

THE GREAT SEAL OF THE CHICKASAW NATION

The replica of the Great Seal of the Chickasaw Nation appearing in colors on the front cover of this winter issue of *The Chronicles of Oklahoma* is a reproduction of the original painting among others of the Five Civilized Tribes in the Museum of the Oklahoma Historical Society.¹ This Chickasaw Seal shows a native warrior of ancient times, standing with two arrows in his right hand, a long bow in his left and a buckskin shield on his left shoulder. This design is significant in the history of the Chickasaws referred to in the records from the beginning of the historic period as a nation of warriors.

The central device in the Great Seal, showing two arrows in the Indian warrior's right hand, represented guard over the two phratries or divisions of Chickasaw tribal society. These divisions were known as the *Koi* and the *Ishpani*, given in English, respectively, as Panther (or Tiger) Phratry (from *koi* in the native language meaning "panther" or "tiger"); and Spanish Phratry (from *ishpani* which some have translated as "Spanish"). The Chickasaws were governed by a hereditary ruler or chieftain, referred to as the "King," from English colonial times, selected from the *Ishpani* division in tribal society. There was also a tribal war chief who was often more influential and powerful in the councils than the "King." The last Chickasaw "King" was named Ishtehotopa who came west with his people in the Removal, and died in the Indian Territory in 1846. The last "War Chief" was the venerable Chief Tishomingo, who died on the way west and was buried near Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1838, at the age of 102 years. He was looked upon with deep affection and held in high regard by his tribesmen. The capital of the Chickasaw Nation West was named "Tishomingo City" in 1856, honoring him in history as the last war chief of the old tribal regime in power before the Chickasaws purchased a home among the Choctaws, their cousin tribe, in the Indian Territory, and moved from Mississippi to this new country. The figure of the warrior in the Great Seal commemorated the courageous Chickasaw of old times, represented in the person and character of Chief Tishomingo.

The Great Seal of the Chickasaw Nation was provided by law in a constitution adopted by the Chickasaws in 1856, when they had separated from the Choctaws and organized under their own constitution and laws in the region lying west of the Choctaw line to

¹ The upper ray of the central star in the Oklahoma State Seal shows the warrior from the Great Seal of the Chickasaw Nation. For further reference on the history of the Seal, see "Official Seals of the Five Civilized Tribes," *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. XVIII, No. 4 (December, 1940), pp. 361-63.

the 98th Meridian. When the manuscript of the constitution and laws was sent to Louisiana to be printed, it was lost on the way, necessitating the adoption of another draft of the documents. The law providing an official seal and its use is found in the constitution adopted in "Convention at Camp Harris," August 16, 1867, under Article V, Executive Department, Section 10 and 11, respectively, as follows:

"There shall be a seal of this Nation, which shall be kept by the Governor and used by him officially; and shall be called 'The Great Seal of the Chickasaw Nation.'

"All commissions shall be in the name and by the authority of the Chickasaw Nation, and be sealed with the Great Seal, signed by the Governor, and attested by the National Secretary."

The impress of the Great Seal is seen on official papers out of Governor Cyrus Harris' office in 1872, showing the Indian warrior with the arrows in his right hand and a bow in his left, but there is no copy of a law of the Chickasaw Nation available at this writing which describes this design.

The Chickasaw constitution adopted in 1867 remained in effect until Oklahoma became a state in 1907, which closed the government of this Indian nation. The constitution provided a "Bill of Rights," "Rights of Suffrage," three departments of government—legislative, executive and judicial—and special provision for "Public Education." "Article V, Executive Department," Section 1 provided: "The Supreme Executive power of this Nation shall be vested in a Chief Magistrate, who shall be styled 'The Governor of the Chickasaw Nation.'" This was a departure from the constitutions and laws of the other Indian governments in the Indian Territory, in which the chief executives were styled "Principal Chief." The first governor of the Chickasaw Nation, elected under the constitution adopted in 1856 was Cyrus Harris (1856-58), who was followed in office by Dougherty (or "Winchester") Colbert, elected 1862-66 as the second governor. The last Governor of the Chickasaw Nation elected to this office was Douglas H. Johnston who continued in the office until his death (1939), in the settlement of original tribal properties and claims before the United States. The present Chickasaw Governor is Floyd E. Maytubby appointed to this office by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, beginning in 1939. The Oklahoma State Constitution adopted in 1907 provided the organization of present Johnston County, named for the Chickasaw Governor, Douglas H. Johnston, with Tishomingo as the County Seat, where the last Chickasaw capitol building still serves as the County Court House. On this same site, the first brick capitol building of the Chickasaw Nation had been erected in 1858.

This same year four boarding schools were in operation, substantial buildings having been erected by the Nation, and the schools

opened in 1851 and 1852, under the supervision of different Protestant mission boards: Chickasaw Manual Labor School for boys (Methodist) about three miles southeast of Tishomingo City; Wapanucka Institute for girls (Presbyterian), site about five miles northwest of present Wapanucka, Johnston County; Bloomfield Academy for girls (Methodist), site about five miles southwest of Achille, Bryan County; and Colbert Institute for boys and girls (Methodist), located at Perryville, about five miles south of present McAlester, Pittsburg County.

The Chickasaw people have the distinction of bearing the same name as it was given in the narratives of the De Soto Expedition that discovered one of the villages of the tribe in 1540, in what is now Polk County, Tennessee. The name in these narratives is given *Chicaca* or *Chicaza*. The great John Wesley on his visit to Georgia in 1736, gave the name *Chickasaw*, the approved form. The tribe was a part of the Choctaw before its discovery, and the language of the two is the same except for a few dialectal expressions. The Choctaws called this cousin tribe *Chikasha*, an abbreviation of the phrase *chikkih aschachi*, signifying "they left as a tribe not a very great while ago," from the old Choctaw expression *chikkih*, "not a very great while ago," and *aschachi*, in the plural sense referring to a group or tribe. In those days, the Chickasaw country included large parts of present Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama and Mississippi. English traders had met the Chickasaws by 1700, and James Adair was living among them in 1744 when he was writing his book describing their life and customs, published as *History of the American Indians* (London, 1775).²

The Chickasaw remained allied with the English interests during colonial times to the end of the American Revolution. The great victories in battle against De Soto's forces in 1541, and in the Battle of Actia (present Lee County, Mississippi) against the French and Choctaw allied forces in 1736, justified the later reputation of the Chickasaws as fighting men. The names of traders besides that of James Adair, listed in the records of the British Colonial Office at London in 1766, include Michael Cheadle, James Colbert, Benjamin Sealy, William Kemp, and William James. These men and others—Thomas Love, John McLish, E. Pickens—reported as British loyalists in the period of the American Revolution married among the Chickasaws, and became the progenitors of families well known in the history of the nation in the Indian Territory.

²The following are sources for Chickasaw history: James H. Malone, *The Chickasaw Nation* (Louisville, 1922); Grant Foreman, *Indian Removal* (Norman, 1932) and *Five Civilized Tribes* (Norman, 1934); John R. Swanton, "Social and Religious Beliefs and Usages of the Chickasaw Indians," *44th Annual Report*, Bur. Amer. Ethnol. (Washington, 1928); Muriel H. Wright, *A Guide to the Indian Tribes of Oklahoma*, (Norman, 1951).

The last of the Chickasaw country in Mississippi and Alabama was ceded to the United States to be sold in public sale, the proceeds to be credited as a trust fund for the Nation under the supervision of the Federal Government, by the terms of the Chickasaw Treaty of Pontotoc in 1832. The sum of \$530,000 was applied out of these funds for the purchase from the Choctaws of the right of settlement and citizenship in the Choctaw Nation by an agreement made in a treaty at Doaksville in 1837. The Chickasaw District, western part of the Choctaw country, was organized for their benefit under the Choctaw constitution and laws. Isaac Alberson, Edmund Pickens, Benjamin and Henry Love, Pitman Colbert, Holmes Colbert, and Jackson Kemp were prominent Chickasaw leaders before the Treaty of 1855, that provided for the separation of the Chickasaws from the Choctaws and the right to organize their own government. Edmund Pickens had served as Chief of the Chickasaw District, Choctaw Nation, in 1848; he was one of the Chickasaw delegates who signed the Treaty of 1855 at Washington, and later was one of the Chickasaw delegates who signed the treaty of alliance with the Confederate States in behalf of the Nation. A county was named for Edmund Pickens when the Chickasaw Nation was divided into four counties and their boundaries established by the Chickasaw Legislature in 1859: Pickens, Pontotoc, Tishomingo, and Panola counties. Pickens covered the widest area lying between the Washita and the Red rivers to the 98th Meridian or western line of the Nation. This old county is now included in nine counties and parts of counties in Oklahoma, and was noted many years before statehood for its fine farms and ranches in the Washita and Red river valleys and the Arbuckle Mountains. Panola ("Cotton") County lay in the western part of present Bryan County and a narrow strip of Johnston County, the smallest of all the counties in the Nation. The rich country south of the Island Bayou, along Red River in Panola County was the location of large cotton plantations owned by the Loves, the Colberts and Isaac Alberson, beginning in the 1840's. Here, too, Chickasaw girls were educated for two-thirds of a century at old Bloomfield Academy which had been named by the early missionaries for the beautiful, flowering prairies of Panola County.

Many of the old records in Oklahoma bear the impress of the Great Seal of the Chickasaw Nation, recalling the history of the courageous Indian people briefly reviewed here.

—*The Editor*