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**Review of *Elias Cornelius Boudinot: A Life on the Cherokee Border*
By James W. Parins**

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Elias Cornelius Boudinot: A Life on the Cherokee Border. By James W. Parins. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006. 250 pp. Photographs, notes, bibliography, index. \$60.00.

Few Native Americans are more enigmatic than Elias Cornelius Boudinot, a nineteenth-century Cherokee mixed-blood who championed policies opposed by most members of his tribe. The motivation of this complex individual whose actions undercut tribal sovereignty continues to intrigue those familiar with his life. James Parins, professor of English and associate director of the Sequoyah Research Center at the University of Arkansas, Little Rock, traces the life of Boudinot and explores influences that shaped his character in a well-written and carefully researched biography.

Controversy, a continuing theme in Boudinot's life, swirled around the interracial marriage of his parents in 1826 and engulfed his family when he was born, the fifth of six children, in 1835. That year his father and other members of his extended family signed the divisive Treaty of New Echota, obligating Cherokees to relinquish their eastern land and move to Indian Territory. The animosity sparked by the treaty led to the assassination of his father in 1839. His mother having died three years earlier, the four-year-old boy was sent to New England where he was reared by white relatives who ensured that he received a solid education. After brief employment as a teacher and a civil engineer for the railroad, in 1853 Boudinot moved to Fayetteville, Arkansas, close to the Cherokee Nation. Reestablishing his ties with his Cherokee family, he was admitted to the Arkansas bar in 1856, purchased a partial interest in a local newspaper, and became involved in Democratic politics. Following the example of other family members, including his uncle Stand Watie, Boudinot aligned himself with secessionists and rose to the rank of lieutenant colonel in his uncle's regiment early in the Civil War. After participating in several campaigns, the young rebel officer resigned his commission to serve in the Confederate

Congress. Following the war, he represented the Cherokees in negotiations with federal officials at Fort Smith and in Washington.

Throughout his life, in addition to fanning the flames of discord ignited by the Treaty of New Echota, Boudinot sought to reestablish his family's political and economic fortune. Taking advantage of a provision of the Reconstruction Treaty of 1866 that seemed to give products grown or manufactured in the Cherokee Nation a tax advantage over similar products produced in neighboring states, the Cherokee attorney persuaded his uncle Stand Watie to join him in manufacturing plug tobacco. The ensuing legal confrontation dramatically weakened the sovereignty of all Indian nations. Boudinot found himself at odds with members of his tribe who viewed the encroachment of the railroad as a threat to the Cherokee Nation. The opportunistic attorney, who considered railroads a harbinger of progress, promoted their construction through Indian Territory and sought to take advantage of the economic opportunities they offered. When most Native Americans opposed federal efforts to terminate their national governments and divide their land, Boudinot not only advocated termination and allotment, but inflamed white land hunger by exaggerated claims of unassigned land that could be opened to immediate settlement.

While Parins's book is the first in-depth, published biography of E. C. Boudinot, it offers little new insight into the career of an individual who played a major role in events leading to the transformation of Indian Territory into a state. Thomas Burnell Colbert's 1982 dissertation, "Prophet of Progress: The Life and Times of Elias Cornelius Boudinot," covered the same topics in greater detail and reached similar conclusions.

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