

Peter Paul Perkins Pitchlynn

(1806 – 17 Jan 1881)

The Evening Star, March 28, 1866

Personal

Colonel Pitchlynn, formerly chief of the old Choctaw tribe, now United States Indian Agent to that nation, called today upon Attorney General Speed, in reference to several indictments found against some Choctaw Indians in Arkansas, which had been discharged but recently called up again.



Pitchlynn. At his residence in this city, at 7:15 p.m., on Monday, January 17, 1881, Peter P. Pitchlynn, aged 74 years, 11 months and 17 days.

Our father has gone to a mansion of rest,
From a region of sorrow and pain,
To the glorious land by the Deity blest,
Where he never can suffer again.
Why should our tears in sorrow flow,
When God recalls his own,
And bids them leave a world of woe,
For an immortal crown?
Then, let our sorrows cease to flow,
God has recalled his own;
But let our hearts, in every woe,
Still say, "Thy will be done."

By His Daughter

The friends of the late P.P. Pitchlynn are invited to attend his funeral at the Masonic Temple, corner F and Ninth streets northwest, tomorrow, Friday, January 21, at 2 o'clock p.m.

The Evening Star, January 18, 1881

Death of Col. Pitchlynn, Ex-Chief of the Choctaws

The Choctaw delegate, Col. P.P. Pitchlynn, who has been well known here for the last twenty-five years, died at his residence on C street last evening. His death will be severely felt not only by his family and the tribe he represented, but also by a large circle of friends who had learned to appreciate his worth as a man of high culture, broad and liberal views, and inflexible integrity. He was born in the country formerly owned by the Choctaws in Mississippi in January, 1806, became prominent in the councils of his people while yet young, was for many years their principal chief, and for the greater part of the time since 1853 has represented them at Washington.

The Evening Star, January 19, 1881

The Ex-Chief of the Choctaws

Peter P. Pitchlynn, for many years the well-known delegate of the Choctaw nation at the seat of government, whose death Monday night was mentioned in yesterday's STAR, had been in failing health for the past two years, his disease being of a pulmonary nature. The most of the winter he had been confined to his room and latterly to his bed. In his younger days he was principal chief of the Choctaws

and afterwards occupied the position of agent or delegate in this city, looking after their interests before the general government and making his home in this city, but at the breaking out of the war, removed to the Indian Territory with his family, and took an active part in the war, returning here in 1865 at its close. He married Mrs. Caroline Lombardy, a widow lady in this city, and daughter of the late Godfrey Eckloff, whom he leaves with four children -- three sons and a daughter. Prior to this marriage, he had reared a family in the Indian country, but they have died long since, with the exception of one daughter, who still lives in that country. Col. Pitchlynn emigrated as early as 1824 from Mississippi to the Indian Territory with his tribe, and being a man of superior native talent and good judgment, although with little or no education, he commanded the respect and confidence of his people, which he maintained up to the time of his death. Since the rebellion closed, he has been directing the prosecution of the Choctaw claim for payment of moneys adjudged by the United States Senate in March 1830, for lands sold the government in 1830, not a dollar of which the government has paid. He was a courteous gentleman of great dignity of bearing and commanded the respect of everyone who knew him. He was a high Mason, being for many years a member of Washington Commandery, Knights Templar, and took the degrees with Gov. Sam Houston, of Texas, more than twenty years ago; an honorary member of the Consistory, 33d degree, Scottish rite, and for many years a personal friend of Gen. Albert Pike.

The Evening Star, January 4, 1889

Col. Pitchlynn's Will

Legal Controversy Over the Estate of the Late Choctaw Chief

His Washington Wife and Her Children—

Applications to Probate the Will Here—

The Celebrated Choctaw Claim Involved in the Litigation

A side issue of the Choctaw claims case is now in the Probate Court, in which a petition has been filed asking for the probate of the will of the late Peter P. Pitchlynn. The decedent was a well-known chief of the Choctaw Indians, and for many years was the representative of his people at the seat of government. He married in this city, Miss Caroline M. Eckloff, who survives him with eight children, and his principal estate was his interest in the Choctaw claim, supposed to be in the neighborhood of \$100,000. There was, however, no will offered for probate here, and there has consequently been no settlement of the estate. One of the sons, Thomas Pitchlynn, had some business relations with Robert Morrison and Thos. Q. Hildebrant, and on Dec. 16, 1886, he made and delivered to them a power of attorney making them his attorneys "in any matters arising out of the will of my father, Peter Pitchlynn, late of the District." This was accepted by them in the belief that there would be several thousand dollars coming to the son from the father's share in the claim. It is these gentlemen who are now, through Mr. John N. Oliver, petitioning for the probate of the will. The petition filed states that the deceased left a will, as is evidenced by

A Letter of Mrs. Pitchlynn

To her son, Thomas, dated May 30, 1887. This letter states:

"1st. That when the will of your father, Peter P. Pitchlynn, deceased, was executed, it was by him committed to the care and custody of John B. Luce, now deceased, with instructions to safely keep the same until the Choctaw net proceeds claim against the United States should be paid, if ever, to the Choctaw nation.

2nd. That after the death of the said Luce, the said will came into my possession as executrix, and was sent to Campbell Leflore, a lawyer in the Choctaw nation, where alone it could be probated according to law with instructions to have that done as the laws of the Choctaw nation require.

3d. That the testator by whom the said will was executed had no property, real or personal, within the District of Columbia to which the provisions of the said will could be applied.

4th. That the said testator was not a citizen of the United States, or of the District of Columbia, but was a citizen of the Choctaw nation, and had no residence or domicile in the District of Columbia, except such residence as he had acquired as an official representative of the Choctaw nation, charged with the duty of representing said nation in respect to its interests and claims against the government of the United States.

5th. That whenever there shall exist any property to which your father would have been entitled if he had lived, the will which you have demanded shall be produced in court (and which has been transmitted to Campbell Leflore for the purposes above stated), will be fully proved, and its provisions strictly complied with according to the known express wish and desire of your deceased father.

6th. That as I now remember the provisions of the said will, I am named as executrix therein, and the money which your father expected to realize and receive from the Choctaw nation (and he had no expectation of ever receiving any money from any other source) was directed by said will to be distributed as follows, to wit: After the payment of all just debts, one-third of the said estate was devised and bequeathed to me absolutely and in my own right. The other two-thirds of said estate was directed to be divided among your father's eight children or their heirs.

The Will Filed in the Choctaw Nation

A letter was also sent to Henry E. McKee, making inquiries for the will, the papers of Mr. Luce having come into his possession, but he replied that the will was not in his possession and never had been. A copy of his letter is appended, as also a letter from Miss Sophie C.M. Pitchlynn, stating from information that the will was in the Choctaw nation, and would be probated when there was any estate for distribution.

Statements of the Petitioners

The petition filed states that decedent, at the time of his death and for many years previous, resided in the city of Washington, District of Columbia; that he had married a resident of said city and District, Caroline M. Eckloff, and he had a large family of children, all of whom were born in said District, have resided here ever since their birth, and that neither they nor their father or mother ever resided anywhere else prior to the death of their father, and that the children and their mother have continuously resided within the jurisdiction of this court ever since the death of their father, and that none of them have any other residence, unless it be Thomas Pitchlynn, who resided here from his birth until within the past few weeks, when he left.

They state that the power of attorney was given them as above set forth, and charge that Caroline M. Pitchlynn, the executrix named in the will of said Peter P. Pitchlynn, has received a large sum of money belonging to said estate which ought to be administered according to the terms of said will and the law in this District; that Thomas Pitchlynn is entitled to a share of whatever money said Caroline M. Pitchlynn has so received, and that your petitioners and no one else have power and authority under said power of attorney to receive and receipt for said share which by the terms of said will is due and owing to said Thomas Pitchlynn. That the said Caroline M. Pitchlynn, the executrix named in said will, refuses to produce the same for probate and record, although she has been frequently requested so to do; and that said Caroline has had notice of the power of attorney from Thomas Pitchlynn to your petitioners. That by reason of the power of attorney aforesaid, your petitioners are interested in the affairs of Peter Pitchlynn, deceased, as attorneys at law and in fact of Thomas Pitchlynn. They, therefore, pray that she be cited to produce the will and probate it.

The National Portrait Gallery

<http://www.npg.si.edu/col/native/pitch.html>

In the early 1830's when George Catlin painted Hat-choo-tuck-nee ("The Snapping Turtle"), familiarly called Peter Pitchlynn by whites, the future Choctaw chief had already become a figure of influence. Having eradicated polygamy in his tribe and stopped the liquor traffic, Pitchlynn had been rewarded in the 1820's with election to the Choctaw National Council. In that capacity, helped select new lands for his people when they were moved west of the Mississippi.

Of mixed white and Indian ancestry, Pitchlynn was well educated in both traditions and served as an effective liaison with the federal government. Impressive in his bearing -- "as stately and complete a gentleman of nature's making as ever I beheld," wrote Charles Dickens -- he became principal chief in 1860 and served as representative of his tribe in Washington after the Civil War. A gifted orator, Pitchlynn addressed the President and several congressional committees in defense of Choctaw claims. He died in Washington, D.C., in 1881 and was buried in the Congressional Cemetery, where the Choctaw nation placed a monument in recognition of his service and allegiance to his people.