



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES

DIVISION OF RESEARCH PROGRAMS

Narrative Section of a Successful Application

The attached document contains the grant narrative and selected portions of a previously funded grant application. It is not intended to serve as a model, but to give you a sense of how a successful application may be crafted. Every successful application is different, and each applicant is urged to prepare a proposal that reflects its unique project and aspirations. Prospective applicants should consult the Research Programs application guidelines at <https://www.neh.gov/grants/research/fellowships> for instructions.

Note: The attachment only contains the grant narrative and selected portions, not the entire funded application. In addition, certain portions may have been redacted to protect the privacy interests of an individual and/or to protect confidential commercial and financial information and/or to protect copyrighted materials.

Project Title: Choctaw Confederates: The American Civil War in Indian Country

Institution: Rice University

Project Director: Fay A. Yarbrough

Grant Program: Fellowships

Research and Contribution

“After de War I was what you call a freedman. De Indians had to give all dey slaves forty acres of land. I’s e allus lived on dis land which jines dat of Ole master’s and I’s e never stayed away from it long at a time.” Thus did Frances Banks describe herself and the situation for former slaves in Indian Territory when interviewed by a Works Progress Administration (WPA) field worker in 1938. Banks was born on a farm near Doaksville in the southeastern corner of the Choctaw Nation before the Civil War. Her parents had been held by the Wright family, whose prominent members included Allen Wright, principal chief of the Choctaw Nation from 1866 to 1870. This excerpt from Frances Banks’ interview offers a provocative glimpse of the subjects I will explore in my project *Choctaw Confederates: The American Civil War in Indian Country*: slavery, emancipation, the Civil War era, and Reconstruction, all from the less familiar vantage point of Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma). As recent controversies about the meaning of the Confederate flag and contemporary debates within native groups about the inclusion or exclusion of the descendants of their former slaves as tribal citizens demonstrate, the issues that cleaved the United States and Indian Territory during the Civil War have yet to be resolved and continue to have repercussions for people today.

The indigenous peoples living in Indian Territory such as the so-called “Five Civilized Tribes” did not consider themselves to be a part of the United States. Rather, they functioned as individual sovereign nations with constitutions and governments. Several of these nations adopted the institution of enslaving people of African descent, and some individual Indians practiced large-scale plantation agriculture. European traders and settlers introduced the Choctaws to African slaves as early as the 1720s. By 1860, black slaves comprised 14% of the population in the Choctaw Nation. Like their counterparts in the American South, Choctaw slaveholders carefully circumscribed the behavior of their chattel by passing legislation that prohibited the education of slaves, prevented slaves from owning property, and disallowed slaves from carrying guns without permission from their owners. Questions about the legitimacy of slavery in the United States, then, had consequences for the Indian nations west of the Mississippi River. Hence, American Indian nations such as the Choctaws officially sided with the Confederacy during the Civil War.

I consider Choctaw rhetoric regarding their Confederate allegiance during the American Civil War to argue that Choctaw Indians, and other native groups in Indian Territory, were deeply concerned about issues of states’ rights and sovereignty. Moreover, they also had a vested interest in the maintenance of the institution of slavery and its associated racial hierarchy. Confederate states’ argument for secession, in my view, addressed two concerns for the Choctaws: protecting their right to own human property and buttressing their claims to sovereignty. My study of Choctaw legislative documents from the era has revealed that Choctaw lawmakers spent a great deal of time talking about their commitment to the Confederate States of America. Choctaw legal authorities even deemed any criticism of the Confederacy or of the Confederate army to be a form of treason against the Choctaw Nation and punishable by death. *Choctaw Confederates* explores what accounted for this level of commitment to the Confederate cause among the Choctaws, as well as what aspects of Confederate ideology appealed to Choctaw authorities.

In the wealth of scholarship produced about the Civil War, native groups, when they are discussed, tend to appear as a footnote or, perhaps, a chapter. In James M. McPherson’s magisterial *Battle Cry of Freedom*, for instance, Native populations appear briefly as they lose land to American expansion and send regiments to fight in the war. Laurence M. Hauptman’s important work *Between Two Fires: American Indians in the Civil War* focuses on Indian Territory, but hones in on native participation in the war as scouts, sharpshooters, and soldiers, not how native nations chose their allegiances in the war. Scholars have devoted a few volumes to the participation of Cherokee Indians in the war, but the Choctaw Nation has not yet been a focus of study. The region west of the Mississippi River also receives short shrift in the historiography of the American Civil War, which focuses on the eastern theater because more battles took place there and the east’s larger population concentration. *Choctaw Confederates* adds to newer work that crosses the artificial divide between the historiographies of the American Civil War and the American West.

Scholars who do address native allegiance to the Confederacy in the Civil War downplay the importance of slavery and racial ideology in Confederate Indians' decision-making. For instance, in classic work that remains valuable nearly a century after its publication, Annie Heloise Abel examined the ties between the Confederacy and various indigenous groups, but Abel placed the onus for the alliance on the Confederate South, implicitly denying Native agency. Similarly, several of the contributors to Bradley R. Clampitt's recent anthology *The Civil War and Reconstruction in Indian Territory* describe Indian nations as having little choice but to side with the Confederacy because federal troops departed from Indian Territory. I posit, instead, that the Choctaw Nation saw common cause with the Confederate South on the issue of slavery and the connection between states' rights and native sovereignty.

When the Civil War ended, the Choctaw Nation was subject to federal authority like their Southern Confederate brethren. And as with the Confederate South, the federal government attempted to re-establish friendly relations with the Choctaw Nation and create a new position within Choctaw society for freedpeople formerly held as slaves there during the Reconstruction period. My work shows that Choctaws and other native nations grappled with questions about federal authority, sovereignty, and the meaning of citizenship just as Americans did. Thus, I contend that we must broaden the traditional geographical boundaries of the Reconstruction era to include Indian Territory as well. Federal authorities negotiated a treaty with the Choctaws that included provisions for granting the Choctaw freedpeople Choctaw citizenship, civil rights, and access to land ownership, something that the federal government neglected to do for its own ex-slave population, but the Choctaw Nation circumvented these measures. In a move that bears some striking similarities to actions taken in the post-Civil War American South, my work demonstrates that Choctaw lawmakers created another class of citizenship with fewer legal rights for people of African descent in the Choctaw Nation. Ironically, given the history of removal, nineteenth-century Choctaws were far more Southern than their contemporaries realized.

Competencies, Skills, Access

I worked extensively with many of the archives I consult for *Choctaw Confederates* while researching my first book *Race and the Cherokee Nation: Sovereignty in the Nineteenth Century*. Here I argued that Cherokee lawmakers' definitions of interracial sex and policing of this activity served multiple functions: preserving political sovereignty, delineating Cherokee identity, and creating social hierarchy. For this project I conducted research in the manuscript archives at the Oklahoma Historical Society, National Archives in Washington, DC, and the Tennessee State Library and Archives. Currently, I have already conducted the majority of my research with the Choctaw Nation Papers, a collection of official records created by Choctaws, and the Indian Pioneer Papers (IPP), which include anecdotal material about daily life in the nineteenth-century Choctaw Nation. Both the Oklahoma Historical Society and the University of Oklahoma house these records and make them readily available to researchers. The WPA gathered the IPP during the 1930s in an initiative similar to the one that led to the collection of the narratives of the former slaves, which I also use in this project.

With Sandra Slater, I co-edited *Gender and Sexuality in Indigenous North America, 1400-1850*, a contribution to the growing scholarly interest in the operation of notions of gender and sexuality in native societies. I also provided a chapter on Choctaw women and labor for this volume. My work has appeared in peer-reviewed journals such as *The Journal of Social History* and *The Journal of Southern History*, as well as peer-reviewed anthologies such as *Race and Science*, edited by Paul Farber and Hamilton Cravens; *Civil War Wests: Testing the Limits of the United States* edited by Adam Arenson and Andrew Graybill; and Kevin Adams and Leonne M. Hudson's volume *Democracy and the American Civil War: Race and African Americans in the Nineteenth Century*. *Choctaw Confederates* and my other work all explore the intersection of Native and African American history.

Methods and Work Plan

While Civil War scholarship abounds, few scholars study native participation in the war from the perspective of native peoples. Thus, sources produced by the Choctaw Indians themselves are at the

center of my project. Fortunately, the Choctaws produced a wide variety of documents including legislative and legal records for historians to consider. Families such as the Pitchlynns, which included Peter P. Pitchlynn who served as chief of the Choctaw Nation at the end of the Civil War, left behind journals and correspondence that provide valuable insight about life in Indian Territory during the nineteenth century. I combine these records with the IPP materials and Choctaw Nation Papers to give voice to an often silent group in American history, Native peoples.

I have completed drafts of three of six planned chapters, as well as the introduction. Chapter 1, titled “Before ‘the white people came in large numbers and brought their customs’: Choctaw Origins,” describes the origins of the Choctaw Nation; traditional practices, particularly regarding gender; and the nation’s removal to Indian Territory. In chapter 2, titled “‘Even if the master was good the slaves was bad off’: Slavery and Ideology in the Choctaw Nation,” I provide an overview of slavery as practiced by Choctaws and the growth of racial thinking in the Choctaw Nation. This chapter is informed by my first book *Race and the Cherokee Nation*. Reconstruction and the efforts to determine the terms for incorporating people of African descent into the Choctaw polity are the focus of chapter 6, titled “‘Dis Land Which Jines Dat of Ole Master’s’: Reconstruction in the Choctaw Nation.”

With the support of a NEH fellowship, I would draft the remaining three chapters of *Choctaw Confederates*. I need to return to the Western History Collection at the University of Oklahoma for a short trip (two weeks) to examine more Choctaw material on the agents who worked in the Choctaw Nation, the subject of chapter 3 which is currently titled “Indian Agents to the Choctaw Nation.” Some correspondence from these agents is available through National Archives in Washington, DC, and the Southwest Regional office of the National Archives in Fort Worth, Texas, which I need to visit for three weeks. Chapter 4, currently titled “Lincoln and Indian Policy,” will consider not just Lincoln’s federal policies regarding natives but also natives’ perceptions of those policies. Participating in the NEH Summer Institute “Visual Culture of the American Civil War” inspired me to incorporate some visual materials in this chapter. In particular, political cartoons that appeared in venues such as *Harper’s Weekly* offer some sense of American attitudes towards native populations, which likely shaped federal policy at this time. The Clayton Library for Genealogical Research here in Houston holds Choctaw and Chickasaw records for Confederate soldiers, which I will consult for chapter 5 of my manuscript, currently titled “Native Soldiers in the American Civil War.” Moreover, my home institution houses the papers of Confederate President Jefferson Davis as well as other materials connected to the Confederacy that will be valuable for understanding the place of Confederate Indians in the larger Confederacy. I envision spending two months total conducting research and the rest of my fellowship time writing in order to complete a draft of *Choctaw Confederates* by May of 2019.

Final Product and Dissemination

In sum, my monograph challenges ideas about who and what experiences are Southern; reorients Civil War historiography to consider the importance of the west, particularly in thinking about the era of Reconstruction; and complicates our thinking about the historical relationship between native populations and people of African descent. I have already received inquiries about my work from several university presses including Nebraska, Kansas, Florida, and Washington and had extensive conversations with Cambridge University Press for inclusion of this monograph in their series “Studies in North American Indian History.” I have presented research from this project at meetings of the Western History Association, Society for Historians of the Early American Republic, and the Organization of American Historians and as an invited speaker at topic specific symposia such as “African Americans in the Nineteenth-Century West” hosted by Saint Louis University. My inclusion in these programs suggest wide-ranging interest in my topic from various scholarly constituencies: historians of the American west, scholars of indigenous populations, Civil War historians, and scholars of African American history and slavery more broadly. Additionally, the Autry National Center of the American West invited me to speak at their public event “Unfree Labor” which suggests a popular audience for my work as well. In both scholarly and popular venues, audiences have responded quite positively and enthusiastically to my work.

SELECT MANUSCRIPT COLLECTIONS

Choctaw Nation Papers
Indian Pioneer Papers
Isaac L. Garvin Papers
James Jackson McAlester Papers
Edmond McCurtain Papers
Jackson Frazier McCurtain Papers
Peter Perkins Pitchlynn Papers
Ben F. Smallwood Papers
Allen Wright Papers

SELECT PUBLISHED PRIMARY SOURCES

WPA Slave Narratives
Baker, T. Lindsay and Julie P. Baker, eds., *The WPA Oklahoma Slave Narratives*. Norman, 1996.
Constitution and Laws of the Choctaw Nation. Multiple volumes. Reprinted Wilmington, DE, 1975.
Pitchlynn, Peter Perkins. *A Gathering of Statesmen: Records of the Choctaw Council Meetings, 1826-1828*. Norman, 2013.

SELECT SECONDARY WORKS

Abel, Annie Heloise. *The American Indian as Participant in the Civil War, 1862-1865*. Cleveland, 1919.
Arenson, Adam and Andrew Graybill. *Civil War Wests: Testing the Limits of the United States*. Oakland, 2015.
Clampitt, Bradley. *The Civil War and Reconstruction in Indian Territory*. Lincoln, 2015.
Cushman, H. B. *History of the Choctaw, Chickasaw and Natchez Indians*. Norman, 1999.
Debo, Angie. *The Rise and Fall of the Choctaw Republic*. Norman, 1975.
DeRosier, Jr., Arthur H. *The Removal of the Choctaw Indians*. Knoxville, 1970.
Foreman, Grant. *The Five Civilized Tribes: Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek, Seminole*. Norman, 1971.
Hauptman, Laurence M. *Between Two Fires: American Indians in the Civil War*. New York: Free Press, 1996.
Kidwell, Clara Sue. *The Choctaws in Oklahoma: From Tribe to Nation, 1855-1970*. Norman, 2007.
Krauthamer, Barbara. *Black Slaves, Indian Master: Slavery, Emancipation, and Citizenship in the Native American South*. Chapel Hill, 2013.
McKee, Jesse O. and Jon A. Schlenker. *The Choctaws: Cultural Evolution of a Native American Tribe*. Jackson, 1980.
Miles, Tiya. *The House on Diamond Hill: a Cherokee Plantation Story*. Chapel Hill, 2010.
Naylor, Celia. *African Cherokees in Indian Territory: from Chattel to Citizens*. Chapel Hill, 2008.
Perdue, Theda. *Nations Remembered: An Oral History of the Cherokee, Chickasaws, Choctaws, Creeks, and Seminoles in Oklahoma, 1865-1907*. Norman, 1993.
Pesantubbee, Michelene E. *Choctaw Women in a Chaotic World: The Clash of Cultures in the Colonial Southeast*. Albuquerque, 2005.
Saunt, Claudio. *A New Order of Things: Property, Power, and the Transformation of the Creek Indians, 1733-1816*. Cambridge, 1999.
Snyder, Christina. *Slavery in Indian Country: the Changing Face of Captivity in Early America*. Cambridge, 2010.
Swanton, John R. *Source Material for the Social and Ceremonial Life of the Choctaw Indians*. Tuscaloosa, 2001.
Warde, Mary Jane. *When the Wolf Came: the Civil War and the Indian Territory*. Fayetteville, 2013.
White, Richard. *The Roots of Dependency: Subsistence, Environment, and Social Change among the Choctaws, Pawnees, and Navajos*. Lincoln, 1983.