enabled him to win the confidence of the Indians with whom he dealt.⁹

Some time later LeFlore's search for a location for his own trading post led him across Mississippi territory to the Pearl River. A bluff reaching some twenty feet above the river caught his eye, and he decided that this was the ideal spot for his trading post. He named it LeFleur's Bluff. LeFleur's Bluff is the present site of the capital, Jackson, Mississippi.¹⁰

While trading with the Indians, LeFlore met and married an Indian woman of high standing among the Choctaws, Rebecca Cravat, niece of Pushmataha.¹¹ Rebecca was the daughter of a Frenchman, John Cravat, and a half-blood Choctaw woman. Her younger sister Nancy was to become LeFlore's second wife some 12 years later, after the death of Rebecca. LeFlore thus married into a family that was prominent in Choctaw affairs. Through his marriage to Rebecca Cravat, Louis LeFlore was related to the

⁹McGraw, 9. Ray, 9.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Jonathan Daniels, The Devil's Backbone (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1962), 188. Smith, Frank E., The Yazoo (New York: Rinehart & Co. Inc., 1954), 51. The story of the meeting and marriage of LeFlore and Rebecca Cravat has been romanticized, told and retold again by writers. Rebecca had gone out to a spring near her family's cabin to fill a pitcher of water for use in preparation of the family's breakfast. LeFlore saw her, attracted her attention, and engaged her in conversation. Rebecca asked him to join the family for breakfast. Thus began the romance that led to their marriage. Allene deShazo Smith, Greenwood LeFlore and the Choctaw Indians of the Mississippi Valley (Memphis: C. A. David Printing Co., 1951), 20-21.

Coles and to Pushmataha, all of whom claimed a Shackchi-Hummas woman, Shumaka, as their progenitor.¹²

In 1838, the connection of the LeFlores and the Coles with Shumaka was made through the testimony of Coleman Cole. Cole stated that an old Indian woman named Shumaka, who in 1838 was past 100 years old, was his grandmother. She had been one of the two hundred Shackchi-Hummas to escape massacre of their clan.¹³ Rebecca and Nancy Cravat LeFlore were related to Shumaka through the marriage of their father, John Cravat to the sister of Coleman Cole's father, Robert, the child of Shumaka. Therefore, Coleman Cole, Nancy and Rebecca Cravat LeFlore were the grandchildren of Shumaka. To carry this relationship one step further, in another case Robert Cole stated that Greenwood LeFlore, the son of Louis and Nancy Cravat LeFlore was his nephew.¹⁴

¹²Peter J. Hudson Folder, (Oklahoma Historical Society) LeFlore Family History. The ancestry of Rebecca Cravat LeFlore is as interesting as is the mystery that surrounds the early life of Louis LeFlore. Her ancestry can be traced to a group of Indians called Shackchi-Hummas who were a group of Choctaws and Chickasaws, who, according to Choctaw tradition, crossed the Mississippi river and established a colony in Arkansas under the leadership of a chief named Shackchi Humma. The Shackchi-Hummas grew in strength until they felt strong enough to challenge the Choctaws; thereafter they followed a policy of war. After a prolonged period of attack the Choctaws determined to rid themselves of the menace in Arkansas. A three year war ensued which culminated with the battle of Oski Hlopah in 1770, which almost destroyed the entire Shackchi-Hummas tribe. One of the few survivors was a young Shackchi-Hummas girl named Shumaka, who was spared because of her unusual beauty. She was adopted into the tribe and lived among the Choctaws to be about 100 years old. Cushman, 186.

¹³Peter J. Hudson Folder, (Oklahoma Historical Society) LeFlore Family History.

¹⁴Choctaw Claims, Choctaw Nation vs. United States, V. I, no. 16, p. 175.

The kinship of Rebecca and Nancy Cravat LeFlore and Pushmataha is supported by Choctaw tradition.¹⁵ They were his nieces. Pushmataha never revealed to anyone who his parents were. When questioned about his origin he would bring himself to full height and tell the dramatic story of how he sprang from a red oak tree in a storm of thunder and lightning.¹⁶ It made a good story and perhaps was a clever way to avoid telling the true facts of his birth. Perhaps he did not want to disclose his real heritage, for being a Choctaw was a matter of pride. If he were the uncle of Rebecca and Nancy Cravat he would be descended from Shumaka and would not be a true Choctaw. This may have been the reason for his vague explanation concerning his origin.

Louis LeFlore fought under Jackson in the Creek War of 1813-1814 with Pushmataha in a Choctaw detachment. The only recorded information available regarding the detachment comes from the roll of the field officers and staff of the detachment. The Choctaws served from March 1 to May 29, 1814. Those on the roll as officers were: Pushmataha, Lieutenant Colonel; Hummingbird, Lieutenant Colonel; Louis LeFlore, Major, John Pitchlynn, Jr., First Lieutenant and Quarter Master; Samuel Long, Quarter Master.¹⁷

LeFlore operated a number of stands along the Natchez Trace. The trading post at LeFleur's Bluff was a successful operation and included

¹⁵Jonathan Daniels, Letter to author; September 16, 1963. Foreman, Grant. Indian Pioneer History. Mrs. Virginia Wyatt Harris, March, 1937. Tishomingo: Interview. Indian Pioneer History is a series of interviews with old timers in Indian Territory and early Oklahoma. The interviews were made under the direction of Grant Foreman.

¹⁶Anna Lewis, Chief Pushmataha, American Patriot (New York: Exposition Press, 1959), 16.

¹⁷H. S. Halbert and T. H. Ball, "The Creek War of 1813-1814." Folder, Oklahoma Historical Society Library.

trade with both white men and Indians who came along the Natchez Trace.¹⁸ At some time between 1810 and 1812, LeFlore moved his establishment 90 miles north of the Bluff to a new location on the Natchez Trace in present Choctaw county. Here he established a tavern or house of entertainment that came to be known as French Camp, because of his French name. His idea was to have a place for the stage to stop and a place for travelers to rest overnight and get a change of horses for the remainder of the trip. Today this place is the location of French Camp, an Indian school just off the paved road that follows the old Natchez Trace in present Choctaw County, Mississippi.¹⁹ The trading post of LeFlore was located some 300 yards from the present French Camp. It is marked by a peach tree on a rise just off the highway.²⁰ A more exact location of the site of the trading post places it in the south east corner, SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$, S 36, T17, R38 Choctaw Session alongside the old Natchez Trace, about 100 yards east of the parkway right of way. According to field notes of the original survey of T17N, R9E, Choctaw Session, made in 1833, the West chimney of LeFlore's old house is located N25W 250 links from the quarter section corner of NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of section 31. When this point was plotted on the parkway right map, it fell in the middle of the east end of the J. B. Curtis house. The location of French Camp Stand is as a consequence more accurately identified than any other historic site on the Natchez Trace.²¹ Located some 100 yards south of this site stands

¹⁸Daniels, 188. Smith, 51.

¹⁹McGraw, 9.

²⁰Sam Patterson, President, French Camp: Letter to author; June 26, 1962.

²¹Dawson A. Phelps, "Stands and Travel Accommodations on the Natchez Trace," The Journal of Mississippi History. XI, No. 1 (January, 1949), 27.

old French Camp Masonic Lodge. The interior lumber in the Lodge is that which came from the original LeFlore trading post.²²

LeFleur's Stand was listed among the names of accommodations to be found along the Natchez Trace between 1812 and 1822. As early as 1815 it went by the name French Camp, as the recorded references of William Richardson, an early traveler on the Natchez Trace, indicated. Another traveler who stayed there was the Reverend Learner Blackman, on March 26, 1813; he made no reference to the quality of the food or the service at the tavern.²³

The settlement of Choctaw families around LeFlore's trading establishment created a small community which led to the establishment of a mission school that came to be known as Bethel Station. The stand at French Camp was visited by the Reverend L. S. Williams, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, about 1822, and he recorded it as being the center of a little community of a dozen families on the Natchez Trace.

The principal reason for settlement of this neighborhood or scattering as it may be called are whites with Indian families, some of whom are of French descent. Among these are the LeFlores who are especially desirous of having a local school established.²⁴

Bethel Station was established near French Camp in 1822 and was closed after four years in June, 1826. The reason given for its closing was the movement of local residents from the area. Why the people left is a matter of speculation. One possible reason was the removal of

²²Patterson, Letter to author: June 26, 1962.

²³Phelps, "Stands and Travel Accommodations," 27.

²⁴Dawson A. Phelps, "The Choctaw Mission: An Experiment in Civilization." The Journal of Mississippi History. XIV, No. 1 (January, 1952), 48.

LeFlore's Stand from the Natchez Trace to Robinson Road which connected Jackson and Columbus, a new route that opened in 1825. Travellers soon seemed to prefer it to the older road, and thus LeFlore's Stand on the Natchez Trace was no longer profitable. LeFlore moved to a location on Robinson Road; perhaps other families in the community tended to follow his example since he was the oldest and most influential settler in the community. Bethel Station also followed French Camp and was located four miles south of a newly designated Upper French Camp. Upper French Camp belonged to Louis LeFlore as distinguished from another Lower French Camp settlement, which belonged to his brother Michael and which was located fourteen miles south of Louis LeFlore's home. Lower French Camp was existant when Louis moved to Robinson Road and appeared to be a well known landmark of the time.²⁵

Louis LeFlore's business activities extended beyond his trading post into the field of transportation and cattle raising. It was in the transportation business that LeFlore laid the basis for his fortune. The wealthy planters of the Natchez district sent orders to London for goods to satisfy their expensive tastes. Invoices often covered goods valued at as much as 300 to 1000 pounds sterling. Much of the merchandise involved items of luxury such as fine wines, madeira, sherry, porter, and cognac imported from Europe. These goods were delivered at Pensacola, Florida, and were then taken to Natchez, Mississippi, by a keel boat through a series of rivers and lakes. Those Natchez planters who owned boats often made the trip to Pensacola themselves. Louis LeFlore is an example of one of these planters. He engaged in carrying goods for

²⁵Ibid.

himself, his neighbors,²⁶ and occasionally for the government. Louis LeFlore delivered some of the first goods sent to Fort Stoddard,²⁷ a frontier military post on the Mobile River in Alabama.

LeFlore also established an extensive plantation and cattle ranch in the Yazoo prairies in the present Holmes county.²⁸ He accumulated vast holdings in what is now Attala and Choctaw counties also.²⁹ He owned 100 slaves, and about this many Indians lived about him and worked for him.³⁰

Louis LeFlore's family was large, for he and Rebecca raised eleven children; among them were William, Greenwood, Jackson, Benjamin, Henry, Martha, Clarissa, Felice, and Mary Ann. The sons later became active in the affairs of the Choctaw nation, and the girls married into prominent Indian families, the Folsoms and Harkinses for example. Some of the sons moved west to Indian Territory during removal, and the others remained in Mississippi.

When Rebecca LeFlore died, Louis married her younger sister, Nancy Cravat, and they had several children. Among those who came to Oklahoma and became well known in the new western regions were Forbis and Basil LeFlore.

Louis LeFlore lived a long life in Choctaw Nation, dying in 1833 after the final removal treaty had been made. The exact place of burial

²⁶Claiborne, 116n.

²⁷Claiborne, 231.

²⁸Claiborne, 116n.

²⁹McGraw, 9.

³⁰Cushman, 116n.

is not known, but is believed to be in Carroll county near where it joins Holmes county.³¹

Louis LeFlore left a will that is unique and interesting in its make-up. It is on record in the Chancery Clerk's office in Holmes county, and a copy hangs framed in LeFleur's Restaurant, now owned by Mr. and Mrs. George Wilkinson on Highway 51 north of Jackson, Mississippi. The original is almost as legible as when it was written 134 years ago. The will is detailed; LeFlore left each of his surviving children a portion of land and money. His real estate was to be divided at a certain time, as were his Negroes "to be held to family connection as nearly as is possible; his crops to be grown and harvested, if underway at his death before division is made."³²

The division described by LeFlore was unique in that he asked that numbered slips equal to the number of children be placed in separate boxes. His executors were to draw these slips from one box and then from the other until all slips were drawn; thus the entire estate would be completely divided when the last one was taken out. His executors were Samuel Lang and Abram Halsy.³³

The death of Louis LeFlore took the progenitor of one of the largest and most influential families of the Choctaw Nation and one of the leading men of the Choctaws. Louis LeFlore was a man of many interests and became successful in all his undertakings. Through his integrity in dealing with the Choctaws at his post he won their confidence and loyalty,

³¹Gene M. Tilghman, The LeFlores of Mississippi, Thesis (Mississippi State University, August, 1963), 47.

³²Will, Louis LeFlore. (Copy in possession of author).

³³Ibid.

and in turn aided their tribal fortunes. It was men like Louis LeFlore, who were sympathetic with the Choctaws and encouraged the introduction of missionary schools among them, who helped the development and growth of the Choctaw Nation.

The adventurous pioneer spirit of Louis LeFlore took him to Mississippi Territory in 1792; this same pioneer spirit was instilled in his descendants, who continued in a position of power and influence among the Choctaws. With the fortune he amassed he educated all of his children well so that they contributed to the development of the Choctaw Nation through their activities in government, schools and courts. The son who became the best known was Greenwood LeFlore, who was the chief during the tragic removal of the Choctaws.

CHAPTER III

PERSONAL LIFE OF GREENWOOD LEFLORE

Of the various sons of Louis LeFlore, the one who was to play the most significant role in the development of the Choctaw Nation was the fourth son, Greenwood LeFlore. Possibly much of Greenwood LeFlore's leadership ability was due to the training provided the young Choctaw by a long-time friend and advisor, Major John Donley. Major Donley, who had a contract to carry mail from Nashville to Natchez, was a frequent visitor at the LeFlores' after Louis LeFlore opened his business at French Camp, on the Natchez Trace. During his visits at the LeFlore tavern, Major Donley was attracted to the 12 year old son of LeFlore as he played with the other children. With some persuasion, Major Donley succeeded in convincing Louis and Rebecca LeFlore that their son needed the advantages of an education beyond that which he could get in the Choctaw country. Somewhat reluctantly the parents gave their consent, and so Major Donley took Greenwood with him to Nashville, where he lived and attended school for the next six years.¹

While at the Donleys', Greenwood LeFlore grew to love the Major's oldest daughter Rosa. When Greenwood approached the Major with his proposal of marriage, Rosa's father objected because of their youth. Some

¹N. D. Deupree, "Greenwood LeFlore," Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society, VII (1903), 142. Langley, Lee J. "Malmaison, Palace in a Wilderness, Home of General LeFlore," Chronicles of Oklahoma V (1927), 376.

time later, when the Major had forgotten about their earlier conversation, Greenwood brought up the subject again, from another angle. He asked the Major what he would do if he loved a girl but her parents objected to their marriage. To this the Major replied that he would steal the girl away and marry her anyway.²

Within a few days Greenwood, acting on this advice, eloped with Rosa, and on December 4, 1817, they were married in the home of a friend. When Major Donley heard of their marriage, he remembered his earlier conversation with Greenwood, forgave them, and asked them to come back home. The young couple did not long remain at Major Donley's, however, for they soon moved back to the Indian country in Mississippi.³

On October 3, 1829, after 12 years of marriage, Rosa Donley died⁴ leaving two children, Elizabeth, and a son John.⁵ In a couple of years Greenwood married again to an Elizabeth Coody, the niece of John Ross, the Cherokee chief.⁶ A year later Elizabeth died leaving no children. For his third wife, Greenwood went back to the Donley family and married Priscilla, the younger sister of Rosa. Greenwood and Priscilla had one child, Rebecca.⁷

After Greenwood LeFlore moved back to Mississippi from Nashville, he rapidly gained wide reputation for his leadership ability, and in 1822

²Deupree, 142. Langley, 376. Smith, 35-38.

³Ibid.

⁴Smith, 38.

⁵Deupree, 150.

⁶Some writers (Smith, p. 83) state that Elizabeth was the cousin of 'Buffalo Bill' Cody. This is not correct, according to Miss Muriel Wright, Editor of Chronicles of Oklahoma.

⁷Deupree, 150.

was elected Chief of Northwestern in the first popular election held in the Choctaw Nation.⁸ He was re-elected four years later. In 1826 the title of colonel was conferred on him by the United States in recognition of his growing importance in the Choctaw Nation. He was also given a sword and medal that had been presented to a former chief by Thomas Jefferson when he was president. The sword was blue steel with a gold-mounted handle. The medal was made of silver, about four inches in diameter; it symbolized peace and good will between the United States and the Indians. On one side of the medal was pictured a peace pipe laid across a tomahawk above two hands clasped representing brotherly love. The other side of the coin bore the words "Peace and Prosperity," the name of the president and the date 1802.⁹

As chief, LeFlore's influence was felt throughout the entire nation. He believed that ignorance was the greatest curse of his people and thus set out to rid them of it. He worked to persuade the people to educate their children. In support of his educational program, LeFlore established regular meetings of the tribal council to enact laws in support of Choctaw teachers.¹⁰ In connection with the schools LeFlore also gave liberal support to missionaries in all parts of the nation encouraging them to teach as well as preach. His philosophy was to educate the Choctaws, then bring Christianity to them in a relatively simple form.¹¹

⁸Lerona Rosamond Morris (ed), Oklahoma, Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow (Guthrie: Co-operative Publishing Company, December, 1930), 33-36.

⁹Deupree, 142. Presentation of a medal of this type was a common practice and was part of the Indian policy of the time to get and maintain the good will of the leaders of the Indians.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ray, 17.

Alexander Talley is one example of the missionaries who entered the Choctaw country after the election of LeFlore. He pitched the tent in which he lived near the house of the chief and quickly attracted a following among the neighboring Choctaws. Schools and churches were soon built.¹² Stimulating an interest in the education of the youth of the Choctaws was the greatest reform of LeFlore's chieftainship.¹³

Relieving the ignorance of his people included destroying the old superstitions and traditions such as witchcraft and 'blood for blood' type revenge. To eradicate witchcraft Greenwood LeFlore decreed that the first Indian proclaiming herself a witch must immediately be reported to him. LeFlore, himself, would then direct the execution of the person who claimed powers of witchcraft to demonstrate that death could come to the so-called witch. This order went far towards putting an end to the practice of witchcraft in the Choctaw Nation.¹⁴

Other reforms launched by LeFlore included the guarantee of a fair trial in every case of homicide in spite of the 'blood for blood' tradition among Indians which demanded a life for a life. LeFlore had an opportunity to set an example for his people in carrying out due process of law in cases of homicides at the treaty grounds of Dancing Rabbit Creek in 1830. While a group of Indians were sitting around a camp fire a loud war whoop startled a horse nearby, the rider could not control the animal, and it charged into the group, killing one man. Immediately the Indians began clamoring for the luckless rider's life in accordance with

¹²Mims Cochran, "Greenwood LeFlore," Daughters of the American Revolution Magazine, (May, 1964), 501.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ray, 20.

the Choctaw tradition. LeFlore spoke up in defense of the Indian, saying that it was an accident, and that it was not right to take the man's life without giving him a chance to defend himself. At first the angered Indians did not listen to LeFlore and rushed forward; LeFlore placed himself between the accused man and the angry group and let them know that if they took the life of the man he defended they must take his life first. Seeing that their chief was determined, the Indians turned back and put their weapons away.¹⁵

Another attempt to improve the life of the Choctaws came through LeFlore's support of regulations passed in council forbidding the importation of liquor and its sale in Choctaw country. These laws were enforced under LeFlore. Again, he had the opportunity to set the example in enforcing the laws. One of his brothers-in-law was among the first to violate the law against selling liquor. The chief personally supervised his punishment. This law for a time was effective in checking illicit traffic in liquor. Other reforms that LeFlore encouraged included the introduction of the practices of formalized religious and civil marriages, building of permanent residences, and encouraging profitable cultivation of the soil.¹⁶

Greenwood LeFlore's reforms extended to the actual administration of the government itself in an attempt to improve its efficiency. Under the constitution a committee of eight from each of the three districts of the Choctaw Nation was to meet quarter-yearly and the members were to report the conditions in their respective districts. The committee was

¹⁵Deupree, 143.

¹⁶Cochran, 501.

to draw up laws and present them to a semi-annual council consisting of the district representatives, three principal chiefs, town captains and one from each captain's company.¹⁷ There was a double purpose in this reorganization of the government; the first was to improve the conditions in the nation regarding some of the old tribal traditions; the second was to form a united front against the encroaching whites and the pressure for further land cessions.¹⁸

Greenwood LeFlore's reforms and improvements in Choctaw traditions and government were put into effect through laws passed by the tribal council of the Northwest District. These included the encouraging of education for the Choctaws, particularly the children, the supporting of missionary activity, the destroying of old superstitions and witchcraft practices, the guaranteeing of due process of law, the forbidding of importation and sale of liquors in Choctaw country, and the reorganizing of the tribal government including a constitution. Some of the laws that were put into effect are as follows: June 21, 1826: Council Ground Northwest District--

We, the Captains of North West District of the Choctaw Nation, do elect and invest with the Constitutional powers, Captain Greenwood LeFlore, as Chief of said District. We form ourselves into a legislative body and enact the following laws:

Act I: Be it therefore enacted that all Captains offending against or refusing to enforce the laws of this district shall be suspended by the Chief, until council, when he shall be twice acquitted.

May 27, 1827: Act II: Be it further enacted that the Captain of this district shall have the power to call together

¹⁷Each Choctaw town had a group of men whose duty was to enforce the law. These groups were called companies. The captain was the organizer and head of the company.

¹⁸Mary Elizabeth Young, Redskins, Ruffleshirts and Rednecks (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961), 26.

twelve of their warriors, who, with himself, shall be in court to bring to trial to acquit, or condemn all persons found offending within the limits of his jurisdiction. But in all cases, the person so tried shall have the privilege of appealing to District Court.

Act III: That the property of all deceased persons shall be (after all debts are paid) divided as follows: The widow shall receive the use of one third during her life, after which it shall be equally divided among the children taking into calculation all property previously received so that each child may have an equal part.

Act IV: Be it further enacted that it shall be the duty of every captain to appoint three persons whose business it shall be to enforce the laws.

July, 1828: That all persons who shall die from date shall be allowed to remain at peace and shall in no case be disturbed by pole setting or anything connected with that ceremony.

Act II: That it shall be the duty of all Captains within whose jurisdiction poles may be set up, to pull them down, or cause them to be pulled down.

Act III: That if any person should be violating these laws, they shall suffer what punishment the council in their wisdom may believe necessary to inflict for the effectual securing of the peace and best interests of the nation.

July 2, 1828: Act I: That no spirituous liquors shall be admitted after this date into the NorthWest District.

Act II: That we shall herewith make it the duty of the Chiefs to appoint twenty persons whose business it will be to put in force this law.

Act III: That it shall be the duty of the persons appointed as above to search out and destroy all spirituous liquors that may be found, and, in case of strong resistance, they shall call upon the Captain within whose jurisdiction liquors may be found, for assistance.

Section 3, Act I: That all females who shall be found guilty of destroying the lives of their children, either legitimate or illegitimate, shall be punished with death.

Act II: That no person shall be considered guilty until the charge is supported by two or more respectable witnesses and positive or circumstantial evidence or proof of guilt.

Section 4, Act I: That no white man shall be permitted to marry in this district, without first obtaining the consent of persons concerned, and a license from the Chief, which license shall be recorded in the district office. And that such marriage must be performed before witnesses, and by some district officer or a preacher of the Gospel.

Act II: That it shall be the duty of all Captains to give notice to the Chief of such persons as may violate the above law (which is in force from this date) and further, that it shall be the duty of the Chief to banish such from the nation.

Act III: That any white man or white man's wife shall have the privilege of preferring charges against his or her companion as the case may be, which charges shall be considered in council, and if said charges are found sufficient in importance, he or she, as the case may be, shall obtain a divorce.

Act IV: That it shall be the duty of any persons who may hire a white man, to pay the sum for which they have contracted.

Act V: That no white family shall be permitted to settle in the nation unless it be for some public purpose.

September 17, 1828: Council Grounds, NorthWest District
Choctaw Nation:

Act I: That all persons be allowed liberty of conscience and be permitted to worship God in their own way and manner which they may see proper.

Act II: That any neighborhood that should wish to build churches for the purpose of worshipping God, that privilege is herewith granted.¹⁹

Had LeFlore remained in power reforms would have improved his nation and pushed it rapidly towards the ways white men consider civilization,

¹⁹Smith, 49. Ray, 18. These excerpts are based on a manuscript document written in council of Northwest District and now in possession of descendants of Greenwood LeFlore.

but antagonism produced by the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek led the Choctaws to strip him of all his power.²⁰ The negotiation of the treaty and the resulting bitterness toward Greenwood LeFlore will be dealt with in a separate section.

After removal, Greenwood was three times elected to the legislature of the state of Mississippi, twice to the state House of Representatives (1831 and 1835), and in 1842 to the state Senate.²¹ John J. Peltus, who served in the Senate at the same time as LeFlore, said that LeFlore made one of the most dramatic speeches he had ever heard in opposition to the sale of liquor. LeFlore said that

the whites had introduced the destroying angel. 'fire water'-- among his race and, it had blighted, withered and ruined his race, the Indians. And the white man, who prided himself on his civilization, intelligence, piety, had often made the Indians drunk with 'fire water' and while in that condition, gone through the farce of buying their lands, at the most trifling price.²²

Another interesting incident is told about his term in the Senate. During this period many of the senators had the habit of sprinkling their speeches quite liberally with Latin, a practice that was very irritating to some. On one occasion a young senator delivered his entire speech in Latin. LeFlore, who had heard the speech, rose from his seat, went to the front and proceeded to make a speech in Choctaw. The house tried to call him down, but he persisted and talked for an hour. When he had finished, he asked which had been better understood, the previous speaker's Latin speech or his in Choctaw. The point was made, and the number

²⁰Deupree, 143.

²¹Ibid.

²²Tilghman, 43.

and degree of the Latin interjections into speeches decreased after this time.²³

LeFlore was one of the most successful plantation owners in the South. He was ambitious in his acquisition of land and slaves, which he supervised from his plantation home, Malmaison. His original allotment plus the special treaty grant from the government in 1830 amounted to 15,000 acres. To work his land LeFlore at one time owned 400 slaves, a number which made him one of the largest slave holders in the South. Contemporary accounts indicate his slaves were treated with kindness and concern. They were made comfortable in their houses with sufficient food, fuel, and clothing. A plantation physician was kept to care for the family and the slaves. Religious services were provided by a minister hired by the planters on a few of the large plantations. Greenwood LeFlore's Malmaison is one example of a plantation where a minister preached each Sunday and performed the marriage ceremony which was encouraged by LeFlore.²⁴

In addition to his plantations in Mississippi, LeFlore had interests in land in Texas. He held deeds to nine leagues of land, about 60,000 acres, in Spanish grants. A company consisting of LeFlore, L. R. Marshall, Minor Guinn and Abram Halsey, son-in-law of LeFlore, held the tract and Halsey developed it.

The company hired a lawyer named Riley to act as their agent with power of attorney to sell the land. Halsey went to Europe in an attempt to persuade a colonization company to purchase the tract; failing in this

²³Deupree, 150.

²⁴Ray, 40.

Halsey was persuaded to go to South America and negotiate for emigration. While there he died of yellow fever.

In the meantime, Riley was selling the land to individuals without the owners' knowledge. When found out Riley was sued, but the Civil War intervened and legal proceedings were stopped. At the end of the war Riley was dead and LeFlore was in poor health. His venture in land speculation in Texas proved a failure.²⁵

The old chief remained in Mississippi when the Choctaws moved West in the 1830's. His capacity to govern his people had been amply demonstrated during his terms in office before removal. After removal, LeFlore to some degree shifted his talents to the affairs of white men. LeFlore outshone many white men in ability and ambition. Much of his time was devoted to the management of his plantation and slaves. Examination of bills of sale of LeFlore show that his slaves increased in number through purchase as well as through birth. Some of his purchases were made in the 1820's, and thus there was enough time to raise some field hands, as children of these early slaves.²⁶

LeFlore was known by the local and regional agents as a heavy purchaser of slaves. A good many purchases were local deals involving the disposal of whole plantation groups of slaves, such as the one in 1839. This was LeFlore's largest purchase, and consisted of 100 slaves from the estate of a neighboring planter who had died. The purchase price was not on the bill of sale, but it must have been enormous and could have been raised by few men in the South. LeFlore's relation to the slave traders was not different from that of many Mississippi

²⁵Deupree, 148. Smith, 96.

²⁶Charles Sackett Sydnor, Slavery in Mississippi (New York: D. Appleton-Century, 1933), 131.

planters, however, for a large amount of capital was invested in slaves and land.²⁷

As an extensive planter and owner of slaves, LeFlore devoted most of his acres to cotton. Cotton from Malmaison, after being ginned and baled on the plantation, was taken to the nearest shipping point, which was Williams Landing or Old Town. The shipping facilities were rather inadequate at Old Town, and Williams sometimes let the cotton stand in the mud and yet still demanded payment for storage. When this happened to LeFlore he was enraged and refused to send more cotton to Old Town. To take care of his cotton crop, LeFlore built a shipping point three miles above Old Town at the fork of the Tallahatchie and Yalobusha rivers which came to be called Point LeFlore. The settlement soon acquired a church, hotel, schoolhouse, post office, stores and residences.²⁸

To make access to Point LeFlore easier, LeFlore built one of the first hard surfaced roads in Mississippi. This log road had fourteen bridges and cost \$75,000 to construct. Use of the road was made available to all planters who would ship their goods through Point LeFlore, thus insuring business for the town. The offer was accepted by many planters, and trade came from sixty miles in the interior.²⁹

Point LeFlore was an important commerical center. LeFlore owned a steamboat which carried cotton out and other products into the town. Yazoo Pass was open at that time, which enabled flat boats and barges to go as far as Point LeFlore with consumers goods that gave the town a large trade. Had it not been for the Civil War and the failing health

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Cochran, 504. Deupree, 147.

²⁹Ibid.

of LeFlore, this town might have grown into an important Delta commercial center. After the death of LeFlore his descendants let the town die, and by a quirk of history Williams Landing survived the efforts of LeFlore to eliminate it and now bears his name Greenwood; moreover it is the county seat of LeFlore county.³⁰

Not far from Point LeFlore and located on the old Greenwood Highway eight miles from North Carrollton was Malmaison, long one of the show places of Mississippi. It was located on a gentle slope overlooking the Yazoo river. Hidden among the hills, the mansion in the wilderness attracted people by its splendor until it was destroyed by fire in March, 1942. The house was occupied by descendants of Greenwood LeFlore when it burned.³¹

It was in 1854, when LeFlore decided to retire from public life, that he decided to build Malmaison. Malmaison stood as a symbol of the love for grandeur and glamour that Greenwood LeFlore yearned for and which was so characteristic of him. The structure was two-story colonial in a style reflecting southern colonial and French influences. It was designed by one of the foremost architects of the time, James Clark Harris. Harris later married LeFlore's youngest daughter whom he had met while working on Malmaison.³²

On top of the house was built an observatory from which LeFlore and his guests could see "Deer Park," a small hunting preserve, and the rest of the plantation grounds. Around the house was a four acre lawn well

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Smith, 119.

³²Ray, 36.

shaded by holly, maple and oak trees. During the life of LeFlore various kinds of fowl wandered about the lawn, including cranes and geese as well as a little fawn that found its way up from the park.

The interior of the house was divided both on the first and the second floors by halls running north and south and east and west, with eight rooms on each side of the hall. To give some indication of the size of Malmaison, the hall running north and south measured 50 x 20 feet, while the hall running east and west measured 65 x 15 feet. At either end of each hall huge doors ten feet high and two and one-half inches thick opened out on to one of the four balconies.³³

It is fortunate that some detailed descriptions of Malmaison have preserved details of the magnificance of the home of the old Choctaw chief and southern planter. The description of the living room captivates the imagination of the reader. More than thirty pieces of furniture, all imported from France, filled this room. The chairs and divans were of French hickory overlaid with gold and were upholstered in deep red silk damask. The window drapes were made of the same material and were held up by rods on large gold knobs. Red in various shades was repeated in the carpet with rose design.

One of the most unusual and interesting features about the living room was the window shades, which were covered with oil paintings of French palaces, Versailles, Malmaison, Founteinbleau, and St. Cloud. The shades were made of linen and, according to a description, "when drawn down, they seem like living scenes."³⁴

³³Ibid.

³⁴Cochran, 504.

In the center of the living room stood a table of ebony inlaid with pearl of every color. Ebony cabinets of matching design were on either end of the room. On the walls hung two mirrors of almost seven feet in length and four feet in width among the pictures of French and Swiss scenes, all framed in gold leaf frames, reflecting the red and gold of the room.

The living room was the only room that was furnished as LeFlore wanted it. The cost of the furnishings in the 1850's was \$10,000, and they would be beyond replacement today. The story is told that the Duchess of Orleans saw the furniture as it was being made for LeFlore and wanted to buy it. When told that it was for an Indian in Mississippi she expressed amazement and asked for permission to have a duplicate set made.

In the library across from the living room hung portraits of Greenwood LeFlore, his wife and youngest daughter. In this room also hung the medal and sword that were presented to LeFlore when he was elected chief. Close by hung the old chief's silver mounted sword cane. There were books with portraits of important men and Indian chiefs in full regalia.

The dining room was used mostly for entertainment and dancing. LeFlore was happy when entertaining lavishly. The wedding of his daughter to Harris was a good example of the affairs at Malmaison. The wedding was performed in one of the halls to accommodate the spectators and guests in attendance. Following the ceremony a wedding supper was served on the lawn from a table one hundred feet in length. Delicacies were served both from the home ovens and from abroad. The meal was

served in an old fashioned manner by servants.³⁵ Refreshments were served upstairs in service, silver, china, crystal, ordered from France.³⁶

While LeFlore was still chief he went to Washington to consult President Jackson about the removal of an agent whom he considered dishonest. When he went he rode in one of the most magnificent carriages in the South. It had a hard black finish, the trimmings were of sterling silver, and the lamps of cut glass. The upholstery was of cream-colored silk damask fastened with ivory tacks, and the curtains were of cream-colored silk taffeta.³⁷ The carriage was saved when Malmaison burned; the coach was exhibited at the World's Fair in Chicago in 1934 in the Progress of Transportation exhibit. The coach then one hundred years old was in a state of perfect preservation.³⁸

It was in Malmaison that LeFlore spent the last eleven years with his young wife. When the Civil War broke out LeFlore continued to be loyal to the Union government. He felt that in signing the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek he had pledged his never-ending loyalty to the Union. He did not want to see war between the states and worked to prevent or delay secession from the Union. In several speeches he appealed to the people not to be so hasty, to wait for an overt act on the part of the North. Never in any way did he willingly co-operate with the Confederate government or army as such. He refused Confederate money for

³⁵Smith, 101.

³⁶Smith, 95.

³⁷Smith, 78-79.

³⁸Ibid.

cattle and supplies that the army confiscated. In another instance of stubbornness he allowed a slave to be seized and sold rather than pay taxes to the Davis government.³⁹

On the other hand LeFlore always welcomed his friends into his home even though they were fighting for the South. However, it was strictly understood that they were there as old friends, and their uniforms were left behind. A recorded example of this feeling was the visit of General Featherstone and some of his men to LeFlore's house. Featherstone sent one of his men ahead to request shelter for the night. LeFlore replied they would be welcome if they came out of uniform.⁴⁰

LeFlore, like many southerners, predicted that it would be the bloodiest war ever fought and that the North, which was stronger in money, men and industry, would be an impossible foe to defeat.⁴¹ As the war progressed, LeFlore's health grew worse, and he suffered from a kind of paralysis. Visits to White Sulphur Springs, in western Virginia, failed to bring any relief.⁴²

³⁹Ray, 44.

⁴⁰Ibid. Smith, 110, 111.

⁴¹Ray, 43, 44. Smith, 107, 108.

⁴²During this period of illness, LeFlore was cared for by an old Negro slave named Ben. There is an interesting and amusing story told about Ben and his master. Ben had always proved to be a faithful servant who had only one real fault and that was talking too much. When Ben took Colonel LeFlore out to the bath house each day he indulged in this habit. Loving to gossip, Ben told his master everything once he had him alone. Because of his age, Mrs. LeFlore wanted some things kept from her husband. Old Ben, however, could never resist gossiping and was always found out because when he brought Colonel LeFlore back from his bath, he would have some part of his clothing on wrong-side-out in proportion to the amount of talking he had done. When he came back with only one garment on wrong, Mrs. LeFlore usually said nothing, but when he came back with everything on wrong-side-out as he did one time, she could remain quiet no longer and in her exasperation scolded him. His only reply was a sheepish grin. Ray, 16.

After his retirement, one of the greatest delights of Greenwood LeFlore was to be with his grandchildren. He loved to tease them especially at the table. As long as he lived there was a separate table set up for the children so they would not have to wait for the grown-ups to finish eating. LeFlore invariably teased them about having something better than they did when in fact the tables were the same. One of the 'delicacies' that often appeared on the table at the LeFlores' was peach cobbler served with thick cream; it was his favorite dessert.⁴³

Greenwood LeFlore was chief of the Choctaws in the Northwest District of Choctaw Nation in Mississippi for eight years from 1822 to 1830. This was a short time to be chief, yet he became one of the best known Choctaw chiefs. He gained his reputation through his ability and energy in governing his people prior to removal. Greenwood LeFlore was a good chief as is illustrated by the laws that he introduced in council in an attempt to improve the conditions among the Choctaws. He knew that with the advance of the white man's civilization and its encroachment on the Indians' ways the latter would be lost unless they equipped themselves to face the advancing civilization.

After removal LeFlore turned his energies to the state legislature of Mississippi and to his plantation home. As a member of the legislature he represented the interests of the white men with the same ability that he had used when he governed the Indians.

It is fitting that Greenwood LeFlore's name is carried by towns and counties in Mississippi, in honor of the old chief, the last chief of the Choctaws east of the Mississippi.

⁴³Ray, 15-16.

CHAPTER IV

GREENWOOD LEFLORE AND CHOCTAW REMOVAL

In the early 1800's the Five Civilized Tribes numbered about 60,000 and controlled approximately twenty-five million acres of land in the southern states. Their land was desired by many men who wanted to move west. By 1820, the western edge of the frontier had passed the Indians' lands into Tennessee and into Arkansas, leaving a large tract of land held by the Five Civilized Tribes unsettled.

The treaty of Doak's Stand in 1820 was the first agreement to take the rich lands of present day Mississippi out of the hands of the Choctaws and make it available for settlement. This treaty was the product of the United States government policy of the early 1800's to secure land belonging to the Five Civilized Tribes. It provided for the largest cession of land by the Choctaws preceding the final removal treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek in 1830.

Agents of the federal government demanded the cession of land on the Mississippi held by the Choctaws in exchange for land in the West between the Arkansas-Canadian and Red Rivers. Both the full-bloods and the mixed-bloods opposed this cession of their land. Their opposition was overcome by the threat of the agents to deal with the Arkansas Choctaws alone. At this point the Choctaws gave in and signed the treaty ceding about one-third of their eastern land. The land surrendered was unoccupied and had

been hunting ground but it was used infrequently by 1820 because of the lack of game.

After the Treaty of Doak's Stand, the Choctaws lived relatively peaceful lives until 1825. Thereafter several trends developed that intensified the pressure for their removal west of the Mississippi. After 1828, the history of all of the southern tribes revolved around the pressure applied by the federal government under the leadership of Andrew Jackson, the oppressive influence of the state laws, and the support for removal by a part of each tribe which divided the Indian nations into bitter factions.

A strong impetus toward removal was the election of Andrew Jackson to the presidency in 1828. With his election, the frontier settlers and land speculators had a representative in the White House whose sympathies were theirs and who evidenced no feeling of compassion for the Indians. His attitude was that of one who had fought the Indians for several years. After Jackson was elected, the Indian problem once again became a leading national issue.¹ The election of 1828 was a turning point in the struggle for Indian land; it turned the tide in favor of ownership by the planters and white settlers of the south as opposed to continued control by the Indians.

Jackson's attitude favoring the state's position was well known, and it was no surprise when in his message to Congress on December 8, 1829, he reviewed the Indian situation and emphasized the need for a removal policy. In his message, Jackson recommended legislation that would provide for land west of the Mississippi for the southern tribes to be

¹Peter A. Brannon, "Removal of Indians From Alabama," Alabama Historical Quarterly, Vol. XII, (1950), 93. Foreman, Indian Removal, 21.

theirs as long as they occupied it. In their new homes the Indians would enjoy more freedom than they had in Mississippi, they could set up their own government, and in general be subject to no control by the federal government.²

In response to Jackson's message and to the mandate of local public opinion that the Indians be removed and that Indian land be opened to white settlement, Congress started work on a general Indian removal bill. This bill evoked bitter debate in Congress; the center of this debate was the position of tribal governments and their relationship to the federal government, and also the nature and extent of the responsibility of the federal government to the Indians.³

On May 28, 1830, the Indian Removal Bill⁴ was enacted which in itself did not compel removal and did not appear immediately to endanger the tribes; however, the significance of this bill was that it announced authorization to initiate negotiations for the purpose of exchanging land in the east for that in the west.⁵ Legislation was also enacted supplying an appropriation of \$500,000 to enable the president to negotiate with the southern tribes and secure the cession of their land.

Following the enactment of the Indian Removal Bill, action was quickly taken to put it into effect. So began the pressure on the Choctaws to negotiate which continued until they signed their final removal treaty in 1830. As soon as Congress adjourned Jackson and Secretary of

²Muriel H. Wright, "The Removal of the Choctaws," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. VI, (1928), 103.

³Wright, 103.

⁴Statutes at Large, IV, 411, 412.

⁵Foreman, Indian Removal, 22.

War John H. Eaton planned to spend some time in Tennessee meeting with the representatives of the Five Tribes preparatory to removal negotiations. Only four days after the passage of the bill, Jackson sent instructions to Major D. W. Haley, a personal friend and man of influence in Mississippi, to make arrangements to meet delegates from the tribes who were favorable towards removal.⁶

The Removal Bill and the initiation of negotiations with the Choctaws in 1830, further divided the tribe. The factionalism as it developed among the Choctaws will be traced later.

After 1825 pressure was exerted on the southern Indians from another source, the state governments. These states extended some of their state laws to include the Indians. The state governments, led by Georgia, enacted these laws in response to what they considered the failure of the federal government to carry out the provisions of the Georgia Compact of 1802. By the Georgia Compact, the federal government was to eliminate the Indian claims, at its own expense, in certain reserved limits of Georgia. Some treaties had been negotiated, but enough land had not been made available for the land hungry white people. Pressure from some of the influential white people led the state legislature which represented the landed population to pass these laws.

In December, 1828, Georgia passed the first legislation defining and curtailing the legal and personal rights of the Indians within her border. Alabama and Mississippi passed similar laws in January and February of 1829. In January, 1830, Mississippi went a step farther and passed legislation providing that any one who held the title or exercised the

⁶Ibid.

authority of chief, mingo, headman, or any position of power or influence in the Choctaw Tribe was subject to a \$1,000 fine and one year imprisonment. This state law which affected the Choctaws and Chickasaws also deprived them of all their rights under tribal law. These laws had the support of Jackson as is evidenced in his refusal to support the Supreme Court decision which declared that state laws could not be legally extended into land guaranteed by treaty between the Indians and the federal government.⁷

The intent of these laws was apparent. They had a twofold purpose. First, the extension of state laws over the Indians would effectively destroy tribal law and weaken tribal solidarity; the abolition of the office of chief would prevent their opposition to removal or cession of land. Thus, any unified action on the part of the tribes would practically be destroyed. A second objective of the state laws was to place the Indian Nations under the jurisdiction of state laws, about which they were totally ignorant.⁸

The extension of the state laws over the Choctaws particularly affected the mixed-blood elements among them. The resistance among the Choctaws was weakened. There was a growing sentiment among some of their leaders, especially David Folsom and Greenwood LeFlore, that removal would probably be the best policy for the Choctaws.

Another development in 1826 that had implications regarding removal was the change in the political structure of the Choctaw Nation. The Choctaws had begun to modify their constitution in 1824 when the death of

⁷Young, 14-15. Debo, 51.

⁸Young, 14.

Apukshunnubbee and Pushmataha, two of their hereditary chiefs, made the change easier. In 1826 also increased pressure from government agents to further negotiations intensified the movement to reform the government.⁹

These changes were carried out after the mixed-bloods in each of the three districts held councils and selected some of their men as chiefs in the place of the ones in office. Greenwood LeFlore took over in the Northwestern district, Sam Garland in the Southern district and David Folsom in the Eastern district. LeFlore took the initiative to call a council of the leaders and warriors of the Choctaw Nation. At the council, it was agreed to adopt the system of electing district chiefs to serve for four year terms. A code of laws was also adopted at this council.

The Choctaws attempted to organize their government on the lines of that of the white man. Centralization of power was one of the major changes in the government. It was the hope of these Choctaws that centralization of power and passage of new laws would provide a more unified front against pressure for removal. For instance, legislation was enacted to punish anyone who ceded his tribal land or a part of it to the federal government in return for a bribe. The changes made reflected the opposition to removal by both the mixed-blood and full-blood elements among the Choctaws in 1826.

These constitutional changes of 1826 and the actions of Greenwood LeFlore and his mixed-blood followers created factionalism among the Choctaws that was to become very bitter for many years to come. The

⁹Debo, 48.

division widened during negotiations of the final removal treaty and during removal.

There was constant pressure applied between 1826 and 1830 on the Choctaws to cede their land in Mississippi. Taking some action in response to this pressure on March 15, 1830, Greenwood LeFlore as chief of the Northwestern district called a council of some of the headmen of the tribe who sympathized with him and the other two district chiefs, David Folsom and Samuel Garland. In a speech to the council, he persuaded them to abandon the divided system of government and unite under one chief. The following day Folsom and Garland resigned their positions in favor of LeFlore as chief of the entire nation. Folsom and Garland sympathized with him, and they were also influenced by the Mississippi state law that forbade anyone to hold the office of chief.¹⁰

LeFlore also spoke to the council about the necessity of removal. He told them that it was the best policy for the Choctaws to agree to move west, and he again persuaded those present to accept his way of thinking. They voted in favor of emigration on March 16, 1830. In response to this favorable vote, a treaty was prepared with the aid of one of the missionaries who was in the service of Greenwood LeFlore, Alexander Talley. This treaty provided for the cession of land in Mississippi and Alabama and removal to Indian territory. Each head of a Choctaw family was to receive 640 acres of land in fee simple.¹¹

The treaty was approved by the council, signed by the chiefs LeFlore, Folsom, and Garland, and 200 or 300 warriors present, in the

¹⁰Foreman, Indian Removal, 23. Debo, 52.

¹¹Ibid.

name of the whole tribe. It was delivered to Major D. W. Haley, a wealthy citizen of Mississippi and personal friend of Andrew Jackson. Haley took the treaty to Washington, where he presented it to the President. The administration thought that LeFlore's treaty was too generous in its provisions for the Choctaws and revised it extensively before it was presented to the Senate for ratification. The Senate refused to ratify the revised treaty, in part because of the strong opposition of the full-blood chiefs who had sent written objections to the Senate.¹²

The full-blood element strongly opposed the changes made in the chieftainship of their nation and the treaty that was prepared by LeFlore and Talley. On April 16, 1830, a month after LeFlore's meeting, they called a council in the eastern and southern districts of the nation. At these councils, Mushulatubbe and Nitakechi, leaders of the full-blood anti-removal faction, were reinstated by their respective districts. They sent letters of protest to their agent William Ward, who forwarded them to Secretary of War Eaton. In their letters the chiefs asked for protection against a possible attack by LeFlore's forces. They feared he would take action against them because of their refusal to submit to his leadership. In their letters these two full-blood leaders denounced the actions of the other council and expressed their opposition to the appointment of LeFlore as chief of the entire nation. They also expressed their satisfaction that the treaty prepared by LeFlore and Talley was rejected by the Senate. They stated their willingness to negotiate further for removal and expressed the desire to send an exploring party to the West, but they pointed out they had no funds to support the

¹²Ibid.

expedition.¹³ It seemed that the major objection to the earlier treaty was that it had been prepared by LeFlore and Talley.

Tension continued to mount during the spring and summer of 1830. In July, 1830, it reached a crisis when the two parties came into contact. When the annuity payment was due to be distributed, Mushulatubbe and Nitakechi decided to prevent LeFlore's party from receiving their goods. They surrounded the factory station and stationed guards along the road approaching it. Mushulatubbe had about one thousand warriors. LeFlore appeared with 800 armed warriors. He sent a message to Mushulatubbe which demanded that he resign as chief in favor of LeFlore. After a few hours when no answer came in return, LeFlore led his men towards Mushulatubbe's camp. It appeared that there would be a battle. Mushulatubbe hid himself and Nitakechi came forward and offered to make peace. His offer was accepted. Most of Mushulatubbe's men fled, and finding it useless to continue in opposition, the old leader resigned.¹⁴ Peace was maintained in this instance, but the bitter division between the two parties continued to grow.

One of the gravest points of disagreement between the two parties was their respective attitudes toward the missionary activities among the Choctaws. This was a part of the overall opposition by the full-bloods to the introduction of white culture among the Choctaws. Greenwood

¹³Foreman Transcripts. Letter to John H. Eaton, Secretary of War, from William Wárd, Choctaw agent, April 18, 1830, Vol. III, 8.

Senate Document 512. Letter to John H. Eaton, Secretary of War, from Chiefs Mushulatubbe and Nitakechi and Council, June 2, 1830, Vol. II, 58-59.

¹⁴Niles Weekly Register, "Disturbances Among the Choctaws," March, 1830, to September, 1830, Vol. XXXVIII, 457-458.

LeFlore had always supported missionary activities because they helped equip his people to face the growing problems with the white people. On the other hand, Mushulatubbe strongly opposed the influence of the missionaries, he was suspicious of them, and believed they tended to lessen his authority over the Choctaws. The hostility of the full-blood party was occasionally expressed through burning religious books and churches.¹⁵

Another reason that some of the full-bloods opposed the missionaries was that some of them, notably the Methodists, supported the policy of Indian removal. They supported this policy because it seemed to be the best way to protect the Indians. However, when it became evident that removal was advocated by southerners to eliminate the Indians and confiscate their land, missionary organizations actively opposed the bill.¹⁶ The missionaries among the Choctaws were divided on the removal policy. Presbyterian missionaries of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions took a neutral stand, although they privately opposed removal.¹⁷ The Methodist missionaries actively supported removal, no doubt being influenced by Greenwood LeFlore, a convert to Methodism.¹⁸

These are some of the reasons that divided the Choctaws into factions in 1830 and made it possible for the agents of the Federal government to use this factionalism to advantage. Greenwood LeFlore had tried to moderate the factionalism somewhat, but his attempt to present a united front for negotiations had been less than successful. Bitter

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Foreman, Indian Removal, 21.

¹⁷ Debo, 54.

¹⁸ Debo, 52.

factionalism continued to tear the Choctaws apart. It was caused in part by the issues involved and in part by the personality and actions of LeFlore himself. The character of the LeFlore party as seen by the other faction is reflected in the name they gave to his party--the Despotic party. The other party led by Mushulatubbe assumed the name, Republican party.

This division within the Choctaw nation made it almost impossible to obtain a delegation to represent them at negotiations in August and September of 1830. At a council of LeFlore's party held August 10, 1830, the Choctaws were unable to reach any agreement on a delegation to meet President Jackson. The warriors of the tribe who were at the council were violently opposed to sending a delegation to meet Jackson for the purpose of making a treaty. The life of anyone who did confer with him for this purpose would have been endangered. In a letter from the council, the Choctaws acknowledged the confusion created among their people since the removal proposition had been made. The council placed the blame for the confusion on certain interpreters who had been employed by the Federal government. The interpreters had, according to the council, been spreading rumors among the Choctaws about the removal plans. The Choctaws requested that these interpreters be replaced before negotiations began. Among those who signed the letter prepared in the council were friends and relatives of Greenwood LeFlore--George Harkins, Anthony Turnbull, Thomas LeFlore, and Benjamin LeFlore.¹⁹

The interpreter whom LeFlore's council had reference to was John Pitchlynn, friend of the Republican party. Pitchlynn and his son

¹⁹Foreman Transcripts. Letter to William Ward from Council of Choctaws, August 10, 1830. Vol. III, 21-23.

P. P. Pitchlynn had worked among the Republicans and had encouraged them to send delegates to meet Jackson. The problem was taken to Major John Donly, the Choctaw agent, and one of the interpreters was replaced by David Folsom, who was satisfactory to both parties.²⁰ The Republican party then sent representatives to Franklin, Tennessee; President Jackson spoke to them and set September 15, 1830, as the date for the beginning of negotiations to be conducted at Dancing Rabbit Creek.²¹ The problem of the interpreter was one more example of the friction, division and confusion among the Choctaws as they went into negotiations in 1830.

The Choctaw Nation was in such a confused state that the agents found it almost impossible to determine the general attitude of the people. Through conference with some of the men, LeFlore, Folsom, and John Pitchlynn, John Donly, the government agent, seemed to think that the Choctaws would rather have a commission appointed to meet with them at Dancing Rabbit Creek than try to select a delegation from within their ranks. In response to this suggestion President Jackson appointed John H. Eaton and John Coffee to meet the Choctaws and negotiate a treaty of removal.

One of the first problems that came up with the arrival of the agents at the treaty ground was that of the missionaries. The missionaries under the patronage of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions had been requested to stay away from the treaty grounds by the agents Eaton and Coffee. When these missionaries, Cyrus Kingsbury,

²⁰Foreman Transcripts. Letter to John H. Eaton from John Donly, Choctaw Agent, August 14, 1831. Vol. III, 26.

²¹Foreman Transcripts. Message from Andrew Jackson to Choctaw Nation after council at Franklin, Tennessee. August 26, 1830. Vol. III, 26.

Cyrus Byington, Loving S. Williams, and Calvin Cushman, received the agents' letter they wrote a letter in reply in which they "respectfully request the privilege of being present at the encampment during the pending negotiations...." The missionaries wrote that they had worked among the Choctaws for several years and that the Choctaws had asked that they be present. The missionaries felt that issues might come up that would affect the interests of the Board, and it would be well for them to be present to take care of such items.²²

The missionaries were told that they had two years in which to instruct the Choctaws in religion and that the Indians' attention could not be diverted by the missionaries from their business during negotiations.²³ The missionaries replied with assurances that they had no intention of interfering in negotiations.²⁴

After lengthy correspondence with the agents the missionaries were still denied the right to be present at the treaty grounds. It is significant that the representatives of the Presbyterian missionaries were never allowed on the ground and that Alexander Talley, a Methodist missionary and close associate of LeFlore, was present at Dancing Rabbit Creek and did not leave even when asked to do so by the agents.²⁵

On Saturday, September 18, the commissioners met the chiefs in council and spoke to them. They pledged support to the current leaders and

²²Foreman Transcripts. Letter to John H. Eaton from Choctaw Missionaries, September 17, 1830. Vol. III, 35-36.

²³Foreman Transcripts. Letter to Choctaw Missionaries from agents Eaton and Coffee, September 18, 1830. Vol. III, 37.

²⁴Foreman Transcripts. Letter to John H. Eaton from Missionaries, September 18, 1830. Vol. III, 39.

²⁵Foreman Transcripts, 36.

recommended that the Indians forget their factionalism. In the second place, the commissioners warned the Indians against listening to the missionaries in matters concerning the treaty, a matter in which they had no right to interfere.²⁶ The commissioners then stated the purpose of the conference with the Choctaws. It was not their land, but their happiness that they desired. The Indians were told that delay and talk would be useless and that this was the last chance they would have to make a treaty.²⁷ If the Indians elected to stay in Mississippi they would have to come under white man's law, be tried in his courts, and be taxed by laws the Choctaws did not understand. If the Choctaws wanted to live under these conditions, then the removal negotiations would be useless. On the other hand, if the Choctaws wanted to be happy and free from white man's control and law, they could make a treaty of removal.

If the Choctaws decided to move, Eaton went on, they would receive liberal provisions. In their new homes no state or territory would be established, their laws and customs would be maintained. The Choctaws would be protected from their enemies, and they would be able to live there as a nation in peace and prosperity.²⁸ However, if the Choctaws decided to stay in Mississippi and live under the white man's law they must surrender the lands previously assigned to them west of the Mississippi.²⁹ With the conclusion of this speech the Choctaws consulted among

²⁶Foreman Transcripts. Speech by John H. Eaton to the Choctaws gathered at Dancing Rabbit Creek. Vol. III, 42.

²⁷Ibid., 44.

²⁸Ibid., 46.

²⁹Ibid., 47.

themselves and on Monday, September 20, notified the commissioners they were ready to negotiate further.

On Wednesday, September 22, the commissioners and Indians met to consider the proposed treaty. The treaty provided that the government would compensate the Choctaws for their land at the price for which the best United States government land was being sold. The Choctaw council rejected these proposals.³⁰

At this point Eaton and Coffee told the Choctaws that this was the last treaty conference ever to be held with them, and that it was the last time commissioners would appear in their nation. The commissioners pointed out that the chiefs had written letters declaring that they could not live under state laws as they now were doing, and if the chiefs acted differently now and rejected treaty proposals they would be guilty of deception and insincerity. If in the future the chiefs asked for help, they would not be heeded because they could not be believed. Eaton declared that he assumed that they had arrived at a decision to stay in Mississippi. If this should be the case, the commissioners would then go home. He scolded the tribal representatives for indicating that they could not live under state laws and for getting the commissioners to come under the pretext of negotiating removal and then changing their minds. Eaton closed his scathing denunciation of the Choctaws by declaring that he had nothing further to say, that the commissioners had nothing further to do and would go home.³¹

³⁰Foreman Transcripts. Council of Choctaws and agents Coffee and Eaton, Thursday, September 23, 1830. Vol. III, 48.

³¹Ibid., 52.

After this speech some of the chiefs and headmen, including LeFlore, asked the commissioners to remain a few days longer and asserted that a treaty could be made. At another meeting on Saturday, September 25, the Choctaw chiefs who were present with a number of warriors presented the commissioners with a set of treaty proposals. Removal would take place in two or two and one-half years from ratification of the treaty.³²

Four sections of land was to be given to each of the three chiefs, according to the new proposal, and two were to include improvements, while four sections would go to Robert Cole, two sections to John Garland, two sections to the speakers of the East District, two to John Pitchlynn and to John Juzan. One section each was to be given to thirteen captains, while other agreements of special grants were to be listed in supplementary articles. There were provisions for those who would move and those who would choose to remain in Mississippi. Statements were included relative to removal expenses and support for one year after arrival.³³ After the proposals had been read and explained, the council broke up, and on Monday, September 27, 1830, a treaty was signed.³⁴

As a means of gaining the support of the chiefs who signed the treaty, LeFlore, Nitakechi, and Mushulatubbe each were given four sections of land by the treaty. Fifty favored members of the tribe listed by the chiefs were given two sections of land each. In addition to land grants, direct financial payments were passed out. Folsom received in addition to land, one hundred dollars for the expense of his sons at LaGrange

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid.

Academy in Georgia. Greenwood LeFlore was allowed one hundred dollars to send his daughters to the Female Academy at LaGrange.³⁵

It seemed that a vigorous effort was made on the part of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Thomas L. McKinny, to persuade LeFlore and Folsom to support government policy with descriptions of great careers for them as governors of the Choctaw Nation. In a letter dated January, 1828, McKinny had written

It is the full intent of the Government to do great things, for you and Folsom, by appointing you to office in the Government of the Indian Territory, or if you prefer it, give you land reservations here....I almost wish I was a Choctaw, that I might take the lead in leading my people to happiness.³⁶

Choctaw removal was scheduled to begin early in 1831. The conditions of the Choctaws were rapidly degenerating; they had not planted crops for food, they were spending what little money they had for whisky that was being sold freely in the Nation, and many were getting deeper in debt.

Another factor contributing to the confusion in the Choctaw Nation was the blundering, inefficient machinery of the federal government by which it actually moved the Indians. The War Department was given the task of directing the removal. Nothing comparable to this mass deportation of 20,000 people had been carried out by the government, and there was no precedent to rely on, as the accounts by Grant Foreman stated:

The government was launched without compass or rudder into the uncharted sea of Indian removal; for the first time it was about to engage in the removal of its aborigines from their homes in which it was bound to collect and feed them, transport them across the great Mississippi River, carry them part way by steamboats and then overland through swamps and across

³⁵Foreman, Indian Removal, 48.

³⁶Young, 33.

streams, and finally locate these expatriates, men and women, the aged and decrepit, little children, and babes in arms, in their new country.³⁷

It was finally decided that the government should receive the Indians on the west side of the Mississippi River and then take them to Little Rock, Arkansas. From that point on several alternative routes and methods of travel would be used.³⁸

One of the bright spots in Choctaw removal was the appointment of George Gaines to take charge of removal. He was appointed by the government to induce the Choctaws to move because they knew and trusted him. Gaines was an exceptional Indian agent, one of the few who was honest and had the welfare of the Indians in mind. He was a definite contrast to many who were attracted by the \$500,000 that had been appropriated and would be spent in government contracts.

Immediately after the removal treaty was signed resentment toward the treaty and those chiefs who signed it increased greatly. This discontent was expressed through local meetings held to urge that steps be taken to depose the chiefs who had agreed to the Dancing Rabbit Creek Treaty.

On October 23, 1830, a council of the Choctaw Nation met and passed resolutions deposing Greenwood LeFlore and appointing George Harkins in his place. The resolutions included the following statements:

We believe that it is our indispensable duty to remove Greenwood LeFlore from office...we do therefore appoint George W. Harkins chief of the northwestern district of the Choctaw Nation....

[We further declare] ...G. LeFlore totally unfit to rule a free people who having forfeited his head by breaking a law he made

³⁷Foreman, Indian Removal, 47.

³⁸Ibid., 42.

himself in open council on the Robinson Road that he would not sell his country.

The council further denounced LeFlore by charging him with:

taking up arms and marching with an armed band of warriors to a council convened at Wilson's Stand and there severely punished by whipping some of our most peaceable citizens.

having expended the money unnecessarily such as purchasing powder, lead, plumes, drums and other unnecessary articles without the consent of the people of said district to the great injury and oppression of the poor and distressed warriors and women.

taking up arms and marching with an armed force of four or five hundred warriors into a peaceable quarter of the nation against the chiefs Mushulatubbe and Nittuchachee.

selling the country against the known wishes of a large majority of the people in said district and disposing of said lands in such a manner as to deprive the warriors generally of any immediate benefit and making laws the most oppressive and degrading to the great mass of the people and also endeavoring to establish a sort of monarchical Government and furthermore threatened property....³⁹

These charges leveled at Greenwood LeFlore were those of a faction which had met in council and passed these resolutions of deposition; they are an example of the division that ripped and tore the leadership of the Choctaw Nation into bitterly opposing groups.

Dissatisfaction with the treaty was also expressed by Nitakechi. He complained that he had not received a copy of the removal treaty; he did not understand its provisions and resented the fact that only one of the chiefs had obtained a copy of the treaty. (This probably was LeFlore.) He was not satisfied with the land reserves for the residents of his district. Nitakechi's district was the poorest of the three districts and when compared to LeFlore's more prosperous district he was envious. Also

³⁹Foreman Transcripts. Resolutions passed in Choctaw Council October 23, 1830. Vol. III, 68-69.

contributing factors to Nitakechi's dislike and distrust of LeFlore were the latter's white blood and his assimilation of many of the white man's customs.⁴⁰

Some of the discontent was manifested by the missionary element among the Choctaws who opposed ratification. They maintained that the statements of certain leaders, expressing support for the treaty, did not represent the sentiments of the majority of the tribe, especially the more backward tribesmen. They claimed that not 5,000 but barely one-tenth of that number were present at the negotiation of the treaty; of the 2,600 people from Six Towns, the most backward of the Choctaws, only one man favored the treaty. Missionaries of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions resented the treaty because it did not grant compensation for their school buildings and improvements. They objected to the meager provisions for the emigrating Indians and the misrepresentation of the way in which the agreement had been negotiated. In contrast to their dissatisfaction with the treaty, Commissioner John Eaton in his final analysis of the treaty was optimistic about it:

It is no grinding-starving treaty, but as it should be liberal. ...The Door to speculation is barred....A section of land to each head of a family--half a section to each of his children over 10 years and a $\frac{1}{4}$ section to younger ones are allowed to those who determine to remain and become citizens--but to guard against fraud, they can receive no title on this account until they have remained on the land for five years....⁴¹

By the provisions of the treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek, the chiefs of the three districts were to go to Indian Territory on an exploratory

⁴⁰Senate Document 512. Letter to John H. Eaton from Nitakechi, dated October 9, 1830, Vol. II, 63-64.

⁴¹Young, 33

expedition conducted by George Gaines. The party was to leave in the fall of 1830. Greenwood LeFlore had made plans to make the trip, but when the time came, he did not accompany Gaines' party. He said that there was too much to be done, and that he was needed in the Choctaw Nation to take care of the many problems in person. Greenwood LeFlore was probably referring to the continually mounting opposition to him and to the removal treaty among the Choctaws of his district. He probably felt that he should stay and try to quiet it. When Gaines tried to persuade LeFlore to delegate his duties to some one else, he would not hear of it. He insisted that the 19th article of the treaty which required those who were planning to take reserves in Mississippi to do so within six months after the treaty was made, imposed on him as chief duties which he had to carry out personally before January, 1831, or his warriors would lose their advantage of relinquishing their reserves at fifty cents an acre. Gaines wrote, "He really seems to think his presence absolutely necessary and seems seriously to regret it."⁴²

Greenwood LeFlore worked long and hard in the fall of 1830 to encourage the people in his district to begin the task of emigrating to Indian Territory. He earnestly felt that it was to the best advantage of the Indians that they move as quickly as possible. This opinion was expressed in letters that Greenwood LeFlore wrote to M. Johnson, Choctaw agent, and to Secretary of War Eaton:

The same causes which appeared to render it necessary that the Choctaws should treaty for the disposal of their lands and

⁴²Foreman Transcripts. Letter to John H. Eaton from George S. Gaines, November 6, 1830. Vol. III, 70.

remove West of the Mississippi make it necessary that their removal should be accelerated as much as possible.⁴³

I have thought it best to urge the removal of the Indians as fast as possible that they escape the evils of intemperance which are flowing in upon the country on all sides and have caused the death of a considerable number since the admission of the Choctaw lands was arrested--I am however by such a course assuming a fearful responsibility should not the United States Government sustain me speedily making a comfortable provision for the new settlers--If those who first migrate find the country a good one and receive early attention from the United States Government they will send back such a report as will induce speedy emigration of the rest and at least all who are friendly with me will soon be there.⁴⁴

In November, 1830, about 700 or 800 Choctaws were on their way to Indian Territory and more were expected to leave soon. This was before ratification of the treaty,⁴⁵ but LeFlore was confident that it would be ratified and therefore urged early migration.

LeFlore was concerned about provisions for the early emigrants who would arrive in Indian Territory in January, 1831, and would need food and shelter. Many who left were poor and had barely enough to sustain them on their journey, and certainly not enough for anytime after their arrival in the West. The Choctaw leader constantly requested that the government give prompt and effective aid to the emigrating Indians.⁴⁶ Five or six of his most influential captains had gone with their warriors and he expected his speaker to follow them and to take charge in the West.

⁴³Foreman Transcripts. Letter to M. Johnson from Greenwood LeFlore, November 19, 1830. Vol. III, 80. Johnson, who was personally acquainted with LeFlore, commented that he was a very able man and that the letter was sincere.

⁴⁴Foreman Transcripts. Letter to John H. Eaton from Greenwood LeFlore, November 19, 1830. Vol. III, 78.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Ibid.

In November, 1830, removal from LeFlore's district was moving satisfactorily. Dissatisfaction which had arisen immediately after the treaty had been somewhat quieted when the Indians learned the terms of the treaty. To aid the migrants, LeFlore gave the Choctaw parties letters to ferries at Vicksburg and Point Chicot, Mississippi, authorizing them to transport the Indians across the Mississippi free of charge and guaranteeing that ferriage would be paid at a later date. He constantly pointed out that the Secretary of War would supply provisions for the next spring in the western country. An agent had been sent to Indian Territory by LeFlore to select a district in the West for his people.

Removal which began in the fall of 1830 moved at a more rapid pace during 1831. LeFlore was concerned for the welfare of his people and was upset when he learned that a shipment of one hundred barrels of whiskey had been brought into the Choctaw Nation from Columbus and other points along the Tombigbee River. It was said that some Indians were living on roots and whiskey, indicating the severity of the situation; without rapid removal many of the Indians would be lost. After repeal of tribal law and its replacement with Mississippi state law, nothing prohibited the importation of liquor into the Choctaw Nation. Choctaw agent Haley wrote a letter to Jackson in which he stated that through LeFlore emigration could be put into effect most rapidly. No other man could do it, he was the only man who could command his people.⁴⁷

Organization for removal began with the appointment of agents for each district. John Millard was placed in charge of Nitakechi's district, F. W. Armstrong and a Mr. Lytte took LeFlore's district, and

⁴⁷Senate Document 512. Letter to Andrew Jackson from D. W. Haley, April 15, 1831. Vol. II, 426.

William Armstrong took Mushulatubbe's district. Two men were assigned to LeFlore's district because there seemed as many people there as in the other two districts combined.⁴⁸

In the spring of 1831, small bodies moved toward Indian Territory before the general removal began. The War Department had decided that the spring and summer would not be the best time to start the general emigration. The year during which the government would provide them with supplies would end before their first crops in the new country would be ready for harvest. September was suggested as the best time for removal; wagons and depots of provisions would be established by then to accommodate the Indians. The War Department hoped that one-half to one-third of the distraught Choctaws would move in the fall of 1831. The general plan of organizing removal was for the Indians to move in small groups of from 50 to 100 each under a captain to whom provisions would be issued. Each ration consisted of $\frac{1}{2}$ pound meat, beef or pork, a pint of corn or corn meal or flour, while two quarts of salt were included in each 100 rations.⁴⁹

In the spring of 1831, the three chiefs who made the treaty were still working under the handicap of opposition and displeasure of many in their districts.⁵⁰ In March, 1831, two chiefs still claimed office in LeFlore's district. LeFlore was recognized by the government, Harkins was ignored. The Harkins party, however, steadfastly refused to recognize

⁴⁸Senate Document 512, 1831. Letter to J. H. Eaton from F. W. Armstrong, June 29, 1831. Vol. II, 496.

⁴⁹Senate Document 512, 1831. Letter to Captain John B. Clark from J. H. Hook, June 21, 1831. Vol. I, 396.

⁵⁰Senate Document 512, 1831. Letter to J. H. Eaton from E. W. Armstrong, June 29, 1831. Vol. II, 496.

Greenwood LeFlore as chief. Harkins was appraised by Haley as being a promising young man who would be a valuable leader in the Choctaw Nation in the West when he was older and more experienced; in 1831, however, he only lent support to the factionalism and division in the district because there were those who would never support him as long as Greenwood LeFlore would serve. According to Haley, Harkins encouraged the Choctaws to hold out for four years, the expiration of Jackson's term, and then they could keep their land. This kind of talk would lead to the destruction of the poor and ignorant part of the tribe. If LeFlore had been dismissed, there would have been general opposition to the treaty. Haley described LeFlore as a firm high-minded honorable man.⁵¹

Even in the face of strong opposition and bitter personal criticism LeFlore continued to urge the Choctaws to emigrate for their own good. LeFlore's concern for his people is illustrated in the initiative and command that he took in backing letters of payment for ferriage at Vicksburg, Mississippi, his purchase of goods in New Orleans, Louisiana, that amounted to about \$3,000 for use by early migrating parties, and his determination to pay annuities in 1831 when the government failed to do so.⁵²

LeFlore explained why he took the actions that he did:

Not having received any instructions with respect to furnishing a memo of the articles wanted, in the district over which I have presided as chief, as the annuity for the current year, I took the liberty of purchasing an invoice, a copy of which I enclose. The goods were purchased in New Orleans, at wholesale prices, and will be delivered to the Indians upon much better

⁵¹Foreman Transcripts. Letter to Andrew Jackson from D. W. Haley, March 10, 1831. Vol. III, 103.

⁵²Senate Document 512. Letter to John H. Eaton from William Ward, May 3, 1831. Vol. II, 442.

terms than if furnished by country merchants. The people are more anxious to remove, and it appears very desirable that they should do so as soon as practicable.

Many of them have neglected to make provisions for their longer support in this country, and will suffer as well on this account, as from their free indulgence in dissipation, which has already brought many of them to a premature death. It is also desirable that the more wealthy part of the people who will be most useful in the new country in its early settlement should be the first to emigrate. They cannot, however, sell their reservations, until it is known how they will be located and how and where the titles will be perfected. I am continually applied for information on these points, and would be glad to furnish it. I have taken the liberty for the purpose of encouraging emigration, to suffer some respectable white men to come into the country and settle upon lands for the purchase of which they have made conditional contracts. I should like to know whether I have done the right in this paper.⁵³

LeFlore had taken responsibility for ferriage across the Mississippi, and the War Department challenged his authority to do so. There was some difficulty in getting the receipt cleared and LeFlore compensated for his earlier expenditures of funds. Armstrong wrote to the department in behalf of LeFlore asking that the claim be cleared as soon as possible so that LeFlore might be reimbursed for his payment.⁵⁴

LeFlore thought that the Indians as a whole would move West with more satisfaction to themselves and less expense to the government if permitted to choose their own mode of removal. He proposed that if a certain payment be made to each person emigrating on his own initiative they could do it at a minimum of expense. Other chiefs, Mushulatubbe and Nitakechi, also agreed that some could supply themselves with provisions and would then receive an allowance equal to what the government would

⁵³ Senate Document 512. Letter to John H. Eaton from Greenwood LeFlore, May 23, 1831. Vol. II, 461.

⁵⁴ Senate Document 512. Letter to John H. Eaton from F. W. Armstrong, July 9, 1831. Vol. II, 511.

have paid for their removal. This method of removal seemed to be supported by many of the Indians themselves. Ten dollars was the estimated cost of removal per person.⁵⁵

Greenwood LeFlore's advice was requested by the War Department on various matters involved in removal varying from questions about the best place to cross the Mississippi River to the most effective use of wagons in moving the Indians. LeFlore was consulted about the crossing because his district was farthest west and he had commercial interests in that direction and was likely to know the best crossing places. When asked for advice on removal, LeFlore expressed surprise that governmental policy was subject to so much uncertainty and flexibility. He had been under the impression that it was unalterable.⁵⁶

When asked whether he wanted wagons for his Indians and if so what arrangement should be made for teams, he replied that it had always been his opinion that the use of wagons as the principal mode of transportation to the West was not the best plan. It was his opinion too that the places for obtaining supplies should be established at points along the route and the people be informed of these so that those who wanted to move themselves could do so. Those who had horses could probably take advantage of this offer to their own advantage. As for those who did not have horses, the old and crippled, LeFlore thought water transportation of some kind was preferable to travel overland. It might be advisable to

⁵⁵Senate Document 512. Letter to John H. Eaton from Greenwood LeFlore, August 30, 1831. Vol. II, 580.

⁵⁶Senate Document 512. Letter to John H. Eaton from Greenwood LeFlore, August 30, 1831. Vol. II, 580.

use a few wagons for removal for those who had considerable baggage to take with them.⁵⁷

LeFlore pointed out that wagons could be used to Point Chicot on the Mississippi River and from there along several different routes to the Red and Arkansas Rivers. However, since this season had brought frequent rains, roads through the swamps had become impassable and probably would be so during the rest of the season. However, wagons could be used on the route through Vicksburg from all parts of Choctaw country. From that point there were good roads West. If boats were to be used the Indians should be collected at Vicksburg where there would probably be a depot for provisions. From there those who were destined for the Red River country could be conveyed to Washington town on the Ouachita River. From that point there was a good road to the Kiamichi in Choctaw country one hundred miles away. Those who wished to settle on the Arkansas River could be taken up the river to Fort Smith.⁵⁸

LeFlore again emphasized that removal should be carried out as rapidly as possible. People were creating divisions among the Choctaws with the hope of destroying the influence of the chiefs and captains who made the treaty. LeFlore made reference to the renewed attempts to overthrow the current chiefs and replace them with new ones. He reported that most of the people were satisfied with the political situation and were ready to move except for those who were dissipated and worthless who often preferred to stay under laws where they could indulge in their bad

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Ibid.

habits. LeFlore reported that he expected to move during the following winter as soon as provision for housing was made for the chiefs.⁵⁹

In September, 1831, Agent William Colquhoun reported that LeFlore was unpopular among the Choctaws for several reasons, and that many public charges and criticisms were being directed at him. However, Colquhoun had not seen and spoken with LeFlore and could not make a definite statement as to the validity of the charges.⁶⁰

After conferring with LeFlore Colquhoun reported that harmony seemed to prevail and that most Choctaws still in Mississippi were anxious to go and were waiting for marching orders. LeFlore did not want conductors appointed and thought that Colquhoun should be stationed at Vicksburg as soon as arrangements were made. (However LeFlore made provisions for his people to leave immediately.⁶¹)

On October 20, 1831, Colquhoun reported that when he conferred with LeFlore in September he had been assured that 3,000 people would be ready to emigrate, and provisions for that number had been collected at stations on Robinson Road near Doak's Stand and at another point near Rankin. October 15 was the date fixed for the migrants' moving to these two places for enrollment. Wagons were hired and notice was given that Colquhoun was ready to receive the emigrants. However, while Colquhoun was away from the Yazoo making these preparations he received a letter from George Harkins announcing that the Indians did not plan to assemble. Wagons to move the migrants came to the designated points, found no

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Senate Document 512. Letter to George Gibson from William S. Colquhoun, September 1, 1831. Vol. I, 570 to 571.

⁶¹Ibid.

passengers, and the wagon masters did not know what to do. Colquhoun dismissed the contractors with a certificate of service and a request to stay ready and wait for further developments.⁶²

From Harkins' letter it can be seen that he was one of the reasons for the failure of the Indians to assemble. This long-time opponent of LeFlore went through the district and held meetings at which he advised the tribesmen to move on their own resources and promised that he would lead them and procure for them commutation allowance of \$10. to cover their expenses. Colquhoun asserted that Harkins knew of the inability of many Choctaws to move by themselves, and that his letter proved he acted only with the view of frustrating the object of the government removal. Harkins had influence among many of the Indians and led them as he pleased. He was also accused by the Choctaw agent of seeking personal gain. Harkins later said he would like to be removal agent, and on the advice of Gaines, Colquhoun sent an appointment authorizing him to help the Indians at the rate of \$2.50 a day. Colquhoun was not too hopeful of the results of the appointment.⁶³

When Harkins received the news of his appointment as removal agent, he replied he could not supervise the removal of the Choctaws in LeFlore's district. He had already spent three weeks going through the district preparing the people to move in the fall. He could not be out this trouble again without more adequate compensation from the government. Revealing his attitude, Harkins said it was the duty of the treaty-making chiefs to direct and organize removal, since they were being paid for

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Ibid.

their services. He went on to say that the Choctaws would never be organized and moved without the employment of some of the natives to assist. Harkins suggested that Thomas LeFlore, a captain and a man of great influence with his people, be appointed.⁶⁴

Harkins closed his letter with the remark that the War Department had refused to recognize him, and thus he would not put himself to any trouble in the work of removal. His people had decided not to emigrate until he went, and that would be the following fall. He went on to say that he knew it was best for the Choctaws to go as soon as possible because they were destroying themselves and spending all their money for whiskey.⁶⁵ Rivalry for leadership of the Choctaws thus continued even during the actual process of removal.

In August, 1832, Greenwood LeFlore went to Indian Territory, and when he returned was reported to be well pleased with the new Choctaw country.⁶⁶ However, he indicated no intention of moving there permanently.

Removal continued in a confused fashion during 1832. William Armstrong visited LeFlore's district in September, 1832, and found chaos. Some Indians were migrating in independent groups, and others were moving with government aid. It was impossible to keep the parties separated, and the tribesmen were constantly changing from one group to another. Many frauds were carried out on the certificates issued to the Indians.

⁶⁴ Senate Document 512. Letter to William S. Colquhoun from George W. Harkins, October 10, 1831. Vol. I, 589.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Senate Document 512. Letter to J. W. Hook from F. W. Armstrong, February 23, 1832. Vol. I, 373.

It was in the fall of 1832 that the Choctaw migration began to move in large numbers. Armstrong reported that in October 2,500 to 3,000 Indians were to assemble from LeFlore's district ready to emigrate. From Mushulatubbe's district the same number were ready, and from Nitakechi's district 3,000 were ready to move.⁶⁷

On November 3, 1832, the agent reported that the first group of Choctaws had just started west, a group of 600 on board steamboat, Reindeer, and 400 others had also started overland. The Indians were afraid of the cholera epidemic that was rampant in the United States, and there was a great deal of difficulty in getting them on board the steamships.⁶⁸

During 1833 migration continued. In February, 1833, Choctaw agent J. Brown reported 1,000 to 1,200 Indians emigrating on their own in small groups, making their way slowly and subsisting by hunting. Most of these were from LeFlore's district.⁶⁹

On August 5, 1833, William Armstrong estimated that there were still 4,000 Choctaws in LeFlore's district, but that of these only 1,000 were going to emigrate. This gave some indication of the uncertainty of the Indians in relation to emigration. In the other districts there were fewer Indians who wanted to remain in Mississippi. In Nitakechi's district there were 1,500 and in Mushulatubbe's district there were 700 who still remained behind.⁷⁰

⁶⁷Senate Document 512. Letter to Jacob Brown from F. W. Armstrong, October 3, 1832. Vol. I, 670.

⁶⁸Senate Document 512. Letter to George Gibson from William Armstrong, November 3, 1832. Vol. I, 394.

⁶⁹Senate Document 512. Letter to George Gibson from Jacob Brown, February 23, 1833. Vol. I, 497-498.

⁷⁰Ibid.

Armstrong talked to several Indians in LeFlore's district, and in September, 1833, he reported that many Choctaws were opposed to emigrating; however, they stated that if he could present them with a favorable picture of the West he might persuade more of them to go. Armstrong attributed the opposition to removal to some three or four leading captains who had acquired land under the treaty and had decided to stay in the east. Armstrong warned the captains that this was the last year they could move with government assistance, and suggested that they should show more concern for the welfare of their followers who might need their assistance.⁷¹

A group of determined Choctaws in LeFlore's district had joined a group in Nitakechi's district who were unalterably opposed to removal. They equalled about 1,000 in October, 1833. There were three treaty captains who had allegedly influenced many of the people to remain. In Mushulatubbe's district by the end of this year all had moved except about 200 under the direction of Little Leader.⁷²

Armstrong also wrote that there had been much difficulty with the remaining Indians. The Indian country was fast settling with whites, and whiskey was plentiful throughout the country.⁷³ All of the discontented of the Choctaw Nation were in Mississippi in the fall of 1833, and they were those who had bitterly opposed the treaty. Also each of the district chiefs was in the West. This would seem to indicate that LeFlore

⁷¹Senate Document 512. Letter to George Gibson from William Armstrong, September 14, 1833. Vol. I, 414.

⁷²Senate Document 512. Letter to George Gibson from William Armstrong, October 11, 1833. Vol. I, 415.

⁷³Ibid.

had again gone to the West in 1833 although he once again did not remain there.

Government aid to the immigrants under provisions of the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek came to an end with the close of 1833. Removal continued independently; by 1834 about 12,500 Choctaws had arrived in Indian Territory.⁷⁴

Removal had resulted in a permanent decrease in the Choctaw population because of the hardships encountered due to the weather and to the cholera epidemic that spread down the Mississippi River and caught those moving West in the summer of 1833. The winter of 1831-1832 saw one of the worst blizzards in history over that part of the country and caught the Indians who had left Mississippi the previous fall in the early migrating parties.⁷⁵ These Choctaws found themselves in a desperate condition. They had left Mississippi in warm weather and were clothed for warm weather. The temperature on December 10, 1831, was zero degrees Fahrenheit, there were six inches of snow on the ground, and ice made the river impassable. Captain Jacob Brown, conductor of one of the parties, wrote, "This unexpected cold weather must produce much human suffering. Our poor emigrants, many of them quite naked and without much shelter, must suffer, it is impossible to be other wise."⁷⁶

About 7,000 Choctaws remained in Mississippi under Article 19 that allowed them to take up reserves in Mississippi and become citizens of that state. In 1836, during disturbances in the Creek Nation, people in

⁷⁴Wright, 39.

⁷⁵Debo, 56.

⁷⁶Foreman, Indian Removal, 53.

Mississippi and Alabama demanded that these Choctaws be removed. However, few left at this time. Further efforts were made as late as 1843 and in 1845 to persuade these Indians to move West.⁷⁷

So ended the greatest portion of Choctaw removal. Greenwood LeFlore had a significant role in the negotiation of the removal treaty and in the removal itself. He had originally opposed removal and had attempted to create a political structure that would enable the Choctaws to face best the increasing pressure from the white settlers, the Federal government, and the state governments. It was only after these pressures became almost unbearable that LeFlore came to believe that removal was the best policy for the Choctaws.

With this attitude he entered into negotiations for a removal treaty in the face of strong opposition from the other district chiefs and from his tribesmen. After the treaty was made, LeFlore used his position and influence to aid his people to emigrate. The factionalism resulting from the treaty and removal was bitter among the Choctaws, and this affected LeFlore very directly and personally. It was a major factor in his decision to remain in Mississippi. At various points in his correspondence LeFlore had indicated that he planned to go West. However, it seemed that much of the bitterness about removal was directed toward LeFlore personally. The attempt to replace him with George Harkins was a direct example of this attitude. This opposition and hatred toward LeFlore helped change his plans and abandon his personal plans to move west. If he had gone to Indian Territory the bitterness would have been transferred to the new country. Instead he remained in Mississippi, where he

⁷⁷Foreman, Indian Removal, 102.

played a significant role in the history of that state for the next three decades.

THE STATE OF TEXAS

The state of Texas is a large state, and its history is a long and interesting one. It was first discovered by Spanish explorers in the 16th century, and it remained a Spanish colony until 1821. In 1821, Texas was transferred to the United States, and it became a territory. In 1845, Texas was admitted to the Union as the 28th state. Texas has a rich and diverse culture, and it is known for its cowboy culture and its large cities. Texas is also known for its oil industry and its large population.

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CHAPTER V

LEFLORES IN INDIAN TERRITORY

Though Greenwood LeFlore decided to remain in Mississippi, many of the descendants of Louis LeFlore migrated to Oklahoma with the great removal in 1830-1833 and settled in the southeastern section in the Choctaw Nation. Among the sons of Louis LeFlore who came to Indian Territory were Forbis LeFlore, Basil LeFlore and William LeFlore. Forbis and Basil LeFlore each came as captains of a group of one hundred Indians and as such were responsible for that group's safe removal. Other LeFlores who came to Oklahoma included Campbell LeFlore, the son of Benjamin and the grandson of Louis LeFlore.

One of the leading LeFlores to locate in Indian Territory was Forbis LeFlore, who was born in 1810, the youngest son of Louis and Rebecca Cravat LeFlore. At an early age his mother died, and he was sent to live with his sister, who was married to George Harkins. While Forbis LeFlore was living with his sister, his father put into action his determination to have one son raised in the Indian manner as a Choctaw brave; Forbis' brothers and sisters had been sent to schools in Tennessee or to missionary schools in the Choctaw Nation. However, in Indian tradition, Forbis was taken at the age of five and placed in the care of an old Indian man who had several young boys to educate in the ways of their forefathers. Five years of rigorous training in Choctaw tradition followed.¹

¹Mrs. A. E. Perry, "Colonel Forbis LeFlore, Pioneer and Statesman," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. VI (1928), 75-76.

When Forbis LeFlore was ten an incident happened that ended his Indian training; he was invited to his brother Greenwood's wedding. In later years Forbis delighted in telling the story connected with his attendance at the wedding. Forbis appeared at the wedding festivities in his Indian suit of leather hunting shirt and pants. Before the ceremony began, however, he was taken by the hand, not too gently, and dressed in the "appropriate" attire of a young man of the 1820's. Not being familiar with the apparel he put it on backwards until he was rescued and dressed properly.²

Forbis was all but enchanted by the beautiful bride in her elegant white dress. As the reception activities grew too dull for him, since he neither spoke nor understood English very well, he slipped out, shed his "proper" clothes, put his Indian suit on and went to play. While he sat cracking hickory nuts, he tried to think of a way he could demonstrate his affection for his new sister-in-law. Then he had it, he filled his shirt front with cracked nuts, went racing into the house dodging all those who tried to stop him and when he reached his sister-in-law he dumped the nuts in her lap. His actions brought laughter from all those present except his brother Greenwood who was extremely irritated. After this incident Forbis was not sent back to the old Indian but raised in a more "civilized" manner.³

Forbis was sent away to school, and he returned to Choctaw Nation in time to be caught in the contest between Greenwood LeFlore and George Harkins for the chieftainship of the Northwestern District. He was

²Perry, 76.

³Perry, 77.

naturally inclined to support Harkins, in whose home he had been raised; he supported Harkins in defiance of his father's orders to support his brother Greenwood. Forbis refused to work or vote for his brother. His father would not tolerate this disobedience and threatened to disinherit Forbis, which he eventually did, as the younger member of his family still refused to support Greenwood. At the age of seventeen Forbis LeFlore was no longer a rich man's son. In his later years he often said that not only did he owe his English education to his brother Greenwood as a result of the wedding incident but that he was also indebted to him for his ability to stand on his own feet.⁴

When the Choctaws began to emigrate to Indian Territory, Forbis and one of his brothers, Basil, came with them. Forbis and Basil were captains of groups of emigrating Indians; they ended their journey at Doaksville near the Red River. At the time of removal Forbis was a young man in his early twenties. He had a working knowledge of English and Choctaw and some knowledge of French which he found valuable in removal and during his later career.⁵

Soon after arrival in Indian Territory Forbis took an active interest in the development and progress of his people. Realizing that education was very important, he helped set up one of the first schools in the Choctaw Nation in 1832. Some of the missionaries from the East had come to Indian Territory and were busy trying to establish schools for the Choctaws. Beginning in the 1830's, Forbis held various positions of responsibility in the Choctaw school system.

⁴Perry, 78.

⁵Ibid.

Forbis LeFlore became Superintendent of Schools in the Choctaw Nation in the late 1860's. The condition of the educational system in spite of disruptions of the Civil War was generally good. In 1869, he reported that the schools were well attended, comparable to the public schools of the surrounding states. The neighborhood schools or local schools were divided into three districts corresponding to the political subdivisions of the Choctaw domain. There were sixty-nine schools in the three districts with an enrollment of 1,847 students. The amount of tribal money spent that year on these schools was \$19,369.⁶

LeFlore reported that he had found a great desire among the people to educate their children, they being particularly desirous that they learn to speak English. Due to limited funds, and to the consequent need to limit enrollment, superintendent LeFlore turned some applicants away. "It seemed to me our people have and do see the great necessity of educating the rising generation to meet the surrounding eagerness and pressure of their white brothers,"⁷ he wrote. During the year 1869, twenty Choctaw children were educated outside of the Choctaw Nation, at the expense of the tribe.⁸

Although the chief aim of the educational system was to teach the children, the adults were not completely ignored. In 1870, Forbis LeFlore reported that Sunday Schools were conducted in English and Choctaw by the different denominations without expense to the Nation.⁹ Not

⁶United States Interior Department, Office of Indian Affairs, Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to the Secretary of the Interior, 1869, 410.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, 1870, 295.

only religion but also instruction for adults in reading and writing was extended at these well-attended week-end gatherings.

In 1870, LeFlore reported that there were eighty-four neighborhood schools, each employing one teacher with an average enrollment of twenty-one students. There was a total of 1,764 students enrolled in 1870. One-third of the teachers were white, and the remainder were Choctaw who had been educated outside of the Choctaw Nation. The teachers were paid \$2 a month for each pupil in attendance. Superintendent LeFlore reported that the amount of money spent on Choctaw schools in 1870 was \$18,886. Three hundred dollars had been spent on children attending schools outside Choctaw Nation. Unfortunately these students were called back because of lack of funds. In 1870 there were no academies, high schools, or seminaries in operation but plans were being made to establish two academies.¹⁰

In his report, Forbis LeFlore complained of the intruding land-hungry whites who were constantly bothering the Choctaws. It was a hindrance to the education and civilization of our people, wrote LeFlore, because the people were always uneasy about their situation. If only they could be left alone, educated, and not crushed by the tide of white immigration, pleaded LeFlore.¹¹ Forty years before, the Choctaws as well as other southern tribes had suffered hardships to move to Indian Territory. They gave up their home for new land where they could live in peace away from white interference; they faced the problem once again.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, 1871, 572.

Forbis LeFlore combined his public career with private undertakings in Indian Territory. He first attempted to make a living by operating a small store at Doaksville. This venture was not successful, and often he told how he could never refuse credit to anyone who asked for it, and he finally went broke. The only thing that Forbis LeFlore had to show for his venture in the storekeeping business was a big blue platter that hung on the wall of his home.¹²

When Forbis LeFlore did not succeed as a storekeeper he turned to law and became one of the most widely known men in the Choctaw Nation. His work as a lawyer was, of course, not that of one thoroughly trained in law. However, he had read some law, and he could read and write both Choctaw and English, which was an accomplishment that stood him in good stead. At one time LeFlore served as district judge and supreme court judge for the Choctaws. His work as a lawyer and with the schools brought Forbis LeFlore into politics, which he seemed to thoroughly enjoy. He was long a member of the Choctaw Council and seldom missed a meeting because he always had some pet measure to introduce regarding his schools.¹³ The perseverance of men such as Forbis LeFlore resulted in a better school system for the Choctaws.

In 1837, Forbis LeFlore represented his Nation at a meeting of chiefs and commissioners of the Choctaw and Chickasaw tribes for the purpose of signing articles of agreement to incorporate the Chickasaws into a fourth district of the Choctaw Nation. On January 17, 1837, the Articles of

¹²Perry, 80. The platter is now in the possession of Mrs. A. E. Perry of Oklahoma City, youngest daughter of Forbis LeFlore.

¹³Perry, 85.

Commission and Agreement were signed; on March 24, 1837, they were ratified.¹⁴

In 1860, Forbis LeFlore was one of the delegates who helped draft a compromise constitution¹⁵ that resulted from twenty-six years of factionalism in the Choctaw Nation. The trouble originated in 1834 with a constitution drafted to vest all legislative power in the hands of the Great Council. In 1838, when the Chickasaws joined the Choctaws in a political union, the constitution was revised to include both tribes. Another revision was made in the constitution in 1843. The Choctaws were trying to find a practical, workable constitution, and they were not satisfied with the 1843 change because it lacked flexibility.¹⁶

More attempts at constitutional changes were made between 1853 and 1857, necessitated in part by the fact that the Chickasaws were dissatisfied in their union with the Choctaws and withdrew in 1855. This made a constitutional revision necessary, to formulate a suitable governmental organization.¹⁷

Intertribal confusion continued until the constitution of 1860 was written. It provided for the separation of tribal government into three branches, a bill of rights, sovereignty of the people, and other characteristics of the American governmental system. The constitution that Forbis LeFlore helped to formulate remained the fundamental basis for the

¹⁴Indian Document, Vol. XXX, 904.

¹⁵Roy M. Johnson (Compiler), Oklahoma History South of the Canadian (Chicago: J. S. Clarke Publishing Co., 1925), 145.

¹⁶Debo, 74.

¹⁷Debo, 75.

Choctaw government with very few amendments for the duration of the tribal government.¹⁸

In 1852, Forbis LeFlore and Thomas McKinney were appointed to represent the Choctaw Nation in Washington to attempt to recover payments due from various past treaties with the government of the United States. It was agreed that 1/10 of what they recovered would be used to pay the expenses of the two delegates. In November, 1852, the General Council approved and confirmed their appointments. The Council further resolved that if McKinney and LeFlore were not successful in securing the payment of annuities they would not be paid for their services.¹⁹ In November, 1860, Forbis LeFlore was paid \$3,000 for his services as a delegate to Washington for the purpose of securing the delinquent payments due under the treaty of 1830.²⁰

Soon after his arrival in Indian Territory, Forbis LeFlore married Sinai Hays, daughter of Captain Jack Hays, one of the early captains during removal. Not long after their marriage she died. In May, 1838, he married again, this time to Rebecca Fisher. She died in 1830 leaving three children. In 1861, Forbis LeFlore married again, a young French girl, Miss Anne Marie Maurer, whose father was Francois Maurer from St. Croix, Alsace, France. The Maurers were a long line of French

¹⁸Debo, 74.

¹⁹Constitution and Laws of the Choctaw Nation Together with the Treaties of 1855-1865, and 1866. Published by authority and direction of the general council by Joseph P. Folsom commissioned for the purpose. Chahta Tamaha, 1869.

²⁰Indian Document, Vol. XXX, 1037. Constitution and Laws of Choctaw Nation, 344-345.

soldiers; Anne Marie's grandfather had been one of Napoleon's bodyguards at Waterloo.²¹

With the coming of the Civil War, Forbis LeFlore was appointed in 1861 by the Choctaw Senate as a commissioner to meet delegates from the Cherokees, Creeks, Seminoles, and Chickasaws at Perryville, Indian Territory. They were to discuss negotiation of a treaty with representatives from the Confederacy. A treaty with the Confederacy was negotiated at the conference and was ratified by the Choctaw Nation without amendment, November 7, 1861.²²

Forbis LeFlore was an outspoken opponent of the North and made many speeches to this effect. The schools that LeFlore had worked to establish were badly damaged during the Civil War and at the end of the conflict were in need of repair. He then turned his energy to rebuilding and reopening them.

Forbis LeFlore's activities had made him a popular man throughout the Choctaw Nation, and in 1869 he was urged to be a candidate for governor of the Nation. His nephew, Campbell LeFlore, a well established lawyer in the Nation, thought that he had a very good chance to be elected and tried to persuade him to run. Forbis LeFlore had previously been asked to run but had always declined, and did so again at this time. His brother Basil then ran for the office of governor and was elected.²³

Forbis LeFlore was a man of wit, fond of making a joke; and he always retained a spirit of boyish fun-making. With his ready tongue and

²¹Perry,

²²Constitution and Laws of the Choctaw Nation, 1861, 205.

²³Perry, 85.

wit he thoroughly enjoyed public speaking, and often delivered his brother Basil's speeches when he was governor.

After a long and fruitful public career in the Choctaw Nation Forbis LeFlore died in August, 1881. And thus ended the career of one of the able statesmen of Indian Territory.

The two LeFlore brothers, Forbis and Basil, were very close in spite of their different personalities. Basil LeFlore was governor of the Choctaw Nation from 1858-1859 and was twice re-elected to this office, the last time in 1869. He served two terms as treasurer and one as national auditor; this position he held at his death in 1886 at the age of 76.²⁴

When Basil settled near Doaksville in Indian Territory in 1833 he married Narcissi Fisher and moved to a farm near Valliant, Choctaw Nation. After the death of Narcissi LeFlore, Basil married Miss Caroline Goodings who was raised at Fort Towson and educated in New York. She taught at Goodland Indian School for fifteen years and was one of the real friends of the Choctaws, striving to help them through education. In 1909 she was laid to rest near her husband in the Goodland Cemetery.²⁵

The third son of Louis LeFlore who came to Indian Territory during removal and whose descendants still live in Oklahoma was William LeFlore.

²⁴Letters of Carrie LeFlore, Vol. I. "Life of Basil LeFlore Told by History Books," Hugo Daily News, May 3, 1931.

²⁵Ibid. Letter to author: Mrs. Ava Mashborn, February 7, 1964. On May 31, 1931, the old home of Governor LeFlore which now stands on the campus of Goodland School was dedicated as a museum. It was a gift from W. E. Schooler in memory of his wife Mrs. Annie Crosett Schooler who died in 1929. The house was a one room log structure built in 1837, a few miles from Goodland. It had been used as a council house for the Choctaw tribal government. Another home of Basil LeFlore is now a part of the Elliott School, a Presbyterian school. Also, Dora Sanders Thompson, "Log House of Basil LeFlore to be made Museum in Honor of Ann Schooler," Daily Oklahoman, April 26, 1931.

The first recorded exercise of judicial functions in the Choctaw Nation involved William LeFlore.²⁶

William LeFlore sold his land in Mississippi according to his rights under the fourteenth article of the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek.²⁷ He was in Indian Territory in 1834 and was involved in a case concerning a slave named Bob, who was the property of John Caffery and who was on trial for the slaying of a Negro woman who belonged to John L. Price. William LeFlore appeared as lawyer for Price and Joel H. Nail represented the district. The presiding Judges were George W. Harkins, Israel Folsom, and Silas Fisher. Thomas and Jack Hays represented Caffery. Basil LeFlore was secretary of the judicial district.²⁸

After a few years in Indian Territory, William LeFlore went back to Mississippi. He is mentioned in testimony given by his brother Greenwood in 1843 as having returned to Mississippi.²⁹ It is not known whether he brought his family to Indian Territory in 1834 or if that was the reason he returned to Mississippi. During his return trip he was drowned in Yala Busha Creek, the exact date not being known. He was married to a Martha Walker, and they were the parents of eight children, all of whom came to Oklahoma; Isabelle, Sophie, Susan, Josephine, George, Greenwood, Elizabeth, and John Long.³⁰

²⁶Foreman, Five Civilized Tribes, 65.

²⁷Indian Document, Vol. 34, 79.

²⁸Foreman, Five Civilized Tribes, 65.

²⁹Indian Document, Vol. 34, 79-80.

³⁰Letter to author: Mrs. John L. LeFlore, February 13, 1963.

One of the sons, Green or Greenwood, taught in one of the first schools established in Mushulatubbe District, Folsom Chapel, at Pocala. He taught there for two or three terms.³¹

It was through the marriage of one of William LeFlore's daughters, Elizabeth, to Joziah Hamilton Dillard that another prominent Oklahoma family had its origin. They were married in southern Mississippi and came to Indian Territory in 1862 and settled near Doaksville. Young Hamilton Dillard, or Hamp as he was called, became a successful and productive farmer and rancher, living near Tishomingo until 1884. He was educated at Old Goodland Indian School, and later attended Spencer Indian Academy. In 1888 he moved to Carter county, where he bought a farm and continued to prosper. He accumulated 12,000 acres of farm land in addition to tribal land. His home at Ringling was the breeding place for good cattle and horses and was a show place to visitors. He operated and owned several other businesses in New Wilson before his death in September, 1927.³²

Another LeFlore in Indian Territory was Campbell LeFlore, the nephew of Forbis, Basil, and William LeFlore. He was one of the best known attorneys in Indian Territory; he practiced law in Tobucksy country court and was licensed to practice in the Supreme Court but confined most activity to Choctaw Nation.³³ He was the son of Benjamin LeFlore, of

³¹Frank E. Parker and J. W. LeFlore, "Some of Our Neighborhood Schools," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. IV (1926), 151.

³²Thoburn and Wright, Oklahoma: A History of the State and Its People, Vol. III (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., Inc., 1929), 396.

³³Muriel H. Wright, "A Choctaw Landmark," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. II, (1933), 477.

Mississippi and the grandson of old Louis LeFlore, who had operated a stand on Robinson Road in Choctaw country in Mississippi along the Yakahockany River.³⁴ Campbell LeFlore acquired extensive property in Indian Territory and in Arkansas, including a hotel in Fort Smith, where he lived for several years.³⁵ Shortly after Fort Smith was abandoned in 1833, the Seventh Infantry under Captain John Stuart was ordered to Fort Coffee, leaving Fort Smith unoccupied until 1838. An Indian named Thomas Wall claimed the land where the fort was located, and when the government abandoned the fort he returned and occupied the land. After Wall's death, Campbell LeFlore bought the property from the Wall heirs and lived in one of the old buildings for some time.³⁶

A progressive man, Campbell LeFlore was interested in innovations; in 1869 he applied to the General Council of the Choctaw Nation for a grant of right of way and privileges to establish a telegraph line through Choctaw Nation. He was granted the right of way beginning at the eastern boundary near Fort Smith and running southwest toward Sherman, Texas. He was also granted all rights and privileges to set up and operate a telegraph office in the capital of the Nation in connection with the line. The privileges granted Campbell LeFlore were granted to him and his heirs exclusively for fifteen years after the passage of this act.³⁷

³⁴Dawson A. Phelps, "The Robinson Road," Journal of Mississippi History, Vol. XII, 161.

³⁵Wright, 477.

³⁶Morrison, William B., Military Posts and Camps of Oklahoma, (Oklahoma City: Harlow Publishing Corporate, 1936), 18.

³⁷Constitution and Laws of the Choctaw Nation, 1869, 208-209.

Campbell LeFlore was one of the most active lawyers of the Choctaw Nation, representing the tribal government in many cases. One such case during Reconstruction involved the extensive legal action necessary to straighten out the confusion that resulted from the division of loyalty among the Choctaws during the Civil War. By the treaty of 1866 with the Choctaws it was provided that a commission should be appointed by the president to adjudicate the damage claims of those who had been loyal to the Union, and award them payment out of tribal funds. The hearings were held at Fort Smith in September, 1866. Campbell LeFlore was one of the attorneys for the Choctaw Nation, seeking to hold these claims to a minimum.³⁸

Another case in which Campbell LeFlore represented the Choctaws dealt with freedmen in the Choctaw Nation after the Civil War. By the treaty of 1866, the Chickasaws and Choctaws had the choice of adopting them into the tribe or having them removed by the United States government to a separate district, the Leased District, within a period of two years.³⁹

Most of the Choctaws favored removal. The United States government tried to influence the Choctaws toward adoption by making appropriations for adoption without waiting for the Choctaws to reach a decision. After the Choctaws had definitely decided against adoption of the freedmen into their tribe, the government continued to exert pressure toward that end. At the end of the two year period the government refused to move former slaves of the Choctaws, and consequently the freedmen remained in the Choctaw Nation for the next twenty years with no clearly defined legal

³⁸Debo, 97.

³⁹Debo, 101.

status. The Choctaws tried to provide the freedmen protection through their courts while the Federal government treated them as United States citizens and as such under criminal jurisdiction from the Fort Smith Court, but outside any civil jurisdiction.⁴⁰

Even with no legal or political rights, the freedmen prospered fairly well among the Choctaws and were determined to stay there.⁴¹ As time dragged on and it was apparent that the government was not going to fulfill the option of the treaty calling for removal, sentiment for adoption grew in the Choctaw Nation. In 1880 the Choctaw council passed a resolution to adopt the freedmen according to the treaty of 1866. On May 21, 1833, the Choctaws passed a law adopting their freedmen. Two provisions of the treaty brought objections from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs; one made freedmen ineligible for the offices of principal chief and district chief, and another said that intermarried citizenship could not be conferred on non-citizen Negroes who should marry Choctaw freedmen. The Choctaw council repealed the provision concerning the chiefs and appointed Campbell LeFlore and J. S. Standley as delegates to go to Washington to work for the adoption of the bill as it stood.⁴²

In an ably prepared statement, LeFlore and Standley showed how the refusal to grant citizenship to intermarried Negroes was not a violation of the treaty and was necessary to the protection of the Nation. If the government would not accept the bill as the Choctaws had prepared it, they threatened to return funds they had received and allow the matter

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Debo, 104-105.

to remain in the same indefinite state it had been in for the last twenty years. The government yielded and accepted the marriage clause of the Choctaws' bill as they had drawn it. In 1885, the freedmen question was at last closed. It is worth noting how the Choctaws outwitted the government in the bill by repealing the clause prohibiting freedmen becoming chief. The Choctaw constitution provided that the office was open to only those of lineal descent from the Choctaws.⁴³

With the coming of the first railroad to the Choctaw country there developed an increased number of claims for Choctaw citizenship and the economic benefits that went therewith. In 1837, the Choctaw council adopted the policy it was to follow throughout the rest of its history regarding decisions on citizenship claims. All cases were referred to the general council, which in turn appointed a special committee to investigate all claims and award or reject citizenship. The Council did not recognize any right of appeal, but "rejected persons" went to the Interior Department. This created confusion and annoyance, and thus in 1882 the Council decided to refer contested cases to the United States agent and to follow his decision. This lengthy process produced one way by which persons in the Choctaw Nation escaped removal as intruders. No time limit had been set in which applications had to be made after arrival in the Nation.

A process was worked out between the government agents and the Choctaws whereby appeals from the agent's decision might be made to the Department of Interior. The Interior Department notified the claimant to appear before the Choctaw emigration council. In 1884 three hundred

⁴³Debo, 106.

applications were filed. Chief Green McCurtain recommended the appointment of Campbell LeFlore to represent the Nation before the citizenship commission.⁴⁴ This was an important task because the claims represented an economic asset or liability of \$2,000 to the Choctaw Nation.⁴⁵

Campbell LeFlore became involved in the Choctaw struggle over proceeds that were due to the tribe from the lease of lands in the Leased District when a member of the delegation appointed in 1853 died. Peter P. Pitchlynn, Israel Folsom, Dixon W. Lewis and Samuel Garland had been appointed for the purpose of persuading the federal government to pay claims against the proceeds from sales of land in the Leased District. In 1859, the United States had made an award of \$2,981,247.30, of which \$500,000 was paid, only to be confiscated by the Confederacy. Claims dragged on until the election of Coleman Cole as chief in 1875. Cole actively pushed for the settlement of claims, and under his leadership all claims were carefully investigated and settled. A period of confusion followed when the government refused to grant the money, impeachment articles were brought against Cole, and he lost most of his influence among the tribal leaders. P. P. Pitchlynn appealed to Congress in 1878, asking that their case be referred to the courts. In 1881 Pitchlynn secured legislation from Congress referring the case to the Court of Claims. That same year he died after spending twenty-eight years in behalf of his people. The Court of Claims awarded the Choctaws \$408,120.32 for delayed annuities. Appeal to the Supreme Court resulted in a reversal of the judgment and a confirmation of the award of 1859.⁴⁶

⁴⁴Acts of the Choctaw Nation, October 19, 1884.

⁴⁵Debo, 182.

⁴⁶Debo, 208.

Peter Folsom in the meantime had died and Campbell LeFlore was appointed to the delegation representing Choctaw interests to the Federal government. He asked the Choctaw chief to secure a legal opinion concerning an 1874 law revoking a certain contract. LeFlore then advised the council to instruct him to make a requisition for the money. After a fight over the resolution, it was adopted in council.⁴⁷ In 1888, Congress made an appropriation for \$2,731,247.30, the remainder of the total amount of 1859.⁴⁸

Campbell LeFlore and Edmund McCurtain were appointed to take charge of distribution of the funds received from the Congressional appropriations.⁴⁹ After studying and settling the claims LeFlore and McCurtain made a written report that was published showing the distribution of the money.⁵⁰

The Federal government at the end of the Civil War was very interested in the formation of an inter-tribal government among the tribes in Indian Territory. The formation of such a government was closely connected with the treaties of 1866, which called for a council of the Indian Territory tribes to legislate on matters of common interest. The Choctaws opposed this plan and along with the Chickasaws did not attend the first council called at Okmulgee in 1870. A resolution was adopted at the Okmulgee council to the effect that since the tribal government machinery had not been established in the treaties of 1866 all those who

⁴⁷Acts of the Choctaw Nation, November 10, 1887.

⁴⁸Kappler, I, 285-286; June 30, 1888.

⁴⁹Acts of the Choctaw Nation, February 25, 1888.

⁵⁰Debo, 209-210.

signed the treaties were bound by the Okmulgee convention actions. Consequently the Choctaws sent delegates to the next session of the council; these delegates were Campbell LeFlore, Joseph Folsom and A. R. Durant. At this session a constitution was adopted providing for a General Assembly that would legislate on inter-tribal affairs.⁵¹ These are some of the activities of Campbell LeFlore as they were a part of the development of the Choctaw Nation in the West.

Another LeFlore who came to Indian Territory during removal was Thomas LeFlore, the son of Michael and cousin of Forbis, Basil, and William. He was also appointed a captain of a group during removal in 1832. In Indian Territory, Thomas was first elected chief of Oakalafiah District on July 7, 1834. This was Greenwood LeFlore's District, on the Red River, and in his absence Thomas LeFlore became chief. He held the office of district chief from 1834 to 1838 and from 1847 to 1850.⁵² Basil LeFlore acted as his secretary during his governorship because Thomas LeFlore lacked a formal education.

Thomas LeFlore lived near Wheelock and Millerton, and during the Civil War his home was used by the Confederate soldiers as headquarters. His house was provided as one of the buildings under the treaty of 1830 for the use of Choctaw chiefs. The ruins of the old house, which was referred to as the "governors mansion" or the "Thomas LeFlore mansion," are still evident. Between the ruins of the house and the site of old

⁵¹ Debo, 214-215.

⁵² Hudson, Peter J., "A Story of Choctaw Chiefs," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XVII, (1939), 193.

Wheelock Academy is the old LeFlore cemetery. The grave stones and high wooden superstructures indicate a former prosperity.⁵³

In 1837, the Choctaw chiefs, Thomas LeFlore, Nitaketchi, and Joseph Kincaid, turned down the proposal of the Secretary of War to furnish the Indians with goods shipped from the eastern cities rather than annuities in money. The Choctaws were tactful in their refusal, explaining that their needs were far too numerous and varied for the government to obtain for them from the cities and then transport west.⁵⁴ The Choctaws were probably wise in their decision, if past experiences with the Federal government was any indication of the kind of services or goods the Choctaws could expect.

The general council provided that Thomas LeFlore be entrusted to hold the patent issued by the Federal government to the Choctaws guaranteeing title to their land. It is still in the hands of descendants of the Thomas LeFlore family.⁵⁵

On July 8, 1846, The Northern Standard reported the election of chiefs to the three districts of the Choctaw Nation. Colonel Thomas LeFlore was chosen chief of Apuckshenubbie District by a majority of 58 votes over George Hudson and 171 votes over Colonel Joel Nail. LeFlore was popular among the people of his district, who looked up to him with veneration. He was described as being well qualified for the office in all respects.⁵⁶

⁵³Rucker, Alvin, "A Centennial of Shame," Daily Oklahoman, Sunday, May 29, 1932.

⁵⁴Office of Indian Affairs, 1837, Choctaw File A, 259-293, Vol. III, 274.

⁵⁵Foreman, Grant, Indian Pioneer History, Vol. XIX, 70. Indian Document, Vol. XXX, 959.

⁵⁶Morrison, James D., "Notes from the Northern Standard," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XIX, 1951, 89.

In June, 1845, George W. Harkins, living at Fort Towson, wrote to Greenwood LeFlore and told him about some of the developments in the Choctaw Nation. In reference to the political situation, there was relative peace and quiet as compared to the Choctaw Nation in Mississippi before removal. The Indians were progressing well, they knew the necessity of education and were making strides towards civilization.⁵⁷

The greatest evil that Harkins was aware of was whiskey. Their Nation, located on the Texas and Arkansas border, was easy prey to the "grog shops" located just across the stateline which encouraged drinking and trouble making. In Mushulatubbe's district from eight to ten murders had been committed, and the law enforcement officers were afraid to bring the offenders to justice. Harkins described Nat Folsom, chief of that district, as being "not worth his weight in coonskins." Colonel Thomas LeFlore, on the other hand, "makes an excellent chief; he has energy and firmness about him; he keeps very good order and regulation in his District...."⁵⁸

Among the second generation LeFlores in Indian Territory was Charles LeFlore, the son of Forbis and Narcissa LeFlore. He attended Armstrong Academy and schools in Paris, Texas, and Fort Smith, Arkansas. When the Civil War broke out he left school and fought with the Confederacy. At an early age, Charles married Angeline Guy of the Chickasaw Nation. For a while, he set up a supply depot and provided meat for the refugee Cherokees following the Civil War. In 1867 he built a grist mill at

⁵⁷ Foreman, The Five Civilized Tribes, 65.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

Limestone Gap, and in 1869 he was granted the right to erect a toll bridge there.⁵⁹

In 1882, Charles LeFlore was appointed commander of the Indian police force. In this position he had many interesting experiences; he also kept his post longer than any of his predecessors.⁶⁰

Charles LeFlore gained fame through his encounter with the "notorious black desperadoes" Dick Glass and Jim Johnson in company with Captain Sixkiller. The outlaw leaders were killed while attempting to escape capture; the rest of their gang got away and were captured by the police after a six mile chase.⁶¹

In 1883 or 1884, Charles LeFlore again added to his reputation as his force thwarted an attempt of the Christie Gang to rob a M.K. & T. train at a place called Reynolds Camp, five miles north of Limestone Gap. The outlaws planned to attack the train when it stopped for water. When Captain LeFlore heard of the planned attack he placed twenty-five men in positions around the tank. The Christie Gang arrived and started to take the same positions. LeFlore had ordered his men not to fire until he signalled and until the outlaws had come within a few feet. A fight ensued, during which time the train arrived and stopped some distance away until the fight was over. In the end the posse of Light Horsemen under LeFlore won the fight. Captain LeFlore told the story about this engagement many times. In his company he had a young Indian boy who had

⁵⁹O'Beirne, H. F., Leaders and Leading Men of the Indian Territory with Biographical Sketches. (American Publishers Association, 1891), 88-89. Constitution and Laws of the Choctaw Nation, 1869, 435-436.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹O'Bierne, 89.

never been under fire. A bullet hit one of the wooden tanks and knocked off a splinter that wounded the boy. LeFlore was next to the boy when it happened and heard him yell, "We have them licked, they're out of ammunition and are using bows and arrows!"⁶²

The spirit of the wounded Choctaw boy in many ways characterized the courage, the will, and the wit of the Choctaws; the LeFlores were good representatives, as they created a civilization out of the wilderness in Indian Territory.

⁶²Riggs, W. C., "Bits of Interesting History," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. VII, 1929, 149-150.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

The Five Civilized Tribes of the South had developed to a high degree of civilization by the 18th century, which fact brought many hunters and traders into their midst. Many of these were French fur traders such as the LeFlore brothers who appeared in the Choctaw Nation about 1792. Louis and Michael LeFlore married into the Choctaw tribe and settled there to raise large families. These children and grandchildren were active in Choctaw tribal affairs for many years following.

The LeFlore brothers were very positive assets to the Choctaw Nation in an economic and in a social sense. Both Louis and Michael LeFlore established trading posts and inns among the Choctaws and dealt with them honestly and fairly. Louis LeFlore's trading post, French Camp, particularly, was the center of a small community where he was the outstanding citizen.

Louis LeFlore encouraged missionaries to come to the Choctaw Nation and establish schools. One such school was Bethel Station, which was a missionary school established near French Camp. Louis LeFlore further set an example for the Choctaws by sending his children to missionary schools to be educated.

Louis LeFlore's sons continued in the tradition of their father as leading men in their Nation. The most widely known of these was Greenwood LeFlore, who was educated in Tennessee. He returned to the Choctaw Nation

about 1820 and was chosen chief of the Northwestern District shortly thereafter. Greenwood LeFlore was eager for his people to progress and prosper. The first step in this direction was the eradication of ignorance through education. LeFlore was convinced that the Choctaws could most readily be educated through mission schools. Putting this plan into action, Greenwood LeFlore encouraged missionaries to come to the Choctaw Nation and teach as well as preach. LeFlore's district showed the influence of this progressive policy within a few years, particularly when compared to the other two districts whose chiefs did not follow a friendly policy toward the missionaries.

Greenwood LeFlore could be described as a reforming chief. His efforts to improve the conditions in the Choctaw Nation extended beyond education into the laws and constitution of the tribal government. Through his influence laws were passed in an attempt to help rid the Choctaws of some of their superstitious behavior; witchcraft is one example. Other laws were enacted to prevent needless loss of life in the "blood for blood" type of revenge that the Choctaws practiced. Other reforms which LeFlore put into effect included the guarantee of a fair trial in cases of homicide. Chief LeFlore not only used his influence to have these laws enacted, but in several instances, he also set an example of their execution.

Greenwood LeFlore was initially opposed to removal, but as pressure increased and he saw the rapid degeneration of conditions among the Choctaws, he came to support removal for the sake of the Choctaws. He had grown up among the Choctaws, and he knew that they were strongly attached to their homes in Mississippi. He felt, however, that they were letting their emotions interfere with their reasoning. LeFlore felt that

the Choctaws had no future in Mississippi under the state laws that had just been extended over them. If the land was allotted in severalty, the Choctaws would be easy prey for white speculators and land shisters. The only way to preserve the Choctaws as a people was to move them west of the Mississippi as far away from the corrosive elements of the land hungry whites as possible.

With this attitude LeFlore went to the negotiations for the removal treaty in 1830. He signed the treaty in the name of the Choctaw Nation because it was probably the best that would be offered by the Federal government under the circumstances.

Following the completion of negotiations for the removal treaty, Greenwood LeFlore began to work actively for removal, using all of his influence both personally and financially, to get the Choctaws moving as soon as possible and to keep them moving as rapidly as possible. Chief LeFlore worked in the face of bitter opposition from within his own district and from within his own family in his activities during removal. The opposition grew so bitter that one segment of a district attempted to depose him and place George Harkins in his position. LeFlore ignored this action and continued to carry on the duties of chief.

The bitter factionalism that divided the Choctaws also prevented LeFlore from moving with his people to Indian Territory. He realized that he was unpopular among many of his tribesmen because of his role in the negotiation of the treaty and in removal. If he had gone to Choctaw country in the Indian Territory, he would have been a bitter personal reminder to the Choctaws of their unhappy experience.

Some of those who criticize Greenwood LeFlore for signing the treaty base their criticism on the fact that the supplementary treaty included

provisions granting him large tracts of land. It should be remembered that this was not an unusual provision in the removal treaties and also that LeFlore was one of the wealthiest men in Mississippi and had made his fortune prior to negotiation of the treaty.

Greenwood LeFlore did not go West during removal, but his brothers Forbis, Basil, and William, his cousin Thomas, and his nephew Campbell did migrate to Indian Territory. These LeFlores all served their people well and faithfully as the Choctaws rebuilt their nation after removal. Forbis LeFlore carried on in the LeFlore tradition of encouraging education of the Choctaws. He worked diligently to get the school system organized and served as superintendent of the Choctaw school system.

Basil LeFlore served as governor of the Choctaw Nation for several terms and was an able administrator. Another brother, William, was a self-taught lawyer and was involved in some of the first legal cases to be held in Choctaw Nation in Indian Territory. Basil LeFlore was a widely known lawyer in Choctaw Nation and was called many times to represent the tribe in cases involving the Federal government, which he did ably. The last of the second generation LeFlores in Indian Territory to be considered is Thomas LeFlore, who migrated during removal and became chief of Greenwood LeFlore's district. He was popular and well respected by the people of his district for his able administration while in office.

Captain Charles LeFlore, the son of Forbis LeFlore, was a colorful figure in the early years of Choctaw Nation as he dashed about chasing outlaws in his capacity as commander of the Indian Police force in the Boggy Depot area.

It must be concluded after the examination of the lives of these members of the LeFlore family that they made a major contribution to the

development of the Choctaw Nation. These individuals represent the ability, courage, and persistence of the Choctaws to maintain themselves as a people in the face of what seemed to be an overwhelming obstacle of removal and reestablishment; for in a new country they helped carve out a new civilization.

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