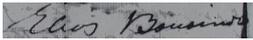


Elias Boudinot (Cherokee)

Elias Boudinot	
 <p style="text-align: center;">Elias Boudinot</p>	
Born	1802 Oothcaloga, Cherokee Nation (now Calhoun, Georgia)
Died	June 22, 1839 Park Hill, Cherokee Nation West (now Oklahoma)
Spouse	Harriet R. Gold
Signature	

Elias Boudinot (born *Gallegina Uwati*, also spelled Watie) (1802 – June 22, 1839), was a member of an important Cherokee family in present-day Georgia. They believed that rapid acculturation was critical to Cherokee survival. In 1828 Boudinot became the editor of the *Cherokee Phoenix*, which was published in Cherokee and English. It showcased Cherokee achievements and served to build unity among the Nation when it was under pressure for Indian Removal.

In 1826 he married Harriet R. Gold, daughter of a prominent family in Cornwall, Connecticut whom he had met while a student at the Foreign Mission School. The union caused controversy in the town. Following his cousin John Ridge's marriage to a New England woman in 1825, the Cherokee National Council passed a law enabling the descendants of Cherokee fathers and white mothers to be full citizens of the Cherokee. (Formerly they had no place in the matrilineal tribe, in which children belong to the mother's clan and people.) The Boudinots lived at New Echota and reared their children as Cherokee.

Early life and education

Gallegina was born into a leading Cherokee family in present-day Georgia, the eldest son of nine children of *Uwati* and Susanna Reese, who was Cherokee and European. When *Uwati* accepted Christianity, he took the name of David *Uwatie* (and later dropped the "u" from his name.) *Gallegina's* brothers were Isaac, better known as Stand *Watie*, who served with the Confederate Army during the American Civil War; and Thomas *Watie*. They were the nephews of Major Ridge and cousins of John Ridge.

Boudinot, the Ridges, John Ross, and Charles R. Hicks and his son, Elijah Hicks, formed the ruling elite of the Cherokee Nation in the early nineteenth century.

Watie's Christian education began in 1808, at the age of 6, when he studied at the local Moravian missionary school. In 1812 he joined the Spring Place school, in what is now Murray County, Georgia. Around this time, Cherokee leaders were petitioning the government for aid to educate their children and showing that they were willing "to accept white civilization".^[1]

Elias Cornelius, an agent from the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), came to the community and served as a benefactor for education. In 1817 the ABCFM opened the Foreign Mission School in Cornwall, Connecticut for educating promising students from American Indian cultures. In 1818 Cornelius selected Watie and a few others to go to the Foreign Mission School. On the way, they were introduced to the Virginia statesmen Thomas Jefferson and James Monroe.

In Burlington, New Jersey, they met Elias Boudinot, president of the American Bible Society and a former member and president of the Second Continental Congress. He and Watie made strong impressions on each other. Watie asked Boudinot for permission to use his name, to which he agreed. When enrolled at the school, Watie started using the name Elias Boudinot, which he kept for the rest of his life.^[1]

In 1820, Boudinot officially converted to Christianity, attracted to its message of universal love. It would become part of his work with the Cherokee Nation. In 1824 he collaborated with others in translating the New Testament into Cherokee and having it printed in the syllabary created by *Sequoyah*.

Marriage and family

While studying in Connecticut, Boudinot met Harriet Ruggles Gold, daughter of a prominent local family who supported the Foreign Mission School. Her family had often invited Boudinot and other Native American students to their home. The couple began a courtship by letter, after Boudinot had to return to Cherokee Nation because of illness.

His cousin John Ridge also attended the school and married a local young woman in 1824, which caused considerable controversy in Cornwall. After the Ridges' return to New Echota to take up residency, in 1825 the National Council passed a law providing full Cherokee citizenship to children of a Cherokee father and white mother.^[2] In the matrilineal culture, children belonged to the mother's clan, so the Cherokee had absorbed children born to Cherokee mothers and white fathers (usually fur traders). Without such a provision, the children of Ridge and Boudinot would have had no place in the Cherokee society. The high status of the two young men probably contributed to passage of the law, to ensure protection for their future children. In her book, *To Marry an Indian: The Marriage of Harriett Gold and Elias Boudinot in Letters 1823-1839*, Theresa Strouth Gaul wrote that the law was inspired by Ridge's marriage and Boudinot's engagement, as they were prominent Cherokee and it protected their children.^[3]

Boudinot and Gold's engagement was originally opposed by her family and the Congregational Church, and roused local protests. She persisted and finally persuaded her parents to grant permission for the union. The couple were married on March 28, 1826 at her home.^[1] The uproar forced the closing of the Foreign Mission School.^[4]

The Boudinots returned to New Echota to live, where they had six children, including Elias Cornelius Boudinot (August 1, 1835 — September 27, 1890). Harriet died in August 1836, a few months after the birth of her seventh child, which was stillborn.

Career as editor

After his return to New Echota, in 1828 Boudinot was selected by the General Council of the Cherokee as editor for a newspaper, the first to be published by a Native American nation. He worked with a new friend Samuel Worcester, a missionary and printer. Worcester had new type created and cast for the Cherokee syllabary. In 1828, with Boudinot as editor, the two printed the *Cherokee Phoenix*, in Cherokee and English. While it was planned as a bi-lingual newspaper, the *Phoenix* had about 16 percent of its content in the Cherokee language during Boudinot's tenure.

The journalist Ann Lackey Landini believes that the Cherokee Nation intended the newspaper to explain their people to European Americans and prove their civilization.^[5] At the same time, the Council intended it to unite the Cherokee through the Southeast, and regularly published laws and other national political information in the paper.

Between 1828 and 1832, Boudinot wrote numerous editorials arguing against removal, as proposed by Georgia and supported by President Andrew Jackson, even after Congress passed the Indian Removal Act of 1830. Jackson supported removal of the Cherokee and other Southeastern peoples from their eastern lands to Indian Territory west of the Mississippi. Over a roughly four-year period, Boudinot's editorials emphasized that Georgia's disregard of the Constitution and past federal treaties with the Cherokees would not only hurt the Cherokees' progress in acculturating but threatened the fabric of the Union. Boudinot's articles demonstrated Cherokee assimilation (conversion to Christianity, an increasingly Western-educated population, and a turn toward lives as herdsman and farmers, etc.) He criticized the "easy" way in which treaty language was distorted by Indian Removal advocates for their own purposes.^[6]

In 1832, while engaged in a speaking tour of the North to raise funds for the *Phoenix*, Boudinot learned that the United States Supreme Court had sustained the Cherokees' rights to political and territorial sovereignty within Georgia's borders in *Worcester v. Georgia*. He soon learned that President Andrew Jackson still supported Indian Removal. In this context, Boudinot now began publicly advocating for his people to secure the best possible terms with the United States by making a binding treaty of removal. His changed position was widely opposed by the Cherokee.

The majority of Cherokee opposed removal, including the National Council and John Ross, the Principal Chief. Former friends in the Cherokee government turned against Boudinot and other "treaty advocates," who included John Ridge and Major Ridge. They attacked their Cherokee loyalty and denied them a fair hearing in councils. Ross forbade Boudinot from discussing pro-removal arguments in the *Cherokee Phoenix*. In protest, Boudinot resigned his position in the spring of 1832.^[7]

Literary works

Cherokee Phoenix

The first newspaper published by a Native American tribe gave a "voice to the American insiders" who had been forced to become "outsiders".^[1] The premier edition of the newspaper was called the *Tsalagi Tsu-le-hi-sa-nu-hi*; it was printed on February 21, 1828.^[1] The *Cherokee Phoenix* office regularly received correspondence from about 100 other newspapers, published far and wide, because it was so respected throughout the United States and Europe. The next year, the second edition of the Cherokee Phoenix was named the *Cherokee Phoenix and Indians' Advocate*, indicating Boudinot's attempt to influence people outside the tribe. Boudinot regularly wrote editorials related to Indian Removal.

"An Address to the Whites" (1826)

This speech was delivered in the First Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, May 26, 1826. Boudinot described the similarities between the Cherokee and the whites, and ways in which the Cherokee were adopting aspects of white culture. He hoped to solicit donations for a national academy and for printing equipment to further "civilize" and "Christianize" the Cherokee population. Following the speech, a pamphlet was created under the same title, transcribing Boudinot's original speech. "An Address to the Whites" was well received and "proved to be remarkably effective at fund-raising".^[4]

Influence on Indian Removal

The Indian removal policy was a result of the discovery of gold in Cherokee territory, the growth of the cotton industry, and increased competition for land in the Southeast. European Americans resented Cherokee control of their lands, and conflicts increasingly arose. The Indian Removal Act of 1830 called for all Indian peoples living east of the Mississippi River to be removed from this area and sent west beyond the Mississippi River. While the majority of the Cherokee led by Chief John Ross opposed the act, Boudinot began to believe that Indian Removal was inevitable. He thought the best the Cherokee could do would be to secure their rights through treaty, before they were moved against their will. Given the threat by the US government, Boudinot and his followers caused a division within The Nation. Boudinot used all of his writing and oratory skills to influence Indian Removal policy. He criticized the popular principal chief John Ross, who opposed his ideas.

In 1832, Boudinot stepped down as editor of the *Cherokee Phoenix*, as the tribe was against removal. He continued to promote a treaty to secure their rights during removal. He and Treaty Party leaders signed the Treaty of New Echota (1835) in Washington, DC, ceding all Cherokee land east of the Mississippi River. Although this was opposed by the majority of the delegation and lacked the signature of the Principal Chief John Ross, the US Senate ratified the treaty. Afterward, faced with open enmity among the Cherokee, many of the signatories and their families migrated to Indian Territory, where they located with the "Old Settlers", who had gone there in the 1820s.

During 1838 and 1839, the US Army enforced the Removal Act and evicted the Cherokee and their slaves from their homes in the Southeast. They forced most of them west into Indian Territory (in eastern present-day Oklahoma). The Cherokee named their journey as the Trail of Tears, due to the estimated 4,000 deaths among their people that occurred because of insufficient supplies and clothing for exposure to severe weather.

Assassination

In 1837 after his wife's death, Boudinot relocated with their children to the Western Cherokee Nation (which had been established in the northeast quarter of what is today Oklahoma by previously displaced Cherokee, called the "Old Settlers"). He arrived impoverished and was forced to secure a loan from the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions to finance the construction of a modest house in Park Hill. Reunited with his longtime friend and collaborator, Samuel Worcester, Boudinot returned to his vocation as a translator of the Gospel.

The "Old Settlers" and John Ross' supporters failed to reach an agreement on unification following the Nation's Trail of Tears removal to Indian Territory. A dissident group of John Ross supporters met secretly to pronounce blood judgement on the Treaty Party leaders, for their role in alienating the land, which was considered a capital crime under "blood law". On June 22, 1839, a group of unknown Cherokee assassinated Boudinot outside his home. His cousin and uncle, John and Major Ridge, were assassinated the same day. Stand Watie was attacked but survived. (Many survivors of the Trail of Tears had also blamed the three for the misery of their forced emigration.)^[8]

Though John Ross denied any connection to the killings, Boudinot's brother Stand Watie blamed the Principal Chief. After these "murders" (as Watie called them), followers of Watie and Ross engaged in violent conflict. For instance, Stand Watie killed a man whom he had seen attack his uncle Major Ridge; Watie was acquitted in self defense. The violence lasted into 1846, when a tenuous peace treaty was arranged by the United States, but the bitterness remained and contributed to tribal divisions during the American Civil War. The assassinations of the Treaty Party leaders led to more violence during the post-removal factionalism, which compounded the misfortune of the Cherokee Nation.^[9]

During the Civil War, the Nation split into two factions in their alliances: Stand Watie and his supporters, the majority of the Nation, sided with the Confederacy (and he served as an officer in their army); Ross's with the Union.^[10]

Notes

- [1] Parins, James W. (2005). *Elias Cornelius Boudinot: A Life on the Cherokee Border* (<http://books.google.com/books?id=YuaSjyiVc1YC>). American Indian Lives. University of Nebraska Press. ISBN 978-0-8032-3752-0. .;
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- [4] Pulley, Angela F. "Elias Boudinot" (<http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/nge/ArticlePrintable.jsp?id=h-626>), *The New Georgia Encyclopedia online*
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- [7] Wilkins, Thurman. *Cherokee Tragedy: The Story of the Ridge Family and the Decimation of a People*, pp. 235–237, 242–244. London: The Macmillan Company, 1970.
- [8] Peyer, Bernd C. "Elias Boudinot and the Cherokee Betrayal," in *The Tutor'd Mind: Indian Missionary-Writers In Antebellum America*, Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997, pp. 212–213
- [9] Franks, Kenny A. *Stand Watie and the Agony of the Cherokee Nation*, Memphis, Tennessee: Memphis State University Press, 1979, pp. 56, 103
- [10] Franks (1979), *Stand Watie*, pp. 115–193

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- Wilkins, Thurman; *Cherokee Tragedy: The Ridge family and the Decimation of a People*; University of Oklahoma Press; Norman, OK; 1986; ISBN 806121882 (1989 paperback edition).

External links

- Paul Ridenour, "The Stand Watie and Elias Boudinot Family (Sons of David Oo-wa-tie)" (<http://www.paulridenour.com/swatie.htm>), Paul Ridenour Website (genealogy)

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