

“The Golden Days”: Taylor and Mary Ealy, Citizenship, and the Freedmen of Chickasaw Indian Territory, 1874–77



*By Ellen Cain**

On a Monday morning in fall 1874, twenty-six-year-old Taylor Ealy felt despondent. He had recently completed an ambitious educational program that included college, seminary, and medical school, yet he was confused about the direction of his future. He longed for the bold, adventurous life of a Presbyterian missionary, not the tame existence he now led as a Pennsylvania preacher. Ealy went to his room on that Monday morning, dropped to his knees, and prayed, “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do—send me anywhere. Show me my work.” The answer came swiftly, the very same day, Ealy received a letter asking him to appear before the Northern Presbyterian Freedmen’s Bureau in Pittsburgh. When he arrived, the secretary of the bureau offered him a choice: to teach at a nearby theological seminary or at a government school for freedmen at Fort Arbuckle, Chickasaw Indian Territory (present-day south-central Oklahoma). Ealy knew immediately that he wanted the more challenging position in the West.

“I said I will take the harder field. . . . I looked upon this as a direct answer to my prayer.”¹

So it was that Taylor Ealy and his new bride, Mary Ramsey, set out for Indian Territory in October 1874. The Ealys carried with them a sincere and enthusiastic desire to aid the recently freed black slaves of the Chickasaw Nation. They labored in Indian Territory—a land of former Confederates—during the last years of Reconstruction. Thus, Taylor and Mary participated in a crucial process of nation-building during the 1870s. The Civil War had greatly expanded the powers of the federal government. Now, during the Reconstruction era, those powers were being tested by complex and difficult questions. How would the national state reconfigure the union of North and South? How would it incorporate the former slaves into the civic community? Similarly, how would it incorporate western territories and western peoples? How was citizenship to be defined? What rights did citizenship confer? The Ealys’ efforts in Indian Territory put them at the very crux of these questions. They joined voices with the former slaves in claiming federal protection for freedmen rights. As they did so, they encountered competing claims from the Chickasaw Indians and from federal officials themselves. Who would attain insider status in the increasingly powerful United States? Who would remain an outsider?² For the Ealys, the freedmen, the Chickasaws, and government officials alike, this debate centered around divisive issues of education and land ownership.

When the Ealys arrived in Indian Territory in autumn 1874, they firmly believed in the importance of the educational work ahead of them. They faced hostility and opposition with the courage prevalent among teachers of the freedmen. As Taylor recalled, “An old man addressed us as a friend. . . . He said I am a correspondent of an influential paper published in [Mississippi] and I heard it said that if any one went to teach those ‘niggers’ at Ft. Arbuckle they would kill him.” Taylor firmly replied, “You tell them that I am not afraid to die. And if they kill me, there will be ten sent to take my place.”³

When at last the Ealys reached their destination, their mood remained optimistic. “Pushing along at a pretty rapid gate [*sic*], we got to Ft. Arbuckle before sun down,” Taylor recorded. “Some ladies would have sat down and cried—but Mrs. E was not so foolish. The cielings [*sic*] of our house had been plastered & all the old plastering was lying upon the floor. We swept a place for our trunks & our bed on the floor & fell to work to get supper in the fireplace spreading our tablecloth on one trunk. . . . We were young and anxious to succeed in the work. We

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tried to make the best of what we had and did not fret about what we did not have.”⁴

In their labors among the Chickasaw freedmen, however, the Ealys confronted a legacy of almost two hundred years of conquest and bondage. By the early 1700s, European contact had introduced African slavery to the Chickasaws, Choctaws, and other tribes of the American Southeast. Throughout the nineteenth century, Chickasaws of mixed-blood descent—those of Anglo and Indian heritage—controlled the tribe socially, economically, and politically, having founded an aristocracy in emulation of southern Anglo planters. They had built “rich lodging[s]” and owned hundreds of black slaves. In the 1830s they took those slaves with them when forced to leave their ancestral homes for Indian Territory in the trans-Mississippi West.⁵

During the Civil War, the Choctaws and Chickasaws sided with the Confederacy almost unanimously. Nonetheless, Union victory obliged Indian Territory once again to submit to the US government and to abolish slavery. Federal treaties of 1866 required the Creeks, Seminoles, and Cherokees to grant tribal citizenship to their freed slaves. Yet the federal treaty negotiated jointly with the Choctaws and Chickasaws on April 28, 1866, provided far less protection for freedmen. Under this agreement, the tribes had two years to adopt their former slaves. If they failed to meet the deadline, they would forfeit \$300,000 as payment for substantial tribal lands ceded to the United States. The money would then be used by the federal government to assist in removing “from said Nations all such persons of African descent as may be willing to remove.”⁶

By 1874, the year the Ealys arrived at Fort Arbuckle, neither the Choctaws, Chickasaws, nor the federal government had honored their treaty obligations to the freedmen. The former slaves, as a result, existed in a political no-man’s land. Although Choctaw and Chickasaw tribes fell under the jurisdiction of the federal government, they functioned in many aspects as sovereign entities, and their freed slaves functioned as neither US citizens nor members of the tribes. The freedmen had few economic rights; although they could live on and cultivate tribal land, they possessed no title to it. Neither could they attend tribal schools. Meanwhile, the Fort Arbuckle school was one of the federal government’s few, inadequate attempts to assist the former slaves.⁷

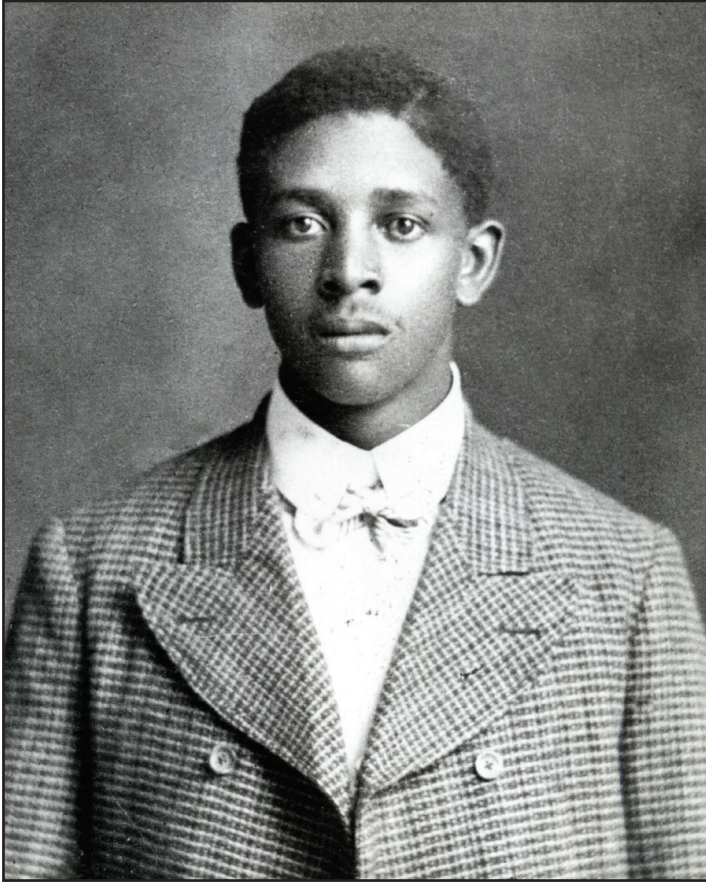
In spite of these overwhelming difficulties, the Chickasaw and Choctaw freedmen joined forces to formulate their own conception of citizenship. They claimed rights “as men, as citizens of these United States, and natives of the Indian Territory.” While declaring that US citizenship guaranteed them “all the rights and privileges enjoyed by any

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Chickasaw freedmen filing on allotments in Tishomingo (3759, W. P. Campbell Collection, OHS Research Division).

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Claude Devoyd Hall, a Chickasaw freedmen who was the first African American instructor at Freedom's School in Tishomingo, c. 1906 (20699.80.44.2, State Museum Collection, OHS Research Division).

other class of [American] citizens," they considered "themselves full citizens of the [Indian] nations and entitled to all their rights as such." In this formulation of dual status, the federal government would have higher authority than any tribal body. Consequently, the former slaves sent delegates to Washington and repeatedly petitioned Congress and other federal officials for protection; as one Choctaw freedman declared in 1872, "The United States liberated us, and we think that they ought to keep us safe." Women as well as men among the former slaves urged

the government to help them secure what they saw as two primary citizenship rights: land ownership and access to education.⁸

The freedmen of Indian Territory expressed an almost desperate eagerness for learning. One observer noted their “universal desire to attend school. Every family will make sacrifices to enable them to send their children regularly.” Here they echoed their fellow freedmen across the South. Overwhelmingly, blacks of the Reconstruction era believed that attending school represented considerable opportunities for economic, social, and spiritual self-improvement. Schoolhouses came to symbolize freedom and independence. Even before the Ealys’ arrival, several Chickasaw freedmen had struggled to fund two small subscription schools. The former slaves of Chickasaw Territory, however, simply did not have the means to meet their own educational needs. They could only hope that the promised school at Fort Arbuckle would enable some of them to become teachers themselves.⁹

Certainly both the Ealys and the freedmen were industrious in establishing their school. The fort had been abandoned by the US Army in 1870, and the buildings had fallen into disrepair. Nonetheless, some two hundred freedmen provided their labor to refurbish the place. Taylor and Mary appropriated one building as a private home and used the others to set up classrooms. Lack of transportation posed a problem for many freedmen. As a solution, the Ealys arranged to board students at the fort, beginning instruction early in November 1874. Their teaching materials included readers and Webster’s spellers as well as texts for history, geography, and arithmetic.¹⁰

Taylor Ealy recalled, “We opened our U.S. Freedman’s School, under government authority. I told those freedmen that we would teach all who came old and young--as long as we could accommodate them, every day in the week except Saturday.” Taylor further noted that the numbers of male and female students were roughly equal, and that men and women shared in the work of supplying the school: “The parents got busy, killed pork & brought provisions to run our large boarding house. Several colored women came in & cooked & took care of the boarding houses. . . . The people even brought fresh cows & left them to furnish milk.”¹¹

The freedmen’s desire for education was quickly tested by physical hardship—sickness exacerbated by close quarters at the fort. Taylor recorded that “the measles [*sic*] broke out in the School. 30 scholars at one time were down with measles.” This was only one situation requiring Taylor’s medical expertise. His father sent him a supply of drugs from Pennsylvania and he remained busy dispensing them and treating the freedmen’s ailments.¹²

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The Chickasaw Capitol Building, Tishomingo, c. 1900. Photo by Grant Foreman while in the field with the Dawes Commission (8470.14, Grant Foreman Collection, OHS Research Division).

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In the midst of these struggles, the school at Fort Arbuckle brought into focus important questions: What links did the Ealys, the federal government, and the Chickasaws forge between education and citizenship rights? What were the implications for the former slaves? How did education help to delineate the perimeters of the civic community?

Looking back on his time in Indian Territory, Taylor Ealy declared that he and Mary “worked hard and faithful[ly], while we were there, for the promotion of good citizenship.” For the Ealys, good citizenship implied membership in the spiritual kingdom of God as well as the earthly realm of the United States of America. In fact, like so many of their contemporaries, the Ealys saw little difference between God’s kingdom and the United States. Their Presbyterian schooling had taught them that an unbreakable bond existed between religion, education, and republicanism. With other Presbyterians of the late nineteenth century, the Ealys believed that the United States could flourish as a Christian republic only, and education in moral citizenship was essential to preserve that republic.¹³

The Ealys therefore hoped their efforts would help the freedmen to become wise, spiritually-grounded American citizens. At heart, this was an egalitarian view. The Ealys believed that, through proper instruction, blacks could achieve full equality with white citizens. “Let us treat all men everywhere as we would have them treat us,” Taylor affirmed, indignant to learn that the freedmen had not been able to read or possess Bibles as slaves. The Ealys believed that women as well as men among the former slaves should be well-educated members of the Christian-American republic. Taylor seemed particularly taken by the history of “Aunt Delphia, one of our cooks & a scholar.” He was pleased to find her a diligent student, much like his own wife Mary. Delphia had been playing on a beach in Africa when she was captured by slave hunters and transported to Virginia. “Think of the loss of a kidnapped child among ourselves,” Taylor mused, “. . . And would any one assert that the grief is not as great in the breasts of the colored parents as in the white? Thus colored people had been sold to the indians [*sic*]. And were liberated in 1863. Do you not think it was high time some effort was put forth to enlighten them?”¹⁴

The Ealys’ efforts to “enlighten” the former slaves involved instruction in the attributes of industriousness, frugality, and self-control, the virtues so important in their own upbringing. Armed with these qualities, the freedmen would then be able to join whites in shaping the Christian-American republic. Thus, education would help lead to an orderly, controlled, and stable nation for all citizens. Taylor argued that economic progress would be an added benefit: “I know [the freedmen]

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will get sewing machines—organs—pianos—and will show evidence of thrift & industry equal to their white neighbors.” The Ealys were, by far, not the only nineteenth-century Americans to see moral instruction as a panacea for the assorted hardships of the former slaves. Like Taylor and Mary, most teachers of the freedmen throughout the South, as well as Indian Territory, were products of a middle-class, northern Protestant world that had raised them in the virtues of thrift, hard work, self-reliance, and self-control. Consequently, the Ealys and their fellow teachers believed these attributes could help overcome poverty and prejudice, as well as promote Christian-American citizenship among the freedmen.¹⁵

Inevitably, the Ealys’ view of education had several weaknesses. It assumed that the Chickasaw freedmen were much like blank slates at the end of the Civil War, waiting for the inscription of spiritual and civic virtue. In reality, the freedmen had long demonstrated the qualities so important to Taylor and Mary. When Presbyterian missionaries first proselytized among the Chickasaws in the early 1800s, they soon found the Indians’ black slaves to be the most receptive audience for their message; even without the benefit of their own Bibles, a great many of the slaves had embraced Christianity well before the Ealys’ advent. The freedmen demonstrated political enlightenment as well, formulating their own definitions of citizenship, meeting with tribal leaders to discuss their status, and repeatedly petitioning federal authorities for assistance.¹⁶ The Chickasaw freedmen—whether by choice or necessity—had been practicing industriousness and frugality long before the Ealys’ arrival. The Ealys also placed far too heavy a burden on education as a solution to the freedmen’s problems. Without benefits of actual citizenship in either the Chickasaw Nation or the United States, no amount of education could compensate the former slaves for their lack of political and economic rights.

Federal officials, too, placed far too much reliance on education as a remedy, rather than addressing the freedmen’s citizenship problems. At the same time, government authorities saw freedmen education primarily as a means to influence the Chickasaws. In July 1874, US Indian Commissioner E. P. Smith stated that the Fort Arbuckle “school is deemed an important one not only for its effects on the colored people, but also by way of example and stimulus upon the Indians for improving the management of their educational work.” A November 1874 letter from Smith to Taylor Ealy reiterated, “It is especially desirable that this school shall be made efficient, for its influence upon other educational work among the Chickasaws. It is believed the demonstration within their observation of what children can accomplish in studies

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Members of the last Chickasaw Legislature, 1905-06 (3971, Ada Bingham Collection, OHS Research Division).

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The commissary at Fort Arbuckle, 1934 (19687.TO.F066.25.1.1, Chester R. Cowen Collection, OHS Research Division).

under proper tuition will act as a spur to their present sluggish and incompetent methods.”¹⁷

Since well before the Civil War, the Chickasaws themselves had placed great importance on the connection between education and tribal citizenship. They devoted considerable time, effort, and money to the establishment of schools, belying Commissioner Smith’s assessment of their “sluggish and incompetent methods.” In contrast to the federal focus on manual-labor skills for Indians, the Chickasaws believed that education would help their children attain the same economic and social status as Anglos, and enable them to negotiate adeptly with the white world. This, in turn, would help protect tribal autonomy. The Chickasaws placed a high value on their national independence, but they wanted to possess the same rights and privileges as US citizens. In 1873 they called for schools to “be carried on in a manner that would reflect honor on the Nation, besides conferring a lasting good upon the rising generation. . . . Let us inaugurate schools that will elevate our children to an equal footing with our white brethren.”¹⁸

Tribal women played a significant part in this goal. The Chickasaw Nation founded boarding schools for both boys and girls, among these the Bloomfield Academy for Chickasaw Females, an institution that

spanned almost a hundred years, from 1852 to 1949. “Bloomfield Blossoms” were expected to become the wives of future tribal leaders. Their education prepared them to “be dignified and cultured young ladies” equal to their Anglo counterparts and thus equipped to navigate social interactions with the white world. Full-blood as well as mixed-blood girls attended the academy. The Chickasaw legislature paid students’ families a ten-dollar monthly grant, allowing even parents of limited means to enroll their daughters at Bloomfield.¹⁹

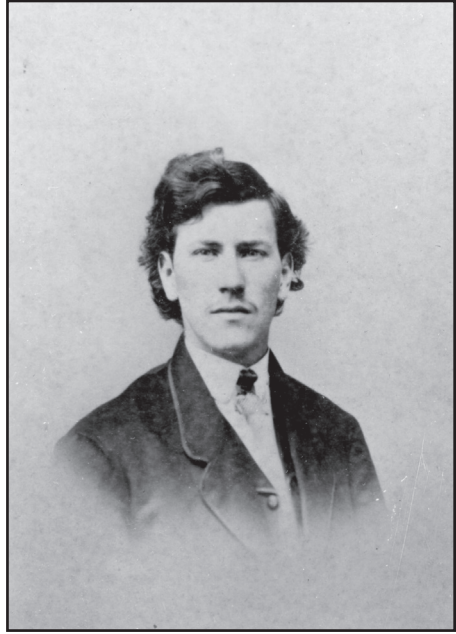
Chickasaw schools only accepted tribal citizens, and this effectively barred the freedmen. By excluding their former slaves, the Chickasaws demonstrated once again their desire to ensure full equality with Anglos. Mixed-blood leaders had long identified themselves with southern white planters—and, like so many southern whites of the Reconstruction era, they did not wish to share “an equal footing” with their former slaves. The Chickasaws mirrored the racial prejudice of whites, and did so quite consciously. Tribal legislators asserted that throughout their own slaveholding history they had closely patterned the behavior of whites, arguing “that the Chickasaw people cannot see any reason or just cause why they should be required to do more for their freed slaves than the white people have done in the slave holding States for theirs.” Even those Anglos most sympathetic to black rights balked at the idea of integrated schools. It is not surprising that the Chickasaws rejected the freedmen so adamantly in their own school system.²⁰

Education, then, served as a canvas upon which to map the boundaries of citizenship. The former slaves claimed education as a right conferred to them by membership in both the Chickasaw Nation and the United States. The Ealys stressed the power of moral instruction to prepare the freedmen for full equality in the American civic community, while federal officials saw freedman education primarily as a means to model Christian-American virtues for the Chickasaws. The Chickasaws, for their part, used education to draw careful divisions between insider and outsider. Even as they set parameters against the former slaves, they asserted their own outsider status. They would incorporate Anglo culture and emulate Anglo success, but only to help retain their tribal autonomy and national separateness.

Controversies over land ownership, however, gravely threatened tribal independence. Would the Chickasaws retain communal possession of their holdings, or would their lands be carved into private lots, boundary lines now etched into the earth itself? The Ealys and their federal superiors, the freedmen, and the Chickasaws all debated this pivotal question. As the conflict intensified, Indian Territory became once more a proving ground for the claims of citizenship.

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*Taylor Ealy as a young man
(Special Collections, University
of Arizona Libraries).*



The Ealys, like the majority of their Anglo-American counterparts, saw private ownership of land as essential to civic virtue. In addition, they believed that the abundance of the West would allow countless citizens to till their own land and thereby strengthen the republic. Taylor Ealy celebrated this abundance from the moment he arrived, showing a need to seize some of it immediately: "Flocks of pigeons as far as the eye could see either way flew over us. I stood up in the wagon & shot at them." Clearly, Chickasaw Indian Territory possessed an expansiveness unfamiliar to Taylor's eastern eyes. It embraced sprawling grasslands where horses and cattle grazed, as well as corn and cotton plantations fed by the waters of the Red and Washita Rivers. Hills densely forested with oak, pine, ash, pecan, and hickory rolled in the eastern region, while the Arbuckle Mountains rose gently in the middle of the territory, taking their name from the namesake of the nearby fort.²¹

Taylor Ealy saw this vastness as a resource to be conquered and used with adventurous zeal. He enjoyed hearing the freedmen's tales of conquest, taking note that the men invariably carried both a knife and a revolver. He seemed delighted when one of his students shot "a very large rattlesnake." On another occasion, "I asked one of the men who

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*Mary and Taylor Ealy
(Center for Southwest
Research, University of
New Mexico).*

brought his wife & children to school. His name was Geo. Loftter—I said Geo. How many Panthers have you killed this year? ‘Well me & the boys killed six (6) this fall.’ Think of it, one family killing six panthers in one fall!”²²

If a single family could avail itself of half a dozen panthers, Taylor Ealy believed there was enough abundance for all. No group should be left out. At the same time, western plenty should be individually apportioned. Taylor desired “the black man [to] sit down under his own vine & fig tree—or worship God—with none daring to molest him or make him afraid.”²³ The West would therefore supply sufficient game and allow independent farm ownership for every citizen regardless of color, contributing to the growth of the Christian-American republic.

Federal officials of the Reconstruction era also had inherited this vision of an agricultural paradise for individual farmers in the West, a vision directly opposed to the American Indian tradition of holding lands in common. Consequently, the 1866 treaty with the Choctaws and Chickasaws focused heavily on plans to survey and divide tribal lands “on the system of the United States,” arguing “that the holding of said land in severalty, will promote the general civilization of said Nations, and tend to advance their permanent welfare and the best

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Students and faculty at the first building at Bloomfield Academy, c. 1880-84 (7040, Juanita Johnston Smith Collection, OHS Research Division).

interests of their individual members.” Once the tribal legislatures had agreed to allotment, each tribal member, “whether male or female, adult or minor,” would be entitled “to one-quarter section of land,” or 160 acres. Each freedman would be assigned forty acres. In the federal view, individual allotment would encourage two qualities essential for republican citizenship: pride of ownership and the resulting dedication to hard work.²⁴

The former slaves, meanwhile, claimed access to land as another fundamental citizenship right under the United States and the Chickasaw Nation. Like freedmen in the southern states, they saw land ownership as a crucial way to escape the poverty and servility of the contract labor system. Along with their southern counterparts, they persistently asked, “How are we to get homesteads?” With so few resources of their own, the freedmen of both Indian Territory and the states looked to the federal government for assistance “in selecting our homes.”²⁵

To strengthen their case with the government, the Chickasaw freedmen adopted a policy that only could alienate them further from their former masters: they openly linked their own hopes for land with the abolition of communal property and Anglo settlement in Indian Territory. In 1869 a convention of Chickasaw and Choctaw freedmen proclaimed “that we consider ourselves full citizens of those [Indian] nations, and fully entitled to all the rights, privileges, and benefits as such, the same as any citizen of Indian extraction. . . . That we are in favor of having this Indian country sectionized, and a certain amount of land allotted to each inhabitant as his own.” The freedmen went on to assert “that we are in favor of opening this Territory to white immigration, and of selling to them, for the benefit of the whole people of these nations, our surplus lands.” Some contemporaries charged that unscrupulous Anglos had swayed the former slaves to this position in order to advance their own goals, yet the freedmen had already proven their ability to articulate their position clearly and decisively. They promoted white settlement in hopes of advancing their cause with Congress; they were not pawns but advocates on their own behalf.²⁶

In the struggle over land tenure, the Chickasaws identified their former slaves as a serious threat. They greatly resented the 1866 treaty stipulation that they provide lands for their freedmen, arguing that former slaveholders in the southern states were not held to the same requirement. Meanwhile, the tribe confronted a growing number of blacks within its borders. In the early 1860s the Chickasaw slave population stood at approximately one thousand; after the Civil War, many former slaves from Louisiana and Texas immigrated to Chickasaw territory, increasing the number of freedmen to more than 2,600.

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The Chickasaws feared the power this population might come to exert. In 1876 tribal governor B. F. Overton stressed his conviction that the freedmen must remain outsiders. He criticized the Choctaw governor for "claiming that we have the right to enact such laws as would compel the negroes to take the oath of allegiance to our respective governments, and become amenable to our laws, without having any of the privileges and immunities of citizenship conferred upon them. But the most ignorant can see how utterly foolish such a position is." Overton went on to warn the tribal legislature that "the negroes will be the wedge with which our country will be rent asunder and opened up to the whites."²⁷ Clearly the tribe gave heavy weight to the freedmen's alignment with Anglo settlement and individual allotment.

Thus, competing visions of citizenship centered around significant issues of land ownership and education in Indian Territory. The Ealys struggled to implement their own vision, but eventually they began to feel like outsiders themselves. Seemingly forgotten at times by their government, money worries as well as loneliness and illness beset them. Payment of their federal salaries was erratic, placing them in serious financial distress throughout their time in the Chickasaw Nation. The tribal governor caused more distress by attempting to collect a \$25 "noncitizen permit" from Taylor "for the privilege of residing and doing business" in Chickasaw territory. Requiring such permits of teachers, doctors, laborers, and others was an effort by the Chickasaws to control the growing number of intruders converging upon them. Taylor Ealy indignantly informed the US Indian Agent, "If there is anything to come out of my pocket in this matter . . . I will stop the school & leave the Nation immediately. I get nothing for preaching. They rather owe me \$2500 than that I should pay \$25 to remain." Summing up his experiences in Indian Territory, he further declared, "It's hard work in this corner."²⁸

The Ealys finally saw no choice but to give up their teaching posts at Fort Arbuckle. In November 1877, the Presbyterian Board of Home Missions offered Taylor a new position, this one as minister in the small town of Lincoln, New Mexico. In spite of the Ealys' discouraging experiences at Fort Arbuckle, their enthusiasm for frontier work remained. They began preparing for their journey to the new post in far-off New Mexico Territory.²⁹

The Chickasaw freedmen would struggle with lack of citizenship rights for years to come, despite their continued petitions to Congress. In 1883 the Choctaws finally initiated proceedings to adopt their former slaves, but the Chickasaws remained adamant against doing so. The Chickasaw freedmen's hopes for education suffered a serious blow

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Above: The third building of the Bloomfield Academy, built in 1890 and burned in 1914 (3301, Oklahoma Historical Society Photograph Collection, OHS Research Division).

Below: Bloomfield girls and a little boy, c. 1900-14 (20917, Juanita Johnston Smith Collection, OHS Research Division).



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in 1884, the year Congress ceased funding for their schools. Only precarious hopes of a better life followed. In 1893 Congress voted to extend the General Allotment Act to Indian Territory. The Five Civilized Tribes would eventually cease to function as legal bodies, and their lands would be apportioned to individual tribal members. While allotment meant destruction of the Chickasaws as a tribal entity, it provided the former slaves, at last, with a stake in Chickasaw lands. Eligible freedmen were to receive their own forty-acre allotments, as originally promised in the 1866 treaty.³⁰

Yet, once again, the former slaves confronted boundary lines. By amendment, allotment rolls were to include Chickasaw children but not freedmen children. The Department of the Interior decreed, "Chickasaw freedmen are not a class of citizens of the Chickasaw Nation within the meaning of the [acts] of Congress . . . and their children [born after 1899] are not entitled to enrollment."³¹

Here federal authorities determinedly ignored their own long-term part in excluding the freedmen from either Chickasaw or US citizenship. The Ealys' efforts among the freedmen might therefore seem insignificant, indeed. Taylor and Mary could do little when the federal government itself made only nominal efforts to assist the former slaves. Congress deserved most of the blame, refusing as it did to devote considered attention to the freedmen's predicament. The retrenchment of federal support ultimately doomed the Ealys' well-meaning efforts in Indian Territory, just as it helped to doom Reconstruction on a wider national scale. Yet federal apathy only reflected the growing indifference of Anglo-American citizens as a whole. Certainly it reflected the North's weakening resolve to support Reconstruction. In this light, it is remarkable that a few northern Anglos like the Ealys cared enough to toil among the Chickasaw freedmen. Taylor and Mary sincerely wished the former slaves to attain full American citizenship, and they worked toward this goal in spite of the daunting problems facing them.

The Ealys also believed they had attained some measure of success in Indian Territory, taking particular pride in the spiritual sustenance they had offered. Taylor recalled how, at sunset, he and Mary often gathered the freedmen for "chapel services" and thrilled to hear their "sublime" voices. The Ealys found it comforting to teach the hymns they had learned while growing up in Pennsylvania. They also rejoiced in their contributions to the freedmen's learning. "In our [Sunday School] we gave them books," Taylor reminisced. "Some of the men who could read would go home reading their books on horseback with the bridle reign [*sic*] hanging on the saddle and the horse sauntering slowly along." The freedmen's desire for education only seemed to

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confirm this sense of accomplishment. Taylor recounted, “One of my students in a letter several years after wrote me calling those school days ‘The Golden Days.’”³²

The Ealys would treasure their memories of Fort Arbuckle the rest of their lives, even though Indian Territory had, indeed, proven to be a “hard corner” for them. Their vision of citizenship, so closely allied to the freedmen’s hopes, had imbued their work with meaning and had given them their own golden days in the West.

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Endnotes

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¹ Taylor Ealy, untitled manuscript, 2-3, folder 3, box 1, Ealy Family Papers, 1873-1984, MSS 443 BC, Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM [hereafter EFP, CSWR, UNM].

² Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), 469. Foner argues that in the post-Civil War era, "the state emerged as a battleground for competing claims upon its authority." Several other historians have explored the insider/outsider tensions of national identity formation. For example, in *Boundaries: The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 270-71, Peter Sahllins states, "National identity is a socially constructed and continuous process of defining 'friend' and 'enemy,' a logical extension of the process of maintaining boundaries between 'us' and 'them' within more local communities." See also Lloyd Kramer, *Nationalism: Political Cultures in Europe and America, 1775-1865* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1998), 85; here Kramer argues that "the different genders and racial groups within nations meant that demarcations of difference defined *internal* social categories as well as the boundaries that separated national cultures from other nations."

³ Taylor Ealy, untitled manuscript, 4, folder 3, box 1, EFP, CSWR, UNM; Taylor Ealy, "Fort Arbuckle, Indian Territory," 15-16, folder 5, box 1, ser. 3, Writings, 1875-1889, Taylor F. Ealy Family Papers, 1854-1937, MS 162, Special Collections, University Libraries, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ [hereafter TFE, UA]. The Ealys would continue to need courage in their work. Taylor recounted how white men would often "ride into" the midst of the freedmen's religious gatherings "and begin shooting right & left." See again Taylor Ealy, "Fort Arbuckle," 7, folder 5, box 1, ser. 3, TFE, UA. For examples of the courage displayed by other teachers of the freedmen, see Foner, *Reconstruction*, 99-100, 144-45, 428.

⁴ Taylor Ealy, untitled manuscript, 5, folder 3, box 1, EFP, CSWR, UNM.

⁵ Arrell Morgan Gibson, *The Chickasaws* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972), 65; see also 140-43. Scholar Daniel Littlefield states that "census roles of Chickasaws taken west list 1,223 slaves held by 255 owners. Twenty of these 255 owners owned ten or more slaves. . . . The owners with the largest number of slaves were Pitman Colbert, who held 150, and Rodi Colbert, who held 95. Although there were a few with Indian names, most of the slaveholders were of mixed blood." Daniel F. Littlefield Jr., *The Chickasaw Freedmen: A People Without a Country* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980), 10.

⁶ *Constitution and Laws of the Chickasaw Nation, Together with the Treaties of 1832, 1833, 1834, 1837, 1852, 1855, and 1866* (1899; reprint, Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1973), 497; Gibson, *The Chickasaws*, 259-61, 275-76; Jeffrey Burton, *Indian Territory and the United States, 1866-1906: Courts, Government, and the Movement for Oklahoma Statehood* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), 15, 17; Angie Debo, *A History of the Indians of the United States* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1970), 150; Donald A. Grinde Jr. and Quintard Taylor, "Red vs. Black: Conflict and Accommodation in the Post Civil War Indian Territory, 1865-1907," *American Indian Quarterly* 8, no. 3 (Summer 1984): 212-13; R. Halliburton Jr., *Red Over Black: Black Slavery among the Cherokee Indians* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1977), 134-36; Littlefield, *Chickasaw Freedmen*, 39-40; Mary Jane Warde, "Now the Wolf Has Come: The Civilian Civil War in the Indian Territory," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma* 71, no. 1 (Spring 1993): 84.

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⁷ Littlefield, *Chickasaw Freedmen*, 51-53, 99-100, 112; Gibson, *The Chickasaws*, 292; Parthena Louise James, “Reconstruction in the Chickasaw Nation: The Freedman Problem,” *The Chronicles of Oklahoma* 45, no. 1 (Spring 1967): 49-52, 56; Berlin B. Chapman, “Freedmen and the Oklahoma Lands,” *The Southwestern Social Science Quarterly* 29, no. 2 (September 1948): 152-54; James H. Kettner, *The Development of American Citizenship, 1608-1870* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 293-95. From 1867 to 1869, the Freedmen’s Bureau operated five schools for the former slaves of the Chickasaw Nation. In the 1870s, the Fort Arbuckle school was one of five schools maintained by the federal government for the freedmen of the Chickasaw and Choctaw Nations. Grinde and Taylor, “Red vs. Black,” 216; M. Thomas Bailey, *Reconstruction in Indian Territory: A Story of Avarice, Discrimination, and Opportunism* (Port Washington, New York: Kennikat Press, 1972), 149; Littlefield, *Chickasaw Freedmen*, 66-67.

⁸ US Senate, Committee on Territories, *Report to accompany bill S. 1802*, Report No. 744, 45th Cong., 3d sess., 1879, 156; US House of Representatives, *Freedmen of Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations*, Mis. Doc. No. 46, 42d Cong., 2d sess., 1872, 1, 15; see also 12. US House of Representatives, Committee on Indian Affairs, *Investigation of Indian Frauds*, Report No. 98, 42d Cong., 3d sess., 1873, 463; James, “Reconstruction in the Chickasaw Nation,” 47; Littlefield, *Chickasaw Freedmen*, 54-55. Freedmen across the South as well as Indian Territory declared, “We are not Africans now, but colored Americans, and are entitled to American citizenship.” By demanding federal protection for citizenship rights, the freedmen had captured the essence of Radical Republican ideology: “the idea of a powerful national state guaranteeing blacks equal standing in the polity and equal opportunity in a free labor economy.” Foner, *Reconstruction*, 599-600, 237. One example of a strong female voice in these claims is a December 1870 petition to Congress by more than two hundred Choctaw and Chickasaw freedmen; almost a third of those who signed were widows or single women. This petition stressed the freedmen’s persistent desire for land and education. US House of Representatives, *Freedmen of Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations*, 1-6.

⁹ Murray R. Wickett, *Contested Territory: Whites, Native Americans, and African Americans in Oklahoma, 1865-1907* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000), 80; Gibson, *The Chickasaws*, 292-93; Foner, *Reconstruction*, 96-97, 366, 541; Ronald E. Butchart, *Northern Schools, Southern Blacks, and Reconstruction: Freedmen’s Education, 1862-1875* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980), 4, 169-77; Jacqueline Jones, *Soldiers of Light and Love: Northern Teachers and Georgia Blacks, 1865-1873* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 3-4, 203; Littlefield, *Chickasaw Freedmen*, 54, 112-13.

¹⁰ Ruth R. Ealy, *Water in a Thirsty Land* (privately printed, 1955), 14, CSWR, UNM. Ruth Ealy was Mary and Taylor Ealy’s daughter. Her manuscript contains letters, diary entries, and reminiscences of her parents, many of these not available elsewhere. When her transcriptions are compared to duplicate documents in collections of Ealy papers, they prove to be identical. Therefore, it is safe to assume that all of her transcriptions are highly accurate. See also Norman J. Bender, “‘We Surely Gave Them an Uplift’: Taylor F. Ealy and the Mission School for Freedmen,” *The Chronicles of Oklahoma* 61, no. 2 (Summer 1983): 186; Littlefield, *Chickasaw Freedmen*, 113, 116.

¹¹ Taylor Ealy, “Fort Arbuckle,” 1, 4, folder 5, box 1, ser. 3, TFE, UA; Ruth Ealy, *Thirsty Land*, 15, CSWR, UNM.

¹² Taylor Ealy, “Fort Arbuckle,” 1, 1, 9, folder 5, box 1, ser. 3, TFE, UA. See also Ruth Ealy, *Thirsty Land*, 19, CSWR, UNM; and Bender, “‘We Surely Gave Them an Uplift,’” 186-88.

¹³ Taylor Ealy, “Fort Arbuckle,” 3, folder 5, box 1, ser. 3, TFE, UA; Ruth Ealy, *Thirsty Land*, 16, CSWR, UNM; Mark A. Noll, *Princeton and the Republic, 1768-1822: The Search for a Christian Enlightenment in the Era of Samuel Stanhope Smith* (Princeton:

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Princeton University Press, 1989), 8, 20, 79-80, 93-98, 138, 144-46, 168, 187, 201-03, 356; Harold Miller, *The Revolutionary College: American Presbyterian Higher Education, 1707-1837* (New York: New York University Press, 1976), 127-28, 283; J. P. Wickersham, *A History of Education in Pennsylvania* (1886; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1969), 401-02; Lewis Harold Caton Jr., "Washington and Jefferson College: In Pursuit of the Uncommon Man" (Ph.D. diss., University of Pittsburgh, 1972), 16.

¹⁴ Taylor Ealy, "Fort Arbuckle," 5-7, folder 5, box 1, ser. 3, TFE, UA; Ruth Ealy, *Thirsty Land*, 18, CSWR, UNM.

¹⁵ Taylor Ealy, "Fort Arbuckle," 7, folder 5, box 1, ser. 3, TFE, UA; Wickett, *Contested Territory*, 68; Foner, *Reconstruction*, 146, 365-66; Butchart, *Northern Schools, Southern Blacks*, 9-19, 25-31, 114, 168, 199, 203-07; Jones, *Soldiers of Light and Love*, 5, 28-29, 110-11, 206-07; Robert Charles Morris, *Reading, 'Riting, and Reconstruction: The Education of Freedmen in the South, 1861-1870* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 151.

¹⁶ Littlefield, *Chickasaw Freedmen*, 5-7, 66; Richard Green, *Chickasaw Lives, Vol. 4: Tribal Mosaic* (Ada, OK: Chickasaw Press, 2012), 164-68.

¹⁷ E. P. Smith to A. C. McClelland, July 31, 1874, microcopy, record group (RG) 75, M21, roll 118, 533, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC (hereafter cited as NARA); Ruth Ealy, *Thirsty Land*, 13, CSWR, UNM; Bender, "We Surely Gave Them an Uplift," 185.

¹⁸ Amanda J. Cobb, *Listening to Our Grandmothers' Stories: The Bloomfield Academy for Chickasaw Females, 1852-1949* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 55; see also 25, 41, 51-54. Irene E. Mitchell and Ida Belle Renken, "The Golden Age of Bloomfield Academy in the Chickasaw Nation," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma* 49, no. 4 (Winter 1971-1972): 414, 416; Wickett, *Contested Territory*, 74; Gibson, *The Chickasaws*, 236, 280-81; Bailey, *Reconstruction in Indian Territory*, 19, 45, 147; William L. Hiemstra, "Presbyterian Mission Schools among the Choctaws and Chickasaws, 1845-1861," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma* 27, no. 1 (Spring 1949): 34-35.

¹⁹ Cobb, *Listening to Our Grandmothers' Stories*, 59; see also 35, 57-58, 63.

²⁰ *Constitution and Laws of the Chickasaw Nation*, 171; James, "Reconstruction in the Chickasaw Nation," 53; Foner, *Reconstruction*, 308. Full-blood Chickasaws were more willing than their mixed-blood counterparts to associate socially with the freedmen. US House of Representatives, *Investigation of Indian Frauds*, 465-66. And, despite tribal laws against intermarriage of blacks and Chickasaws, many interracial relationships took place. As Daniel Littlefield explains, "Amalgamation had also occurred before and after removal, and in the appearance of many [black] families, the Indian blood predominated." Littlefield, *Chickasaw Freedmen*, 25; see also 15, 92-94.

²¹ Taylor Ealy, untitled manuscript, 5, folder 3, box 1, EFP, CSWR, UNM; Littlefield, *Chickasaw Freedmen*, 79-80; Arrell Morgan Gibson, *The Oklahoma Story* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1978), 92; W.B. Morrison, "Fort Arbuckle," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma* 6 (1928): 28. Both the fort and the mountains were named for General Matthew Arbuckle.

²² Taylor Ealy, "Fort Arbuckle," 2, folder 5, box 1, ser. 3, TFE, UA; Ruth Ealy, *Thirsty Land*, 15, CSWR, UNM.

²³ Taylor Ealy, "Fort Arbuckle," 7, folder 5, box 1, ser. 3, TFE, UA.

²⁴ *Constitution and Laws of the Chickasaw Nation*, 503, 505; see also 497. Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 595, 659; Gibson, *The Chickasaws*, 307; George Brown Tindall, *America: A Narrative History*, vol. 1 (New York: W.W. Norton, 1984), 251-53.

²⁵ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 329; see also 289, 305, 320-21, 329, 374. US House of Representatives, *Freedmen of Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations*, 2.

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²⁶ US Senate, *Report to accompany bill S. 1802*, 155; Thomas F. Andrews, “Freedmen in Indian Territory: A Post-Civil War Dilemma,” *Journal of the West* 4, no. 3 (July 1965): 369-70; Gibson, *The Chickasaws*, 291-92. Historian Angie Debo argues that “many of the petitions supposed to have originated with the freedmen are clearly not genuine expressions of their opinions, but are artificial demands inspired by scheming white men who sought to influence them for their own purposes.” Angie Debo, *The Rise and Fall of the Choctaw Republic* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1934), 103. While it is true that at least a few Anglos in Indian Territory, such as newspaper editor Valentine Dell, did champion the freedmen cause, the former slaves actively and persistently took the lead in fighting for their own rights. The December 1870 petition to Congress by the freedmen emphasizes that the former slaves acted “of their own free will and accord . . . without any undue influence.” US House of Representatives, *Freedmen of Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations*, 6.

²⁷ Littlefield, *Chickasaw Freedmen*, 66; Gibson, *The Chickasaws*, 292; Grinde and Taylor, “Red vs. Black,” 220, 223; Andrews, “Freedmen in Indian Territory,” 371. Even among Radical Republicans, the idea of confiscating land from southern plantation owners and redistributing it among former slaves was deemed too extreme. Congressman Thaddeus Stevens was one of the few arguing for confiscation; the majority of Radicals asserted rather that blacks should be provided “a perfectly fair chance” to work for and purchase their own land. Foner, *Reconstruction*, 237; see also 245-46, 308-09, 316, 377.

²⁸ Gibson, *The Chickasaws*, 285; see also 286. Littlefield, *Chickasaw Freedmen*, 119.

²⁹ Bender, “We Surely Gave Them an Uplift,” 190-91.

³⁰ Littlefield, *Chickasaw Freedmen*, 69-70, 133; Gibson, *The Chickasaws*, 300-04.

³¹ Commissioner to Tom Johnson, January 10, 1907, Applications for Enrollment of the [Dawes] Commission to the Five Civilized Tribes, 1898-1914, Chickasaw Freedmen Minor 48-330, microcopy, MI 301, roll 390, NARA, courtesy of the Research Library, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City; Gibson, *The Chickasaws*, 305. See also Wendy St. Jean, *Remaining Chickasaw in Indian Territory, 1830s-1907* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2011), 42-55.

³² Taylor Ealy, “Fort Arbuckle,” 1, 6, 8, folder 5, box 1, ser. 3, TFE, UA.